



**BALDUR VON
SCHIRACH**



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HITLER

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September 1965

I am in a room in the Berlin-Spandau Military Hospital, blindfolded. Six hours ago I was operated on again, this time for the second time on my left eye. I am almost blind in my right eye. A British nurse puts a cigarette in my mouth, lights it and leaves me alone. Then I hear the door open slowly and a male voice asks:

-Do you mind if I sit with you for a while?

Of course it doesn't bother me. He is a British military policeman, in his twenties. I ask him where he is stationed.

-In Westphalia. But now I've been separated from my group and I've flown here to keep an eye on you.

He tells me about his service. I ask him about his impressions in Germany. But in the middle of the conversation, he seems to hesitate and lowers his voice.

-Sir, yes no you if you don't mind, I would like to ask you something that me has been worrying for a long time: what kind of man was this Hitler? He must have been a great man, for he gave millions of Germans hope, gave them jobs and built motorways for them. Then he had millions of others executed. I do not understand.

I was moved. For twenty years I had been convinced that in case I survived imprisonment, my own children would ask me that question. For twenty years I had been writing in my cell memories and thoughts intended to answer it; memories and thoughts that every fourteen days were punctually collected and burned. And lo and behold, that young Englishman, born after the war, asked me the long-sought question. That Englishman who was a member of a generation for whom Hitler's name did not correspond to any lived fact, but represented a purely historical reference.

I tried to explain to him the Hitler phenomenon from the beginning. How I met Hitler when I was seventeen, how I became one of his followers so that at twenty-one I was head of the National Socialist students, and at twenty-four of the Reich Youth and the youngest member of the Reichstag. We talked like this for two hours, until he was perfectly informed.

I am the only survivor of the National Socialist hierarchs who knew Hitler in the early days and were close to him. I therefore set out to report on how I came into Hitler's ranks, how we obeyed him and how we lost the German Reich.

I

I was born in 1907 in the house marked 17 Blucherstrasse in the south-west of Berlin. Nearby is the barracks of the Guards Cuirassiers, where my father was first a lieutenant colonel and was eventually appointed squadron commander. A year after my birth we moved to Weimar. My father had asked for his retirement as squadron colonel and was entrusted with the management of the Weimar "Hoftheater"^[1], which later became the German National Theatre.

When I was five years old, my father decided that my German was a lieutenant colonel first, and was eventually appointed head of school.

That I spoke almost entirely in English was due to the somewhat adventurous history of our family. My great-grandfather, Karl Benedikt von Schirach, a Danish judge in Lauenburg, had emigrated to America in 1855. My grandfather, Friedrich Karl von Schirach, fought in the American Civil War as a major in the North's army and lost a leg at the Battle of Bull-Run. When President Lincoln was assassinated, my grandfather stood guard of honour at the coffin with his cork leg. That leg must have been a marvellous work of orthopaedics, for my grandfather did not miss any of the great dances in Philadelphia after the Civil War. At one of them he fell in love with a girl from one of the oldest families in the region, Elisabeth Baily Norris. The Norris clan then owned a well-known factory, which had been of decisive importance to Lincoln in the struggle of the northern states against the southern states. After the founding of the Reich, my grandfather and his young wife returned to Germany in 1871, first living in Kiel, where my father Karl Baily Norris von Schirach was born, and later settling in Lübeck. Until his entry into the Prussian army, my father was an American citizen. Transformed into a young officer he visited relatives across the Atlantic and married in Philadelphia an American who was also a member of the Norris clan, Emma Middleton Lynah Tillou, my father's wife.

mother. She died in July 1944, when a German plane crashed in Wiesbaden.

Like most American women, my mother was very much at home in Berlin. The American colony in the Reich's capital was highly regarded by the Kaiser, and Wilhelm II frequently conversed with my mother in English. Although she spoke fluent German, there was hardly a reception where she did not converse in her mother tongue with the young American wife of the Prussian officer.

My mother was, perhaps because of this, very homesick for Berlin. Weimar seemed limited and provincial to her. She found it very difficult to get used to the ways and customs of that society and detested its rigid ceremonial.

An anecdote is told of a reception at Weimar Palace. Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst, still a young man and always a passionate hunter, was in conversation with other hunters in the middle of the hall. According to protocol, no one was allowed to take a seat before His Serene Highness had made himself comfortable. My mother, the youngest of all the attendants, found this offensive, took a chair and sat down.

All around them heads turned, there were murmurs and general surprise. This attracted the attention of the grand duke, who hastened to my mother, kissed her hand, and apologised for not having taken the presence of the ladies into account.

As the grand duke's gentleman-in-waiting, my father was obliged to wear court dress at official events: it consisted of a dark green frock coat trimmed with gold, a rapier, breeches and a bicorn. To one of the coat tails was pinned the golden key, the sign of his office. He did not like us to see him in such attire, and so my brother Karl, who was seven years my senior, and I used to go out into the hall when he wore it. He listened grumpily to our remarks.

"He looks just like the porter of the hotel Elephant",
looks like the doorman at the "Elephant" hotel), and
Karl added:

I was saying
(it
*"No, I have
looks*

like the man in front of Kastans Panoptikum, in Berlin" (No, more like the *man in front of Kastan's Panoptikum, in Berlin*).

At the age of ten I entered the "Pedagogium" in Hexenberg, Bad Berka, Thuringia. It was a boarding school for boys, where I was made responsible for the class called "The Incubator". That was indeed the name of the dormitory for the youngest boys.

Life in that school was of spartan simplicity. The dormitories had no heating. Every winter morning we had to break the ice in our toilets, and as the one in charge, being the oldest in the class, I had to see to it that my little comrades washed from head to toe despite their cries of protest and chattering teeth. As a sign of my office I was given the key to the dormitory, which, by the way, I kept until the end of the war. That possession was for me the sign that I had ceased to be a child and had become a boy with responsibilities of my own. For it was on the sense of responsibility that the whole educational system of the school was based.

When I first made the trip from Hexenberg to Bad Berka to buy supplies, I felt like a king. We wore our school uniform: leather shorts, blue jackets and a scarlet beret. The boys in the village reacted to the sight of that beret like bulls to a cape. As soon as our carriage appeared on the corners of the village, the first stones flew. To go shopping at a gallop and return under a hail of projectiles thus represented for

We have a great adventure.

To tell the truth, we were not really concerned at the time about the reasons for the village boys' hatred of our red berets. Perhaps it was just a quarrelsome impulse. Perhaps it was based on the fact that most of us pupils at the school belonged to a different social class. There were no popular schools for everyone then, and the "upper" ones admitted only the ruling classes.

Among the "high schools" was Bad Berka, which was otherwise an excellent institution. Our German educational system has always suffered from the defect of teaching only pure science. There has been no education of character and citizenship among us, as in English, American and French schools.

I believe that it was precisely because of this very character of our schools that, already at the turn of the century, there were strong youth movements in Germany, such as the "Wandervogel" [2] [3]. In this way, young people created their own forms of life, which the school and the parental home refused to give them. To these youth movements we owe also some exemplary German boarding schools like Hexenberg. Here, the whole spirit of initiative of the young people was on display. The pupils were on a first-name basis with the headmaster, and there was no protocol between teachers and youngsters. The older pupils, for their part, exercised responsibility towards the younger ones from an early age. There is no doubt that I received the most decisive education of my life at Hexenberg.

I experienced the collapse of the empire there in 1918. The Hexenberg overlooks a large area of Thuringia. Something had been in the air for several days. Our director Endemann had left in a hurry the night before 9 November for Weimar. Nobody seemed to want to work, not even the teachers. In the morning, the carriage left, as it did every day, to go shopping in Bad Berka. The boys returned with a word in their mouths:

Revolution!

The word excited my fantasy considerably. I asked how and why, because I wanted to know everything. I was told, among other things, that Germany had a new flag. Its colours were black, red and gold. I rushed to the sewing room, where a couple of spinsters were mending sheets and shirts, and asked them to make me the new ensign immediately.

When I had it in my hands, I climbed onto the roof of the house and iced the new colours. From a distance of miles away it was possible to

see them. The revolution had broken out in Hexenberg. Director Endemann also saw the flag on his return from Weimar that evening. All along the way he kept his eyes on the colours floating above his house, and when we came out to meet him, he shouted from quite a distance:

-Who did that? I went ahead:

-I have hoisted the new flag. The revolution has broken out... Tears welled up in his eyes:

-Do you know what you have done to me? Do you know what a revolution is? In Weimar a council of workers and soldiers has taken the government. They have today dethroned our grand duke and deposed your father. For four years our soldiers have fought under the black, white and red flag for everyone, including you. And now over my house, over our school, that new flag....

I felt absolutely ashamed. Without a word I climbed back onto the roof and lowered it. Thus ended my first attempt to be a "revolutionary".

Eight months later, in July 1919, the peaceful city of Weimar looked like a mixture of camp and marketplace. In the Hoftheater, the National Assembly, which was to draft the new republican Reich constitution, was in session. All the hotels were packed. A member of parliament was staying at my parents' house. But I was not at all interested in the politics of those gentlemen in dark clothes. At weekends, when I came home from school, I was much more attracted by the soldiers occupying the city to protect the National Assembly.

Some streets were intercepted with barbed wire. In others, notices like the following could be read: "Anyone who crosses will be shot. Machine guns and cannons could be seen, as well as soldiers with carbines on their shoulders. They let us climb into the gun carriages, showed us the machine guns, gave us empty magazines, and while cursing the "old men

The "Hoftheater's" "chocks" made jokes about "Friedrich, the Provisional". They were referring to Friedrich Ebert, whom the National Assembly had elected provisional head of state and later the first president of the Republic. In the eyes of the soldiers, this was nothing more than a kind of comical covenant that they were prepared to put an end to one day.

In the rest of Thuringia, the Socialist Council formed in the days of the revolution still held sway. So it was that every Sunday evening I returned from the enclave under the black, red and gold flag to the socialist domain which also included Hexenberg, even though the forces of the red government had not yet reached the boarding school.

However, a cavalry unit of the Volkswehr was stationed in Bad Berka, and horsemen with red armbands over their grey uniforms were exercising in the surrounding fields. My fellow students and I spied them hidden in the undergrowth. Depending on the time of year, we harassed them with snowballs, stones or dung. Sometimes we managed to scare the horses away, and once the saddle

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and the rampaging horse knocked down its rider. We celebrated with loud cheers and felt proud as victors.

In this way, a boy who was three-quarters American was developing into a German nationalist. But the really decisive event for me was a tragic event in our family.

It happened in October 1919. I was sitting in a classroom at school, doing my homework, when headmaster Endemann appeared and asked me to accompany him to his office. To my great surprise, Mrs Junghans, my parents' housekeeper, was waiting for me there, all mourned and teary-eyed. She told me that she had come to fetch me to accompany me on my return to Weimar, but without telling me why. Once I got home, I knew what had happened. Karl had died; my brother Karl, seven years older than me.

Karl was at the time a philosophy student at the boarding school in Rossleben, Thuringia, an evangelical cultural institution. At the school he was described as a "primus omnium", a very talented pupil whose main interest lay in zoology. In reality, however, Karl was a jack of all trades, for he wrote verses in German, English and Greek with equal perfection. But despite this poetic vocation and an extraordinary inclination towards the natural sciences, his goal was only one: he wanted to become an officer. Shortly before the collapse of the Empire, he had joined the Baden Guard Dragoon Regiment in Karlsruhe as a trainee ensign, and it was planned that he would return there after graduation.

But things took a completely different turn. Political events followed: the collapse of the fronts in November 1918; the flight of the Kaiser to Holland; the abdication of the princes. There followed a period of upheaval throughout the country: founding of the Communist Party of Germany; assassination by radical right-wing officials of the left-wing socialist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; appointment of the social democrat Friedrich Ebert as the first president of the Reich. In our city, Weimar, and in the same theatre which our father had directed for ten years, the Versailles dictate was accepted by the National Assembly. Before Scapa Flow the fleet sank itself before surrendering to the victors, a heroic gesture which made a great impression on the young and tense patriotic consciences.

My brother Karl committed suicide in Rossleben.

In his farewell letter he wrote that he did not want to survive the disgrace of Germany. Today we would call this decision a guilt complex. But the fact is that at the time, the state of mind that could lead to such a desperate gesture was widespread among his peers of a similar age.

A whole youth had been preparing during the war years for the sole purpose of entering the campaign. Suddenly, that prospect had vanished completely. My brother

saw no other way out than death. Others continued the struggle in the German hinterland, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the revolutionary events of the years 1919 to 1923. Later I found many of these frustrated fighters among the NSDAP and S.A. commanders.

With Karl's death I lost more than a brother. He was an example to me in whom I was constantly inspired, and so, at the age of twelve, I felt it my duty to take his place. So I took up that inheritance which obliged me to profess above all an exceptional love for my homeland.

On July 20, 1924, I heard it said: "Your Excellency, General Ludendorff will review the paramilitary organisations at the aerodrome in the afternoon. This was exciting news to me, for I had been a member of one of these groups for a year. We wore grey jackets, "breeches", and covered ourselves with grey canvas ski caps. They had been called "Hitler caps" since 9 November 1923, when a man called Adolf Hitler had marched at the head of such uniformed columns over the Feldherrnhalle in Munich. Hitler had since been imprisoned in the fortress of Landsberg and his party had been banned in Bavaria. But General Ludendorff, who had accompanied him in that action, was still at liberty. He was the protector of all paramilitary organisations and something like the supreme leader of that sort of secret German army of which we all felt we were a part.

Ludendorff had gone to stay with neighbours during his stay in Weimar. He lived, in fact, with our relative, Admiral Von Levetzow, who was, during Hitler's time, president of the Berlin police. Through the garden fence I saw the Baron engaged in various conversations, always standing like a stick in his black civilian suit. He was like a myth, like the embodiment of an almost supernatural strategic genius, who had been on the verge of victory in 1918, had not the rearguard delivered its treacherous stab in the back to the

fighting front. At least that is what I had heard from the "Reichswehr" officers ^[4] who, dressed in civilian clothes, instructed us on weekends in the camp.

We formed up at the Weimar airfield, no bigger than a football field of slightly larger than usual dimensions. A car stopped. "Look to the right!" The baron got out of the car. We stood at attention.

Only for a very brief moment was I allowed to contemplate Ludendorff's face. It was rather a mask, dominated by a rotund, square double chin and thin, immobile lips. He looked at us for a few moments, and as quickly as he had come, he drove away again in his car.

Was that all there was to it? Not a speech, not even a brief salute. "Dismissed!" they ordered. We hurried after one of the officers who had accompanied Ludendorff, and learned that His Excellency had found our appearance unmilitary, and criticised the number of "men" who, in standing at attention, had brushed the seam of their trousers with the palm of their hands.

The mythical military man had found nothing else to say to those young people. That was why we wore out our heels on marches and clashed with the communists in workers' assemblies. That was why my comrade Garscha had let himself be killed on a march on Arnstadt. In Ludendorff's opinion, we were nothing but an undisciplined bunch.

After that disappointment, I considered myself cured forever of my veneration for the figure who had been more than legendary, almost mythical, to me until then.

//

A year later - it was March 1925 - I was asked by Dr Hans Severus Ziegler, a young professor of literature and an acquaintance of my father's, when we were both in the artistic circle:

-Will you come with me to the station? I have to order a room for Hitler.

He had joined the National Socialist Party before the "Hitlerputsch". Hitler, who had been imprisoned in the fortress of Landsberg, had been released four months before the "Hitlerputsch". 27 February he had proceeded to re-found the party in

Munich. Dr. Ziegler had been appointed *gauleiter* [5] [6] interim government for Thuringia. The "Gau" existed practically only on paper. The few supporters Hitler had won in Weimar before their *putsch* in Munich, they had been separated from the time of the organisation. In Bavaria and in almost all the other "Land", he was forbidden to speak. In Thuringia, however, where two National Socialist deputies supported the slim government majority, he was allowed to make speeches. That was why Hitler came to Weimar.

The costs of his stay were to be borne by the Thuringian "Gau", i.e. in practice by Dr. Ziegler himself. We did not therefore look for a room in the "Erbprinz" or "Elephant" hotels, but went to the third-class "Germania", opposite the station, where a room for only one person - Hitler had announced that he was arriving with an escort of four men - cost five marks. Too much money for us.

Dr. Ziegler asked if the hotel had a meeting room.

-Yes," replied the hotelier. With or without a drink? Without a drink it costs thirty marks.

We rented the lounge, which was strictly speaking just a large back room where only about fifty people were able to

to make themselves comfortable at the tables. Of course, Dr. Ziegler had not counted on such a turnout. He had specially invited the decorated and "national glories". Since Weimar did not yet have a SA, he asked our para-military detachment to protect the hall. So I joined their ranks and was punctually on the "Germania". And then Hitler arrived. I must confess that at first I did not notice him. Suddenly a car appeared, such as I had only seen in photographs until then, a "Mercedes Kompressor", sixteen horsepower, with shiny spoked wheels. It was the latest craze. I was so fascinated that I paid little attention to the men descending from that marvel. Consider that I was then sixteen years old and the proud owner of a "Brennabor" motorbike.

The room was entirely full. Most of those present had a cup of coffee before them. There was no ceremonial with H.H. "streets", flags and marching music, as was later customary. Everything was conducted according to "civilian" formalities, so to speak.

Dr Ziegler introduced the speaker:

-This is Adolf Hitler speaking!

I seem to be looking at him still in front of me, in his blue suit and black tie. He was of medium height, slim, with dark hair, still slicked back. Most of the crowd had come less out of conviction than out of curiosity to see the man.

whose *putsch* in Munich had been averted in sixteen hours. A
In the eyes of many of those present, the *putsch* did not represent a
This is not a good recommendation at all, but rather a reason to be wary.

I don't remember anything particular about Hitler's speech. I only know that I paid special attention to the tone of his voice. It was a completely different tone from what was then heard from the mouths of teachers, priests, officials or politicians, for it was deep and harsh. It seemed to resonate like the notes of a cello.

His accent, which we thought of as Austrian - he was actually from Lower Bavaria - sounded strange there in central Germany, and its very uniqueness was striking. He spoke about the Treaty of Versailles and went deeply into historical references. He had certainly made the same speech many times before. But it still seems to me, forty-two years later, after a world war and a score of prisons behind him, to be the most vigorous speech I have ever heard from Hitler. At first he spoke in a low tone, very slowly, as if meditating. I had no idea then of the problems of a mass speaker. I did not know how painful and difficult those first few minutes can be for a speaker. I didn't know that you don't just take over the audience with words, but also with your eyes, until you warm them up. First you win over a few, then others, and finally the whole audience.

The fifty inhabitants of Weimar who were present were not an easy audience for Hitler. I was undoubtedly the first who understood him both by their looks and their words. But I would never have dared to express my approval among so many older people. So I remained seated, as if spellbound.

One thing struck me about that speech. We were then facing a presidential election period. The National Socialists had nominated Ludendorff as their own candidate. The elections were to be held on 29 March, but the speaker hardly mentioned this political event. Much more than I knew the reason: Hitler had accepted General Ludendorff's candidacy, even though he was convinced beforehand that it would fail. In the elections of 29 March 1925, Ludendorff received only 300,000 votes, i.e. only 1.1 per cent. As none of the candidates won an absolute majority in the first round, there was a second round. The right-wing parties advocated Hindenburg. And Hitler, who knew exactly how much enmity divided the two world war marshals, went for Hindenburg. This meant the

Ludendorff's political death, which meant that Hitler was recognised as the first figure of the radical right wing.

But at the time I did not understand such chess moves of politics and marvelled that Ludendorff was hardly alluded to by Hitler.

At the end of his speech, his tone became pathetic. The fifty inhabitants of Weimar, at first so sceptical, seemed enthusiastic. Those of us in the order service took up a collection. I seem to remember that we managed to raise the seventy-five marks we needed, and this was the result of Hitler's first speech in Weimar.

But for me that first meeting was not yet over. Dr. Ziegler told me that he was planning a conversation with Hitler at his home and asked me if I and my comrades would like to take over the protection of the house. I agreed, both because of the importance of the mission and also because I wanted to take the opportunity to look at the fabulous "Mercedes" again. Unfortunately, Hitler and Dr. Ziegler arrived on foot.

I stood guard together with my friend Hans Donndorf, who was then a clerk at the "Deutsche Bank". He too was enthusiastic about Hitler's speech. Twenty years later, in March 1945, we met again. It was during the final battles around the Austrian capital, in a *bunker* under the "Hofburg". Hans Donndorf was a lieutenant in a "Greater Germany" regiment and I was a Reich Commissar. And the man whom we had both seen twenty years earlier in Weimar as Germany's advocated saviour became the man we both knew.

was at that time in his

bunker under the
Chancellery

of the Reich, still waiting for a miracle...

Hitler's conversation with Dr. Ziegler lasted about an hour. Then he appeared at the door. He wore a grey coat and held a felt hat in his hand.

Dr. Ziegler introduced him to the two sentries who ensured the protection of the house. Hitler shook us at length

his hand as he stared at us. For the first time I was standing directly in front of him.

That provoked in me one of my frequent moments of lyrical-patriotic inspiration; I ran home and composed one of the innumerable bad verses I was accustomed to:

*You are
many
thousands
behind me
and you are
me and I
am you.*

*I have had no thoughts whatsoever
that I would not have encouraged in your heart.
And I form words,
for I know of no
one who is not
unanimous with
your will. For I am
you and you are
me.
And we all believe that Germany is in you.*

Unfortunately, I showed those verses to Dr. Ziegler and he published them in his small newspaper *The National Socialist*. At In addition to this one, several other publications of the same kind were printed in Germany, so that a few weeks later I received a letter from Munich. A certain Rudolf Hess wrote to me: "Mr. Hitler has read your poem in the "Gau" newspaper and sends you a personally dedicated photograph with his thanks.

The photograph was by the Munich photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, who later became my father-in-law. It showed Hitler as I knew him - in a blue suit - and the dedication: "Yours: Adolf Hitler".

I proudly placed the photo in a silver frame on my desk. From that moment on, my devotion to the man became enthusiastic, even if my parents did not stop joking about it when I turned the conversation to politics. Which was, by the way, very often.

You had to be eighteen years old to become a member of the NSDAP. I was so impatient that I could hardly wait for my birthday, 9 May 1925. In the morning I went to the Party headquarters, filled out my application, and four weeks later I had my membership card with its dark red covers in my hands.

He overwhelmed Dr. Ziegler with questions about Hitler. He wanted to know what he was like in conversation

He also knew what he read and what his favourite poets, composers and painters were.

With my curiosity I was to experience considerable disappointment. On the day of the speech, Dr. Ziegler had accompanied Hitler on a tour through Weimar. They went, of course, to Goethe's house. He was particularly impressed by the simple rooms, which did not seem to correspond to Goethe's image of a rich and pampered courtier. He also reproached Goethe for having defined himself as a cosmopolitan during the Napoleonic wars and said to the freedom fighters: "You can only shake off their chains, for the man is too big for you".

Dr. Ziegler could not believe his ears when Hitler told him in a confidential tone:

-Dietrich Eckart has written verses as beautiful as those of Goethe.

This confidence came as a shock to me. I knew that the Munich writer Dietrich Eckart, who was also editor of the anti-Semitic and anti-republican magazine *Auf gut deutsch* ⁷ had influenced Hitler's thinking in the early years of the movement and had also given him some financial support. It was understandable to me that Hitler had to a high degree the memory of the man who passed away shortly after the *putsch* of Munich. But to go so far as to compare Dietrich Eckart with Goethe seemed to me to be blasphemy.

In this way I soon became acquainted with one of Hitler's characteristic traits, which Bismarck had already described as the young Wilhelm II's worst trait: "Difficulty in making assessments". This lack of sense for words and dimensions became more and more pronounced as his triumphs increased.

As for me, I must confess that I was able to overcome that first disappointment. My enthusiasm for the political hero was too immense for me not to forgive him a small fault. I was therefore free from any critical attitude.

in the summer of 1925, when he began to read the first volume of Hitler's work.

He knew from Dr. Ziegler that Hitler had written a book while in prison. In the newspaper of the "Gau" one day an advertisement for *Mein Kampf* appeared and that same day, the

Tomorrow I ordered it directly from Enher Publishers in Munich. I remitted the price of twelve marks in advance in order to avoid any delays in shipment.

I read all three hundred and eighty pages of *Mein Kampf* in one sitting,

for a single night. The life trajectory of the son of the Austrian customs officer who wanted to become a painter, who was rejected by the Vienna Academy of Art, and then experienced as a seasonal worker the privations and misery of the proletariat, was the life trajectory of the man whose photograph appeared on my table framed in silver. The volunteer in the Flanders battles of 1914, decorated with the Iron Cross first class, the one wounded by gas and interned in Pasewalker Hospital, who, in the face of the revolution of November 1918, had decided to pursue a political career, was the man whose unmistakable voice still echoed in my ears.

Forty-two years later, I know that Hitler essentially retouched his biographical sketch. But even if I had known then that during his youth he never had to suffer great misery, even if I had known then that he had never been a manual labourer, but earned his living by painting cheap watercolours of cityscapes, my enthusiasm for Hitler would not have varied in the slightest. He was the unknown soldier decorated with the Iron Cross First Class. And that was what counted for me.

And the political content of the volume also counted. I devoured practically everything Hitler wrote about world politics and economics, about parliamentarism and revolution, about Aryans and Jews. Hitler's book thus became my gospel. Today I know what it really was: the programme of the German catastrophe.

Hitler's book, with its print run of two hundred and thirty thousand copies, turned out to be a real bestseller. But the truth is that I do not remember reading a single truly critical reference to it in the German press at the time. It is true that the *Wettbühne* and the *Tagebuch* attacked Hitler violently. But these publications were in turn rejected in advance by right-wing circles, which never read them. On the other hand, among all those personalities who would have had to watch over the formation of the large nuclei of young people on the right, not a single one of them expressed their disapproval of the book: not a general, not a single businessman, not a single magistrate, professor or priest, spoke out openly.

Very soon Adolf Hitler reappeared in Weimar. It was a completely different Hitler. In the autumn of 1925 he performed in the National Theatre Weimar Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungs*. As a former quartermaster general, my father was entitled to his seats. So I was once again taken aback by the fascination and violence of the Bayreuth magician, even though my heart was already closer to Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and Tchaikovsky.

It was during the prelude to *Las Vallarías*. In an earlier row of I discovered Dr. Ziegler and Hitler at his side. I pointed this out to my father.

-The man knows how to dress," he said.

I then noticed that Hitler was wearing a dinner jacket. This detail did not strike me as significant as it did my ^[7] father, for I had regarded it as normal for evening performances since I was sixteen years old. That a National Socialist and workers' leader should also submit to such an etiquette did not, therefore, come as a particular surprise to me.

During the break, Dr. Ziegler made the presentations:

-Herr Hitler; the Intendant General, Von Schirach.... You know the son...

Hitler did indeed remember me, or at least he pretended to.

My father asked Hitler if he liked the performance, because as a resident of Munich he must have been used to a different kind of acting.

For a few moments I feared that my idol would again make a comparison similar to the one between Goethe and Dietrich Eckart.

Fortunately, this was not the case, and his role was not ridiculous in front of my father, quite the contrary: Hitler's response seemed to please him. He said he found the performance quite good and made some reflections that gave the expert away. He compared *The Weimar Valkyries* with the performances he had attended as a young man in Vienna, and gave names of conductors and singers. All this contributed to the fact that my father, who until then had always been rather suspicious of Hitler, seemed to open up:

-Come to tea with us to-morrow," he said at the second ringing of the bell. Frau von Schirach will be pleased.

At this unexpected invitation, I was stunned by the surprise.

I was in the hall of our house when Hitler arrived the following afternoon. He was accompanied by a very tall young man, who introduced himself as his secretary: it was Rudolf Hess.

I saw Hitler offer flowers to my mother and kiss her hand.

He was wearing another blue suit with a black tie. After a brief glance around, he took an interest in the Empire furniture that came from the trousseau of my American mother's family. He looked at it and expressed his admiration in a discreet way, as if he did not dare to ask details about what was new to him. He seemed to have been won over by the atmosphere of the house and listened attentively, without interrupting his interlocutors once. All in all, it was a pleasant meeting.

As far as I remember, only artistic matters were discussed. The little operatic conversation of the previous evening expanded considerably, and when Hitler had left, my father exclaimed:

-In all my life I have never met a layman who understands as much about music, especially Richard Wagner, as your Hitler.

But much more important for me was my mother's judgement:

-How well he behaves. - And then

he added something that flattered me even more: "*At last a German patriot.*"

I know that these recollections will now arouse strangeness, and perhaps some considerations will be made about the relativity of such judgements. For the current portrait of Hitler is very different: a vulgar fellow, both in appearance and manner, with the affected, cheap fascination of a suburban café violinist; a bourgeois gone mad and a kind of raging monomaniac.

It is understandable that the image of this Hitler has spread. But the truth is that it is a false and sinister image. How was it possible for a people so possessed of its own culture to follow such a scarecrow? That is the question of today's youth and possibly of generations to come.

I too have seen the vociferous Hitler in situations that I cannot recall today without shuddering. But it was at a time when his fortunes had already changed. The fortunate Hitler, who seduced the masses as well as individuals, the primal as well as the educated, Germans as well as foreigners, was the other Hitler. He was a discreet, talkative, affable Hitler, and an eternal admirer of beautiful women.

He had great successes to thank for this facet of his character, and it is therefore all the more surprising that none of his biographers have so far stopped to analyse both the origins of this facet and its motivations.

In the early years of his political activity, when his name was hardly known in Munich, Hitler was already frequenting families who were important in society and cultural life. In 1920 he was admitted to the salons of the Berlin piano manufacturer Bechstein, and shortly afterwards the doors of the world-famous Munich publishers Bruckmann and Hanfstaengl were opened to him. With prior to *putsch* The 1923 Munich Conference of 1923 had brought the

friendship with Siegfried and Winifred Wagner in Bayreuth. During my stay in Spandau I often wondered why these exclusive patricians had opened their homes to the agitator of the Munich beer halls. In my opinion, there is only one answer: the people in those social strata had been deeply disturbed by war and defeat. The princes, the heads of that society, had abdicated without a single hand being raised in their defence. Communist subversions were taking place everywhere in Germany, giving rise to fears of a radical cataclysm like that which had just shaken old Russia. To the fear of Bolshevism was added the fear of a possible "twilight of the West". The bourgeoisie believed that the day was approaching when the churches of Germany would be turned into stables, when museums would be ransacked and the last Mozart sonatas thrown into the fire. In this state of crisis, it is not surprising that they looked for a saviour.

Suddenly there appeared in Munich a man whose speeches fascinated the masses, an orator such as there had never been in the whole of German history. This man, moreover, reconciled two concepts which had hitherto seemed as antagonistic as fire and water: nationalism and socialism. For many, this was something of a magic formula. The man had, moreover, been a corporal in the military ranks and was decorated with the Iron Cross first class. All around him, many nameless and familyless combatants had died. France had buried its Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe. In Germany he appeared alive and as a messenger of the national revolution. All this was so fascinating for the masses of the German people.

the beer halls as for the gentry of the salons. They were all agog about this Hitler. In the big families, it was the women in particular who were most curious about the new and unusual personage. They did not fail to be impressed by his spacious living quarters, his art treasures and his way of life. It was a new world for the son of the Austrian customs officer, who had lived in Vienna and Munich in bachelor flats and cheaply furnished rooms, and then for four years in barracks and trenches.

I myself, who later lived in the Bruckmann house in the Leopoldstrasse in Munich, was able to hear from the owner of that mansion many details about Hitler's first period of residence in the Bavarian capital. Frau Elsa Bruckmann, née Princess Cantacuzeno, was then almost seventy years old, but she was still a dark-haired beauty, possessed of great culture and an extraordinary temperament. She explained to me how she first invited Hitler to a dinner party in the family circle and how the upstart behaved in a world completely foreign to him.

Thus, when food he did not know appeared on the table - lobsters or artichokes - he would say with ease: "Dear lady, please teach me how to eat this dish. He also had her instruct him on how to kiss a lady's hand. Mrs. Bruckmann also instructed him on how to dress. After his licentiate, Hitler had only a drab uniform and a civilian suit dating from his Viennese days. It was Frau Bruckmann who advised him to have blue suits made and to wear them with a white shirt and black tie. It was this outfit that became his favourite.

But Mrs. Bruckmann was not the only maternal friend who gave him advice and influenced him. Another lady, Mrs. Elena Bechstein, persuaded him to order a dinner jacket and patent leather shoes. It was the same dinner jacket, no doubt, that so pleasantly surprised my father on his first meeting with Hitler.

On the afternoon when he had tea at our house, Hitler talked very little with me. He asked me what I wanted to be. At the time I was a year and a half short of a bachelor's degree, and I told him so. I added that I would certainly go on to study. He said:

-When you study, come and see me in Munich.

Those words decided my future life. For a long time, I had been encouraged by the idea of becoming a musician. I had been playing the piano since I was five years old, and at the age of fifteen, I had begun my studies at the Weimar University of Music and Dramatic Arts. But I was not what one might call a good pupil. I was a dreamer, and when I had time, I composed a few verses, such as these lines from my early youth:

*Some are thick
from devouring
and cultivate
foreign states,
They have house, home
and bed, The others are
soldiers.
Some have become powerful,
The
 other
s rest in
Flanders.
Are they the
same for the
 sun of
God One
and the
other?*

He versified with great pleasure. But it was not for nothing that I was the son of an intendant and opera director, who had learned to demand the highest quality of artistic expression, first and foremost his own. So I understood that there was nothing exceptional about me. I belonged to the middle ground and I had to be satisfied with that.

Suddenly, Hitler's visit to my father's house showed me the way: politics. This did not mean that I aspired to become a simple civil servant. It was made prohibitive by the fact that the organisation of the

The National Socialist Party was not exactly distinguished by its large means, as the provincial headquarters in Weimar itself showed. It was limited to a ground floor in one of the districts where the premises were cheapest. In the shop windows, a couple of books and pamphlets, and inside a counter, a bookshelf, and a couple of tables for the *gauleiter* Dr Arthur Dinter, who He only appeared from time to time, and the office manager, Fritz Sauckel, with whom I would sit twenty years later in the dock at Nuremberg.

That was where the monthly party dues were paid: 0.80 marks. It was there that I went to collect the leaflets which we comrades distributed in the streets, or which we would tirelessly carry up and down the stairs through all the letterboxes in Weimar. The party then numbered barely forty thousand members in the whole of Germany. Had the five per cent formula existed, as it does today in the Federal Republic, it would have had no representation in the Reichstag or in the parliaments of the "Laender", with the exception of Bavaria.

Nevertheless, I was absolutely convinced that Hitler would eventually come to power. He would then need collaborators who shared his views, his world view. Given my parents' extensive relations and the close ties of kinship that bound us to several Anglo-American families, I thought from time to time that my path would then lie in diplomacy. But then, on further consideration, I thought that my duty was to become an editor and thus contribute to the dissemination of National Socialist doctrine.

But none of these projects had taken concrete form by the time I graduated at Easter 1927. I decided to study German studies, English language and art history, as these were my favourite subjects. My further destiny was left to the

time and I was only determined on one thing: to move to Munich because that's where Hitler was.

Earlier I had set out to make a decision, which was by the way the first that National Socialism had forced me to make. It was to break away from my former youth league. In those leagues, which at that time numbered in the hundreds, the predominant attitude was to distance oneself from everything that was party and party politics. The aims of these associations were almost unanimous in almost all of them: to fight for Germany to regain its conscience and regain a decisive role in the world. None of them knew exactly how this could be achieved, but there was only one general conviction: that it would never be achieved through a party.

For this reason, when I identified myself as a member of Hitler, my comrades considered this to be a kind of betrayal. And I was faced with the choice: them or the Hitler party.

For me there was only one answer: Hitler. So I joined the S.A., taking two friends with me.

III

In July 1926, long columns formed behind swastika flags marched through Weimar from the railway station. The streets echoed with music and marches hitherto unheard in Goethe's city. A single cry could be heard: "Germany, wake up!" New special trains and columns of lorries were constantly arriving: Bavarians in white shirts and lederhosen and also quite a few groups wearing the new National Socialist uniform: the brown shirt. They were all coming to Weimar for the second national congress of the NSDAP, which was the first since its new founding in 1925.

At headquarters, unease was rife. Hitler was receiving, together with the *gauleiter*, the reports that came to him about the rally. He feared that the "Markplatz" would not be filled the next day as planned. The aim was to fill the entire city with the swastika sign. In this way, both those attending the rally and the other inhabitants would be aware that the era of the Third Reich had begun.

But where were the necessary masses to be found? From the immediate "Gau" in central and northern Germany, as many people as could carry a swastika and pay their own travel expenses were called upon to attend. However, the troops thus assembled were not enough. Reserves were only available in the traditional citadels of the Hitler movement, Bavaria and Franconia. They were mobilised by telephone at nightfall, and special trains from Munich and Nuremberg brought reinforcements.

Filled with passion, I carried out my missions as a member of the S.A. by riding my motorbike between the station and the city, from one concentration camp to another, organising an overnight shelter with a couple of bales of straw or arranging an audience with a few female admirers of Adolf Hitler. In my ear they sounded

The experience of the diversity of my homeland made me feel happy and joyful. It was a feeling identical to that experienced by the young gymnasts at their rallies, by the "Wandervogel" or scouts, the socialist youth or the youth groups that militated under the various nationalist obediences. Many parties, leagues and associations which organised congresses and marches at the time, easily managed to mobilise a similar or greater number of people than the National Socialists. But we were convinced of one thing: that no other organisation had as its leader such a brilliant orator and propagandist as Adolf Hitler.

The main event of the party congress was held in the National Theatre. There I experienced for the first time the National Socialist ritual of the pledge of allegiance. About five hundred flag bearers formed a semicircle on the stage. In front of the platoon standard-bearers were four square banners with the swastika and crowned with silver eagles. Hitler had personally chosen these insignia, which were modelled on Catholic parish flags, the eagles of the Roman legions and, above all, the Fascist banners. "Banner" was also the name given to the S.A. unit whose strength and organisation was similar to that of a regiment.

The solemn opening of the ceremony was marked by the entrance of the "blood flag". That flag led the nine of November 1923 the column which, after the failed *putsch*, had been He headed for the "Feldherrnhalle" in Munich to meet a bloody end there. It came to represent something like the sacralised element of the movement. Hitler entrusted its custody to the newly created S.S. (Defence Sections). The ceremony of swearing in the flags and banners of the S.A. units had a high point, which consisted in Hitler's brushing the new insignia with the "blood flag". For the young men that we were at the time, that act had a sacred character and

At such times, Adolf Hitler seemed to us to be much more than a mere politician.

He was not yet in uniform, but in a kind of militarised attire: grey coat, leather belt, breeches, knee-length grey socks and hunter's shoes. To this was added a grey felt hat. The other ranks appeared in civilian clothes, mostly in dark suits and many in shirts with old-fashioned bow-tie collars. In this bourgeois attire they also took part in the parades at the head of the uniformed columns.

On that Sunday, Hitler presented eight new banners at the National Theatre. This brought the total to twelve, seven of them for Bavaria and one each for Wurtemberg, Baden, Thuringia, Saxony and Berlin. This demonstrated the strength of the Bavarian and South German element in National Socialism.

A somewhat distressing incident for us Weimar National Socialists occurred during the evening mass rally on the "Marktplatz". Julius Streicher, the Nuremberg *gauleiter*, spoke, and his speech was a torrent of anti-Semitic threats and insults. Some of Weimar's citizens did not fail to express their disapproval of his words. And so, in the windows of the town hall, from where the burgomaster and his councillors watched the unusual spectacle, there was a movement of recoil. Streicher noticed this and, turning there, shouted:

-Don't close the window, gentlemen! You too need to know these truths. As the British Prime Minister Disraeli said: "The race problem is the key to history". Julius Streicher says it to you.

Our Thuringian *gauleiter*, Dr. Dinter, expressed himself in the same vein. In 1918 Dinter had already provoked some scandal with his

novel entitled *The sin against blood*. It was the story of a
marriage mixed German- Jewish, tragically
aborted because of the incompatibility of the
two races and the two bloods.

In 1926, the book reached an edition of almost 250,000 copies and was read by millions of people.

Dinter was a giant with a powerful, square skull. Outwardly, he reminded one a little of Martin Luther, and the truth was that he regarded himself as a kind of twentieth-century Luther. In one hundred and ninety-seven theses he had summarised a new gospel called "spiritual Christianity". He used to attend, together with his supporters, spiritualistic séances, in which he taught them the art of communicating with the spirits of the dead by means of movements of a table and blows which were the transmission of signals.

This was the *gauleiter* Hitler in Thuringia. Both he and Streicher aspired to make "spiritual Christianity" a new religion. Hitler seemed to agree: "I attach the greatest value to the fact that our party closes the rift that tears our people apart," he had said. Protestants and Catholics can feel united in this doctrine".

But his enthusiasm soon wore off and, a year later, he removed Dinter from office. His successor was the former sailor and worker Fritz Sauckel. Like Streicher, he was sentenced to death in 1946 in Nuremberg and later executed.

My youthful faith could not then be affected by such delusions, which in my eyes turned out to be nothing more than external aesthetic defects. In short, National Socialism was, for me, Hitler, the comradeship of those who thought like me, and also the union of high and low, of rich and poor.

Much has been said and written about the former Nazis. True and false things have been said and written. It is now generally believed that they were a kind of negative selection of petty bourgeois who tried to compensate for their inferiority complex with a presumed nationalist and racial superiority. Even if there was some of this, it is not the whole truth. This is thus another of those half-truths which make it impossible to make a genuine analysis of Hitler and National Socialism.

IV

In 1927 I enrolled as a student of Germanic language and literature at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. I rented a student room in Franz-Josef-Strasse, in the Schwabing district, and for eight years I studied with varying degrees of zeal, for party activity was very time-consuming and demanding. Among the most interesting classes I attended were Forster's English literature classes, Borchardt's "Goethe College" classes, and Pinder's art history classes. As a member of the "Shakespeare Society" I knew almost all the renowned specialists in English language and literature in Germany. Before I began my studies, I was already quite familiar with English and French literature. However, I increased my knowledge considerably, and through the family of the Schick counsellor and, above all, the Bruckmann family, I got to know such interesting personalities as the Romanist Wossler, the historian Karl Alexander von Müller, his colleague Oncken or the Egyptologist Spiegelber.

At first I wanted to become a psychiatrist, and this vocation had a great influence on my life. Perhaps for this reason I was the only one who was later able to understand Rudolf Hess in Spandau and maintain excellent relations with him.

One of my first visits to Munich was to the headquarters of the N.S.D.A.P. I imagined something gigantic and solemn, a real cathedral of the revolution. But the reality was quite different.

The headquarters were located on Schellingstrasse 50, on the first floor. The white-painted foyer was crossed by a counter with windows. I later found out that these windows had been used to decorate a film about a bank robbery that my future father-in-law, Heinrich Hoffmann, had made together with Stewart Webbs. As the headquarters of the N.S.D.A.P. had moved into Hoffmann's former film studio, the counter had been taken over.

A young man appeared at the window and took my party card.
I said:

-I would like to pay my dues for the remaining seven months of the year.

The young man adopted an incredulous expression, disappeared and returned with an honourable-looking gentleman with golden spectacles, who immediately made his introduction:

-Schwarz, Treasurer.

He certainly wanted to see for himself the rare character who paid his dues seven months in advance.

My general impression was that there was cleanliness, order, but not a shred of revolutionary impulse. It could just as well have been the office of a mutual insurance company. Moreover, Hitler remained invisible. For the party, I was only a number: member number 17,251.

At the university, things were different.

In the glassed-in courtyard, around the statue of the "Speerträgers" [8], the student leagues gathered at eleven o'clock in the morning. The so-called "battle leagues" were predominant in terms of their numbers and the noise they made. They wore round, coloured caps pulled back, crossed bands on jackets and shirts, and the scars of the "mensur" [9] crossed their young faces. In contrast, the National Socialist student troops were rather humble. Some wore jodhpurs and breeches; the rest wore a small swastika in their buttonholes. I was among the latter.

The students were quite agitated.

In Prussia, where most of the universities and technical colleges were located, an open conflict had broken out between the student body and the government. Its origin lay in the problem that the large organisation of all students, called the "German Students' Union", should continue to form a unity with their Austrian colleagues. The Austrian student organisations were strongly anti-Semitic. They did not admit a single Jew and demanded

drastic limitations on the number of Hebrew students at the university. Prussia's Minister of Culture, Becker, had therefore issued an ultimatum to the "German Studentate" organisation: either they would sever their ties with the Austrians or they would lose the state recognition and the right to collect sixty *pfenning* per student when the semester fees became effective. The student organisation saw the demand as an attack on pan-Germanic ideals and the right to student self-administration.

In reality, the Prussian Minister of Culture was neither against pan-Germanic ideals nor against the students' own administration. What he could not accept was that anti-Semitism should spread from Austria to Prussian cultural institutions.

A test of strength was coming. At the end of 1927, Prussia's students had to vote on Becker's new student regulation. The majority of the students did not recognise the real problem and were determined to fight the minister, both inside and outside Prussia. And among the emboldened students were also most of the conservative-leaning professors.

Naturally, I was against Becker. The demands of the Austrian students that a *numerus clausus* should be established for the Jews seemed fair to me. Twenty-five per cent of the students at the University of Vienna were Jews, and their numbers were increasing day by day. The reason for this growth was quite simple: Poland, Hungary and Rumania had established, in the name of their reinvigorated national consciousness, the *numerus clausus* in their

Universities for religious and national minorities. The measure had particularly affected Germans and Jews in those countries, who were forced to limit the number of students they sent to higher education. Thousands of German students, but also German-speaking Jews, were forced to leave the universities of Warsaw, Krakow, Lemberg, Budapest and Bucharest. Most of them left

They went to Vienna and Berlin. The colleges in those cities were packed.

-And what does Hitler say to that? - I asked my National Socialist co-religionists.

There was a succession of puzzled faces. None of them, not even the head of the Munich University group, Alfons Weber, had ever spoken to Hitler. They knew him only from having seen him at meetings.

In the autumn of 1927, I was preparing for my second year of study in Munich and had not yet met Hitler. In November, the general student committees (A.S.T.A., Allgemeine Studenten Ausschüsse) were to be elected. Until then, the National Socialist Student League had played a very minor role. The Waffening, the organisation of the so-called "battle leagues", had the greatest influence on university circles. In southern Germany it shared power with the Catholic student associations.

I thought that had to change. But it could only change if Hitler took a personal interest in the students' election campaign. Chance came to my aid.

In mid-November I saw Hitler strolling along Maximilianstrasse with his huge sheepdog. He stopped in front of shop windows and seemed to have plenty of time. I crossed the street and approached him. He recognised me, greeted me warmly, asked me how long I had been in Munich and reproached me for not coming to see him. I told him what I thought.

-We'll talk better at my place," he said.

He lived in Thiersstrasse, number 41. It was a rented flat, with a rather steep staircase. On the first floor, Hitler opened a door. I saw a white plaque with the name "Reichard".

The hall was dark. A thin, protruding-eyed man stood up from a sofa. He looked down at the telephone, which was

on the small table, and
said:

-Nobody called. It was *factotum* Hitler. Later, as
Julius Schaub, the
assistant *obergruppenführer* of the S.S., often obliged the
and
that generals and heads of state will keep their turn to see their
master.

Hitler's working cabinet was long and ventilated only by a window
overlooking an inner courtyard. One wall was almost entirely covered
by a bookcase with volumes from the Soennecken collection, and
opposite it was a cast-iron cooker. Hitler said to me:

-Don't take off your coat, for the cooker has not yet been lit. While
I was having her mistress serve us tea, I amused myself with a
glance at the spines of the books. They were nearly all historical
works: Treitschke's history of the nineteenth century; Ranke's
complete works; works on military science; nautical science; and
some

volumes of teachings and architecture.

I begged Hitler to speak at a large gathering of students.
He seemed to hesitate:

-I don't know...

It was clear that he was not enthusiastic about the idea.

I then informed him about the situation of the National Socialist
Student League. And I told him that we would always be doomed to
be a small group if he allowed the leaders of the student movement
to remain on the left.

-You know," Hitler said to me in his characteristic accent. - I don't
think it will be possible for us to win for our cause more than ten
percent of the university youth; only ten percent of the
'intelligence'....

-I am of a different opinion," I objected. We can win the majority
of university youth in a couple of years if you speak to them yourself.

In view of my decision, he rectified it:

-Good; make a practical proposal.

I suggested the party room of the "Hofbrauhaus" as a meeting place.

-I guarantee that every last hole will be filled.

-But not students," said Hitler. There go droves of tourists, but not your university students.

Le I promised that only deliver
invitations against presentation of the student card.

He looked at me with

He was quite sceptical and then nodded:

-Well: give it a try. I can't promise I'll come. You understand that in Munich I can't risk speaking in front of a half-empty room. But I will be here, at home. If you call me to tell me that the hall is full, I will come. Otherwise you will have to find an excuse and get yourself out of a jam as best you can.

On 21 November 1927, at eight o'clock, the event was due to begin. Two hours earlier, the hall was completely full. And by half past seven, the attendance was so large that the students had even climbed over the masonry cookers. I called Hitler. He had no choice but to come, but he didn't seem too enthusiastic about it.

The student assembly differed essentially in its outward appearance from the other party meetings held in the "Bürgerbraukellen" or the "Loewenbrau". At these, half an hour before the beginning of the meeting, the "Krug" band played military marches. When Hitler made his entrance, the "Badenweiller Marsch" was played, and then the flags made their solemn entrance. We dispensed with this ceremonial, so that when Hitler arrived there was only an expectant silence. He had given me very precise technical details: there was to be no speaker's desk on the stage, but a low podium, so that he had the assembly before him. A low table would also be used to place his notes. He prepared all his speeches by means of very brief notes on eight or ten sheets of paper, over which he glanced from time to time. A bottle of mineral water and a glass were prepared on the table. Hitler's greatest concern was not to appear as a lecturing professor.

or as an ordinary speaker. People had to be able to see that he spoke with ease, with his own train of thought. For Hitler wanted not only to be heard, but also to be seen. For him, gestures were as important as his voice.

Hitler was also concerned with the manner in which the events in which he took part were opened. A few words from the person presiding served to focus attention on him. So I proceeded to quote a line from Goethe: "Every great idea, which penetrates the world like a gospel, is a scandal to the pedantic and stultified people and foolishness to the superficially educated". And I added:

-Adolf Hitler has the floor.

He began to speak in a low, hesitant voice. This helped him to achieve an initial success among those who were hearing him for the first time and had expected a revolutionary uproar. His tone brought silence and forced the crowd to listen.

Young people now often ask: Why did Hitler shout so much?

They have heard excerpts of his speeches at party congresses or those delivered in the Reichstag or the Sportpalast on radio or television, and it is inconceivable to them that their parents could have been won over by such shouting. There is no doubt that every speaker has his or her moments of tension and that listening to them, when they are taken out of context, is sickening. It would only be possible to understand the effect Hitler's speeches had on his audiences if they were followed in their full rhetorical and ideological vein.

Was Hitler a brilliant orator?

Many scientists and critics, experts in rhetoric, reply in the negative. But they measure Hitler by the same yardstick as the classical orators and compare epochs that are in no way comparable. The great men who have made history through their oratorical art were not, in any of the great periods of their lives, the great men who have made history through their oratorical art.

cases, orators of the masses. Neither Martin Luther, nor Caesar, Napoleon, Fichte or Bismarck.

Hitler discovered his oratorical qualities in the cantonments and barracks on the Western Front during the 1914-18 war. After the defeat, Corporal Hitler was attached in 1919 to propaganda groups aimed at influencing the disbanding army in an anti-Bolshevik direction.

In the same year, 1919, an agent of the Munich political police wrote the following report on a meeting of the "Deutschen Arbeitspartei" ^[10] held in the "Eberlbraukeller" beer hall: "The first speaker, Herr Hitler, was masterly in his "Brest-Litowsk" theme. He can be regarded as a speaker of shock and great effect on the masses".

In the "Eberlbraukeller" Hitler spoke to three hundred people. But as the number of listeners grew, it became necessary to rent larger and larger halls: the Loewenbraukeller, the Hofbrauhaus, the Festsaal, the Buergerbraukeller and finally the largest venue in Munich, the Circus Krone, with its 4,000 seats. As early as 1922, Hitler spoke on the Koeningsplatz to 20,000 people without a loudspeaker system.

In 1922, the U.S. embassy in Berlin sent its attaché military *captain* Smith, to Munich, to see Hitler. He reported

y,
Hitler's ability to influence an assembly is sinister. In personal speeches he metamorphoses into a forceful orator, driven by a fanatical vigour which has the maximum effect on neutral auditors.

And the Viennese journalist Karl Tschuppik wrote in 1927, after a speech by Hitler in the Krone Circus: "Among so many stammerers today, Hitler is an orator."

Of all the mass orators who came to prominence between 1919 and 1933 - from those of the German National Party to the Communists - there was not one who could dominate the masses with his words, as Adolf Hitler did.

How did he do it? I will explain it in very simple terms: his calm principle gave the audience the impression that the man had thought about what he was saying. The first half hour, almost always devoted to historical background, served to convince people that the man knew history and that his concepts were not the product of a day. Hitler had a taste for complicated words and this served to make his audience conclude that he was a man of great learning. Gradually, as he dealt with current problems, his tone of voice increased. He had a great ability to modulate it, depending on whether he was accusing enemies and statesmen, insulting them or ridiculing them. And his auditors said to themselves that the man was right.

After this first third of the speech, which lasted about half an hour, there was the first burst of applause. This served to increase Hitler's inspiration. His temperament then apparently overflowed, and his speech was transformed into cascades of eloquent phrases. But it was only in appearance, for he maintained an iron grip on himself. And so, suddenly, he would cut off the applause with a wave of his hand and resume, again in a calm and quiet tone, the speech where it had been interrupted. These ascents from the *pianissimo* al *fortissimo* and *furios* were repeated many times in the

course of the speech. On each occasion he progressed, faster and faster, towards the immediate summit, and so, from one to another, he completed the hour and a half, which was the time his speeches lasted.

At my first student meeting he addressed the topic "The road to bread and freedom". The fundamental concepts were identical to those contained in all his speeches. Namely:

1. The world war of 1914-1918 was the result of a worldwide conspiracy to annihilate the Reich.
2. ° The war was not lost militarily, but because of a treacherous backstabbing^[11] encouraged by criminal elements.

3. The Versailles dictate was the instrument of the victorious powers to perpetuate the domination of the German Reich and to enslave the German people.

4. ° The Weimar Republic was ruled by the same Jewish and Marxist criminal elements who had stabbed it in the back. They did not see themselves as responsible instruments of the German people, but as bought factors in Jewish big finance.

5. ° The devaluation of money and the consequent impoverishment of the middle class was not a natural consequence of the war, but of the treachery and incapacity of the "November traitors".

6. ° If the German people regained the consciousness of their duties and aims, if the workers shook off the domination of their Marxist and Jewish exploiters, if they counteracted the poison of the class struggle and renounced the slogan: "Never again war", being ready in all its strata for the liberating struggle..., then there would be bread and freedom for all Germans.



Illustration 1. Hitler surrounded by his 1932 election campaign comrades.



Illustration 2. The famous "Brown House" in Munich, the headquarters of the National Socialist Party.

During twenty-one years of seclusion I pondered how it was possible to drag a cultured people down with such elementary concepts. And so I came to the conclusion that Hitler was merely expressing what a large section of the German bourgeoisie was thinking. When I think back to my own youth in tranquil Weimar, when I recall the men who were my role models and my teachers, I am absolutely convinced that not a single one of them doubted the war guilt of the victorious powers and the "stab in the back". They thought, therefore, exactly as Hitler did.

He did not need to awaken, therefore, the awareness of the inability to liquidate the defeat of 1918 and the inclination to look for scapegoats. This was latent in almost all Germans. But Hitler pointed to the culprits: the Jews, the republic of Jews.

Of course, he found anti-Semitism more difficult to spread among the German people than nationalist slogans. It is evident that anti-Semitic sentiments were rather diffuse. Long before Hitler they had been exalted by the Christian Social movement of the court preacher Stoecker in Berlin, and the burgomaster

Karl Lueger. But anti-Semitic excesses in word and deed, such as those provoked in France by the Dreyfus trial, had not occurred in Imperial Germany. Bismarck himself was on very good terms with his banker and personal friend Bleichroeder, and Wilhelm II distinguished men like Albert Ballin, creator of the H.A.P.A.G.; Albert Einstein, Paul Ehrlich, Bruno Walter and Max Reinhardt - to name but a few - who might have been silenced for being Jewish.

To the enlightened bourgeoisie, however anti-Semitic in their thinking, Hitler's hatred of the Jews seemed excessive. As for the proletariat, the fact was that in their struggles for a shorter working day, better working rates and essential insurance, they did not have to deal with Jewish capitalists of an international character, but more often than not with Aryan entrepreneurs.

It was much easier to turn the middle class - the artisans, small rentiers and small industrialists - against the Jews. Economically, they were the victims of inflation and the second technical revolution that had begun after the war. The large industrial concentrations were increasingly affecting small family businesses. It was only logical, therefore, that these people understood less and less what was happening and looked on in confusion at those who were competing with them with the greatest success. And if these were Jews, the fear of being economically wiped out easily turned into racial hatred.

The majority of students were in the same situation. The colleges of higher education were overcrowded, and the competitive examinations for posts and positions in university careers were much more rigorous than before. When the students calculated that Jews, who constituted only 0.9 percent of the German population, occupied 10 percent of the positions in medicine and law, the exasperation grew considerably. And so we, the National Socialist students, demanded, like our fellow students

Austrians, a *numerus clausus* for the Jews at the Universities. This meant that their proportion had to be no higher than 0.9 per cent.

At the same time, we were protesting against the *numerus clausus* in Polish, Hungarian and Romanian universities, because it was clearly directed against the German minorities.

Adolf Hitler had clearly underestimated his ability to influence academics. The meeting at the "Hofbrauhaus", which he had attended so reluctantly, turned out to be a success. The speaker was aware of this before he had finished his speech and acted accordingly.

So he ended with an allusion to his *putsch* of 9 September. November, and raising his voice, he concluded:

-If the student body had joined the ranks of the National Socialist movement with thirty thousand of its members instead of continuing to live closed in its old traditions, it would not be obliged to defend its own positions today. Under the passage of the German liberation army consisting of the university legions and the workers' battalions, united in one action, a new Reich would have arisen, embracing all Germans and saving the sacred blood of the people.

With these words Hitler left the platform. After shaking my right hand with both hands, he put on the *trenchcoat* held out by his *factotum* Schaub and left the hall.

Hitler's speech did not, however, have the slightest effect on the student elections. The National Socialist students got a total of 400 votes, against 2,500 for the "Studentische Waffening" and 2,300 for the "Katholische Stentenschaft".

For several weeks I heard no more about Hitler. But I still needed him, for it was my wish to exploit as much as possible the success of his first speech to the students. Nevertheless, it was not possible for me to find out where he was. I went to the party offices in Schellingstrasse. -I can consider myself

I will be satisfied if I manage to send him the incoming correspondence every fortnight," his private secretary, Rudolf Hess, told me as he led me to Hitler's office.

It was a spacious room, with a diagonally placed writing table, a carpet and two armchairs. Behind the desk hung a portrait of Bismarck painted by Lenbach. The seat underneath was empty and, in general, the impression of the office was that it was rarely used. It is curious that this same impression was later given to me by all Hitler's offices, both in his own home, in the "Brown House" and in the Reich Chancellery. I never saw him work sitting behind a desk, which for him were mere decorations. Nor did he ever have a working schedule.

-If you want to meet Hitler, go to Café Heck after three o'clock," Hess advised me.

This was the daily hub of a social gathering of former party colleagues, artists, journalists and the occasional eccentric Munich man. The most burning issues were discussed at that table. I found it unbearable and never went to that café again.

At the beginning of February 1928, Mrs. Elsa Bruckmann, wife of the well-known Munich publisher, called me.

-We have a few guests this evening. You may come too, if you wish.

The Bruckmanns' salons were frequented by the cream of the city. I was invited as Friedrich von Schirach's nephew, since my uncle, a colonel and master composer, maintained an excellent friendship with the Bruckmann family until his death.

"A few guests" could mean, in the Bruckmanns' house, ten or fifteen people, as well as eighty or one hundred and twenty. The drawing room of one of the most beautiful mansions in Munich - Karolinenplatz, number 5, at the Obelisk - could accommodate the whole gathering without having to move a chair or an armchair. With its splendid furniture, its

The pictures and gobelins, the antique statues and valuable vases, provided a unique and singular setting for social intercourse. Nothing was served except a cup of tea and a snack, for it was rightly considered that conversation was of the utmost importance there.

Elsa Bruckmann was as interested in human beings as she was in art, philosophy, history and politics. Her passion was to bring people into her salon whom she believed had something to say to each other.

And that is where I met Adolf Hitler again. I knew that he had been going in and out of that house for years. Next to him I recognised Karl Alexander von Müller, professor of history at the University of Munich, with whom he was having a lively conversation.

In a way, Professor Karl Alexander von Müller must be regarded as the discoverer of the political Adolf Hitler. In 1919, the professor had given lectures to soldiers assigned to carry out anti-communist propaganda in the barracks. Among those in attendance was Corporal Hitler, who shocked the professor with his zeal and aptitude. It was the professor who brought this to the attention of Hitler's superior, Captain Mayr.

I knew nothing about it when I saw the two men in the living room of the Bruckmann house. I approached them and learned that they were talking about the policy of the then foreign minister, Gustav Stresseman.

Stresseman, who had advocated a policy of conquest during the war, then went on his way to Damascus, and set himself the main task of reaching an understanding with the victorious powers. In the Treaty of Locarno, it recognised the western borders set by the Treaty of Versailles, and the violent alterations to the eastern borders were accepted. In 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. Stresseman believed that he had thus achieved the prerequisites for the gradual easing of the most drastic obligations of the Versailles Treaty.

The right-wing parties, and above all Hitler, violently attacked Stressemann for his policies. Instead of an understanding with France, Hitler advocated an alliance with Italy, which historically must have considered France its hereditary enemy, as Germany did. And to win Italian friendship, Hitler demanded that Germany secure the Brenner frontier. Austrians and Germans, including Stressemann's "Deutsche Volkspartei" or populist party, accused him of treason against South Tyrol and even claimed that he had been bribed by Mussolini. In numerous libel trials, Hitler rejected this accusation.

Nevertheless, there, in the salon - and later in restricted circles as well - Hitler spoke with great respect of Stressemann. Even in 1935 and 1936, around the Reich Chancellery table, I heard him say that Stressemann had been the greatest foreign policy expert Germany had had since Bismarck.

Such contradictions between what Hitler expressed privately and the policies he practised were not uncommon. They contributed in large part to sowing confusion among his collaborators and interlocutors, and even among foreign statesmen, diplomats and journalists. I, too, was often confused, since he never admitted that his harshest words were merely propaganda and tactics.

Professor von Müller had a wonderful rapport with Hitler. And it made a great impression on me to see my political boss recognised by the university professor.

I took advantage of that private meeting with Hitler to try to interest him again in the student problem. He was convinced that the Hitler movement could win over the majority of students throughout Germany. At the beginning of December 1927, in fact, an event had occurred which I considered to be of paramount importance in this respect. In the dispute between the Prussian universities and the Minister of Culture, Becker, the students had

overwhelmingly proclaimed their anti-Semitism. In no other stratum of the people, therefore, could a clearer tendency towards National Socialism be found.

Hitler remained sceptical.

-Don't kid yourself, Schirach. The student corporations will never give up their feasts, their duels and their caps to put on their brown shirts.

-There is no need for them to renounce," I objected for my part. They can keep their customs. The essential thing is that their votes should be National Socialist.

This thesis set me against my comrades in the "National Socialist Student League". They were convinced, like Hitler, that the universities could only be won by fighting against the other student associations. A pact with some of them appeared in their eyes as a betrayal. In their opinion, all the student bodies, with their usages, traditions and customs, were nothing but the embodiment of the most despicable class obscurantism.

Deep down, my opinion was the same as theirs. But I considered it practically unfeasible to get the students to renounce their old traditions. My intention was to go the other way: to penetrate the corporations and win them over from within.

I tried to explain this to Hitler as I escorted him through snowy Munich on my way back from the Bruckmann salon. When we said goodbye, in the doorway of his house in the "Thiersstrasse", he promised to speak to me at the command congress of the "National Socialist Students' League" which was to be held in Leipzig.

-Until then, I'll think about it again, Schirach," he said.

Arrived 19 February 1928.

For the past four days, the general staff of the "National Socialist Students' League" had been discussing at the Hotel Sachsenhof in

Leipzig, on the tactics and strategy of the struggle in the universities. My ideas on the subject had not been well received. Wilhelm Tempel, founder and leader of the "League", made this poor reception clear in a first proposal: no double membership of students in other associations and a fight against the practices of dueling and other barbaric traditions of the student body.

The next evening Hitler appeared at the "Sachsenhof" and spoke on the subject of "Students and Politics". And no sooner had he spoken for a quarter of an hour than we knew that everything proposed the day before had to be abandoned. The "quaint traditional associations" were not to be fought against, for they were "our natural allies".

There were the natural irritations and hushed discussions. But Hitler managed to convince.

On the return journey on the Leipzig-Munich night train, my colleagues in Munich offered me the leadership of the National Socialist university group in Munich. I accepted on condition that they would work with me for the new line.

Half a year later, I met Wilhem Tempel again, who was preparing for his final exam. Who was to be the national leader of the National Socialist students?

Hitler said:

-The easiest way is for Schirach to be.

Rudolf Hess had scruples. He considered my twenty years of age too young for the job. In a circular letter he ordered the National Socialist university groups to nominate a new national leader. The majority voted for me again, and Hitler confirmed the choice. That was the first and only time that a National Socialist was elected to a party leadership.

It took place on 20 July 1928.

I thus found myself, at the age of twenty-one, the national leader of the "National Socialist Students' League", the first of the great university movements. I was in the third

He had happily alternated between studying and politics until then. But soon the difficulties began. The national leadership of the "League" was transferred from Leipzig to Munich. I rented a spacious flat in the Schillingstrasse, not far from the NSDAP headquarters. One of the rooms was assigned to the national headquarters of the Students' League. The most valuable items in our inventory were two old typewriters, and the dues flowed in very sparingly. The NSDAP treasurer did not give us anything and there was never any money in the till. When we had to send out circulars, I was forced to buy paper, copy paper and even pay for the postage out of my own pocket.

Nevertheless, politics went to my head. So much so that I became afraid for my studies and told Hitler about it one day.

He put his hand on my shoulder and said:

-Schirach; you will study in my house.

And so the man whom I considered the greatest politician since Bismarck and the only revolutionary Germany had ever had, made me his disciple. From then on it was not as easy as before to meet me in university lectures.

Sometimes human destiny takes a sharp turn and demands a choice between two paths. Seen from the present, it seems to me that such a twist of fate was for me the great journey I undertook in the autumn of 1928. During the holidays I made a two-month journey to the United States. In Philadelphia and New York we visited our relatives. I learned about the power of money and the ancient culture of the great families, but also about the fabulous kitsch in the palaces of some of the nouveau riche. I also marvelled at the technical perfections with which the Americans were already making life easier for themselves: rubbish disposal, remote-controlled heating, Pullman cars and perfect service in the hotels. On the 24th floor of a skyscraper towering over Manhattan, I had a decisive conversation with my uncle, the Wall Street banker Alfred Norris.

My uncle was 66 years old at the time and his optimism about America's limitless economic possibilities was imposing. He never tired of answering all the questions I asked him, and finally he said to me:

-Why don't you stay here, Baldur? You could join my company immediately.

It was a flattering proposition for a young man of twenty-two. I was also sure that if I told my mother, she would have been heartbroken, as she had long wanted one of us to settle in the United States.

I did not answer my uncle's question and instead informed him of my work with Hitler. He did not give up:

-The political career is also open to you here. In fifteen years you can become a senator or a minister. I doubt that your Hitler can offer you so much.

Nevertheless, I refused the offers. Although I felt attached to the American tradition of my family, I could not decide to stay in America forever. And just two weeks after that conversation I returned to Germany. I was returning to Hitler's side.

Until then I had only known him in salons and assemblies. From November 1928 onwards I learned to know him also within a rather more restricted circle.

The university elections were once again on the horizon. I persuaded Hitler to address the students in Erlangen and he drove me in his own car.

On time, his "Mercedes Compressor" pulled up in front of my house in the Schwabing district. Hitler was sitting next to the chauffeur. He was wearing his usual trenchcoat and a leather motorist's cap.

He seemed to like high speeds. He did not know how to drive, but it was immediately obvious that he was familiar with automobiles. He was familiar with the different models and knew everything about

There was a need to know about valves, transmission, suspension and steering, as well as engine timing and driving characteristics.

V

Among Hitler's companions, I was most impressed by the chauffeur Julius Schreck. He was a sturdy man with keen eyes and a cordial character, whose face bore a certain resemblance to Hitler's. True, he was somewhat quarrelsome and would have disembowelled anyone who dared to threaten his owner. True, he was somewhat quarrelsome and would have disembowelled anyone who dared to threaten his master, but he was not of a servile nature, and for his part Hitler reciprocated with sincere affection. On the other hand, Schreck was one of the best drivers I have ever seen behind the wheel. He drove Hitler for hundreds of miles without an accident or even a breakdown.

Julius Schaub was an entirely different kind of guy. The former fighters, his friends, made fun of him because he acted as a valet. On Maximilianstrasse in Munich, he could often be seen ironing Hitler's trousers. Schaub was of medium height and it was not obvious that he had been one of the fiercest fighters in Hitler's shock troops, which were a kind of embryonic cell of the S.S. He was a soldier at the front and his toes froze there, but he never showed that he had a limp when he walked. Later, Hitler made him his personal adjutant and promoted him to the rank of "Obergruppenführer" of the S.S. The trajectory took Julius Schaub into situations for which he was not prepared.

At that time I also met Rudolf Hess. His status as a volunteer in the war, as a front-line officer and fighter pilot, amazed me. His imprisonment with Hitler in the fortress of Landsberg lent him a revolutionary air in my eyes. I thought, moreover, that if Hitler had made him his private secretary, it must surely have been because of his special gifts of intelligence and ability.

However, immediate acquaintance would force me to make the necessary corrections to the false picture. Hess lived in a small flat in the "Barstei", which was then one of Munich's most fashionable districts. Mrs. Use Hess was cultured, intelligent, intelligent

and also very skilful. Together with her husband, the manuscript of *Mein Kampf* was ready for printing.

But in the many conversations I had with Hess I did not notice his revolutionary spirit at all. I must admit that any conversation with him was difficult, if not impossible. His favourite subjects were natural medicine, yoga and vegetarian nutrition. It was completely incomprehensible to me how a close collaborator of Hitler's, thirty-four years old, could be so intensely concerned about his health. The more I got to know Hess, the more I regarded him as one of those "herbalists" on whom Hitler had poured all his irony in *Mein Kampf*.

Hess only seemed to be happy when he was at Hitler's side. His features became more open and every word Hitler uttered seemed to be a great relief to him. Yet his sombre character remained essentially unchanged, and he remained solitary and hermetic most of the time.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have dared to think then that Hitler would one day appoint him "deputy Führer" and Reich Minister. Among the public and also among the majority of **T**o**s** **p** **a** **r** **t** **y** comrades, Hess was still until then a unknown. Suddenly, he appeared as Hitler's advocated successor. His interesting appearance and his silence lent him the halo of a kind of knight of the holy grail of pure ideas, something like the personification of an ultimate instance when it came to purity and righteousness.

In fact, Hitler had never considered him his successor, neither in the party, much less in the state. At one of the first sessions of the Reich Cabinet, Hess proposed, as the then Foreign Minister Von Neurath explained to me, that the death penalty should be applied to the crime of adultery. Hitler immediately interrupted him, and from then on Hess was a great silent partner there too.

Rudolf Hess's headquarters in Berlin's Wilhemstrasse 5, opposite the Foreign Office, became, to a certain extent, the

a parallel party government. There, there was a chaos of competition: party departments against ministries and also against each other. Hitler acted according to the motto "divide and rule" and encouraged potential competitors to fight each other. Hess was one of the main pawns in this game.

In January 1936, when I had a run-in with Hess about the Hitler Youth, Hitler confided to me in a conversation between him and me:

-Hess is the biggest mistake of my life. I don't want to dismiss him, but he won't be my successor.

This decision was made public on 1 September 1939, the first day of the war. In his speech in the Reichstag, Hitler designated Hermann Goering as his successor in the event of his death, and only appointed Hess as his second in command.

The latter thus acquired only symbolic importance, for Hitler wanted in this way to strengthen the party's position as a leading force.

For a long time Hess's political influence had been practically non-existent. He was aware of this and withdrew into himself. For the most part he buried himself in his villa in Munich-Harlaching, where he was very active in sport and indulged his interest in natural medicine and astrology. He became less and less frequent as an orator and could only be seen at Hitler's side under particularly solemn circumstances. The position of Hitler's private secretary and permanent shadow had been left to his solicitous deputy, Martin Bormann, who thus became active in the position which for Rudolf Hess had represented only a title: deputy to the Führer.

It was perhaps in protest against this silent degradation that Hess made his enigmatic flight to England in May 1941. It was politically the action of a Quixote. Hitler was quick to declare him mentally ill and Winston Churchill corroborated this opinion. Hess thus became a psychiatric enigma and remained such in

Nuremberg and Spandau. It took me years of intense effort to crack open the shells in which he was enclosed, like an oyster. When I succeeded, the stomach spasms that tormented him and of which he had been complaining for a long time disappeared. In reality, he was still, at heart, the same original guy I had met in 1925 as Hitler's secretary.

On 1 October 1966, Hess began a punishment to which he had not been sentenced at Nuremberg. Until then he had been able to maintain contact with his fellow prisoners. From then on he was completely alone.

I know for a fact that he was watched day and night by a paramedic or a prison guard to prevent him from attempting suicide. Such a situation greatly affects a man who is now seventy-three years old and whose mental constitution cannot bear the circumstances of his life.

But let's go back to 1928.

On the journey to Erlangen we stopped in Eichstätt. I was obliged to visit, in Hitler's company, the architectural masterpieces of the former episcopal city. With a kind of pride of ownership, he made me notice many details. When he spoke of architecture he was at his ease and took every opportunity on his travels through Germany to admire a particularly beautiful castle or an old church.

Hitler was in the habit of always carrying a dog leash, even though he was often not accompanied by the beautiful dog he owned. Curious as all young men are, I told him about it as we went to an inn in the woods near Eichstätt for a cup of tea.

-It's a memento from Mrs. Bechstein," he said. You know that I am like a son in the Bechsteins' house. Mrs. Bechstein gave me my first wolf-dog and this whip.

This did not really answer my question. What I wanted to know was whether Hitler felt threatened and whether the whip he carried so ostentatiously was the answer to the politician.

social democrat Grezinski, who, after the *putsch* of Munich had He demanded: "That guy should be whipped out of Germany!"

It did not take me long to discuss the matter with Mrs. Bruckmann. She rejected the version that the whip was a gift from Frau Bechstein and said that she had given it to him herself. Further investigation revealed that Hitler did not have just one whip, but three. One, with a solid handle, which could serve as a "jigsaw puzzle", was a gift from Frau Helene Bechstein. The second, with a silver handle, had been given to him by Frau Bruckmann, and to these must be added the thick hippo-skin whip given to him by Frau Buchner, the housekeeper at the Platterhof in Obersalzberg.

When the time came for tea, I could not believe my eyes when I saw that Hitler filled the cup with lumps so full that he could hardly pour the tea out. He drank it in large gulps and ate two or three pieces of cream cake. Noticing my gaze, he looked at the cup, smiled and said:

-I really shouldn't eat so much, I'm going to get too fat, but I love sweets so much!

And as he said this, he helped himself to another piece of cake.

Hitler was then still able to ironise about himself.

Unfortunately, it was soon to lose this quality; as soon as the

"Führerkult" ^[12] took on mythical forms. But in 1928, when we made the trip to Erlangen, nobody said "My Führer", except Rudolf Hess. The rest of us called him "Herr Hitler", and when he was not in front of us, we called him "Chief".



Illustration 3. The National Socialist Party celebrates its seizure of power on the night of 30 January 1933.



Illustration 4. Von Schirach, in his speech to the Hitler Youth at the Nuremberg Congress, behind Hitler and Hess

VI

Hitler's speech to the students in Erlangen was a step on the road to success. In the wake of the university elections of 1928 it resulted in a positive outcome for the National Socialist Students' League that no one would have dared to suspect. In Erlangen, where Hitler had spoken for the first time, we obtained an increase of thirty-two per cent of the votes; in Greifswald and Würzburg, twenty per cent respectively; in Jena, eighteen per cent; at the Braunschweig University of Technology, fifteen per cent; at the Munich University of Technology, thirteen and thirteen per cent; and at the University of Munich, ten per cent. To tell the truth, Hitler had never considered such a result possible. It represented the first political triumph for National Socialism since the party's new founding in February 1925.

13

Hardly had the echoes of the "Deutschlandlied" died away after Hitler's speech when we found ourselves seated in the car again, heading at full speed for Nuremberg. From Eichstat, Schaub had reserved rooms for us at the "Deutscher Hof", Hitler's regular hotel. Julius Streicher, the *gauleiter* of Franconia, was waiting for us there.

The painful role played on the "Markplatz" in Weimar on the day of the National Congress was still fresh in my mind. On the other hand, since my studies in Munich, not a day went by without a new Streicher scandal in Nuremberg being reported in the press. Streicher's weekly newspaper "Der Stürmer" had been waging a fierce anti-Semitic campaign based above all on the publication of stories about the private lives of Jewish citizens. Streicher's "Stürmer" turned every shady business involving a Jew into a scandalous scandal.

Hitler greeted him warmly, I saw that he treated him with great respect, and I understood for the first time what it meant in the NSDAP to have a force of one's own. As early as 1919, Streicher had already organised a powerful movement, the Franconian group of the "Deutschen Sozialistischen Partei", and in 1922 he had put himself at the head of the "Deutschen Sozialistischen Partei", the "Deutschen Sozialistischen Partei".

Hitler's orders. When the NSDAP was disbanded after the *putsch* of After the new foundation in 1925, Streicher's "gau" surpassed the traditional stronghold of Munich-Upper Bavaria in importance. From Franconia most of the dues flowed into the NSDAP treasurer's coffers, and when Hitler spoke in Nuremberg, Streicher managed to gather a much larger audience than any other *gauleiter* in any of the big cities.

Hitler reciprocated by giving Streicher a free hand in his "gau". The latter's success was a confirmation of his belief that anti-Semitic hatred was a sure means of winning over the masses. Indeed, the ground was particularly fertile in Franconia. The country's small farmers, craftsmen and family-run businesses were suffering the economic consequences of the post-war period. And so, just as the Jews had once been held responsible for famines and natural disasters, the blame for economic misery was now placed on the Hebrew traders in livestock, grain and hops.

Streicher was almost always favoured by a visibly complacent judiciary. In 1926 he appeared before the Nuremberg tribunal for having published the following poem in "Der Stürmer":

*Away, Jew, go away, Flee
from the German "gau",
If you want to
see your
homeland still
alive!*

The court found that "causing alarm among Jews could not be considered a punishable offence". Only in a higher instance was Streicher sentenced to a derisory fine.

Shortly afterwards, the *gauleiter* of Franconia visited me in Munich. I had written a poem cycle with the title "The Cross of Golgotha". A fragment had been published and Streicher wanted to publish the whole cycle in the "Stürmer Verlag" [\[13\]](#) [\[14\]](#).

I hesitated a lot because I didn't like the neighbourhood. Streicher, no doubt to convince me, assured me that he was a believing Christian. But according to his conviction, Christ had been an Aryan whom the Jews had therefore put on the cross.

Despite this, the poem cycle was not published. Some time later I visited Streicher in Nuremberg. Her home was typically petit bourgeois, and the housewife was a sorrowful woman, who seemed to be suffering a great deal from the fact that her husband had exchanged his post as schoolmaster for that of "Führer" of Franconia. Streicher, who had boasted in his own publication of his women's stories, soon exchanged that first wife for a younger one.

He was then kind and fatherly. As a culmination of the visit, I was obliged to accept one of his watercolours. It was a surprise for me. The exasperated anti-Semite revealed himself as a passionate Sunday painter, a simple amateur, though not unskilled. His paintings appeared to be quite delicately worked.

However, his innermost being was not to be revealed to me until many years later. One day I received an urgent call from Gugel, the district leader of the Hitler Youth in Nuremberg.

-Streicher called me a short time ago. He told me that he had to cycle around the countryside and asked me for two girls from the B.d.M. [\[15\]](#), in gym shorts and with bicycles....

Naturally, Gugel did not comply with Streicher's request. I suspected that he was suffering from a series of serious deviations. His penchant for pornographic details, his descriptions of the

The sadistic depictions of the crimes against morality committed by the Jews were, in the final analysis, nothing more than externalisations of their sick dreams and fantasies.

Shortly after the episode described above, he was dismissed. It happened at the beginning of 1940, and Hess revealed to me one of the reasons: Streicher, who was under investigation for numerous administrative irregularities and sexual excesses, summoned his collaborators to the headquarters of the Nuremberg gau and told them: "You must make me an offering. He then forced them to leave their wedding rings, watch chains and all the gold they had with them on the table. This gold was melted down and a professor at the Nuremberg art school made a valuable chest out of it for Streicher's mistress, an actress.

After the scandal, the chain of Streicher's irregularities, arbitrary actions and theft came to an end. But despite this, the "Stürmer" continued to appear.

Many years later I saw Julius Streicher again in Nuremberg, in the prison for war criminals. A real human wreck, he was barely able to walk around the prison yard every day.

VII

I have often repeated that I was a convinced supporter of Hitler. I was therefore proud that I had achieved a great success in the student camp. The triumph meant everything to Hitler. This was undoubtedly one of the reasons why one of the most changing figures of National Socialism, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, came to the fore at that time.

For three years Goebbels and I had been good acquaintances. I had first seen his name in the fortnightly publication "N-S. Briefe" [16], which the brothers Gregor and Otto Strasser edited in Elberfeld. At a time when National Socialism was almost entirely a Bavarian affair, the publication "N-S. Briefe" was an element of the Bavarian nationalist movement. "Briefe" represented an element of dissemination for the party in northern Germany. The publication had,

The tone was more restrained and their texts emphasised the word "socialism", and the best-cut pen was that of a certain "Doctor G." who later became a *gauleiter* in North Rhine-Westphalia. The best-cut pen belonged to a certain "Doctor G.", who later became *gauleiter* of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The "gau" in northern and western Germany were then in opposition to Hitler and the Munich party leadership. Since he himself was affected by the speech ban, Hitler had made the pharmacist Gregor Strasser responsible for party organisation in those regions. To tell the truth, the National Socialists in northern Germany found Hitler's programme too vague and diffuse. They believed that in order to win over the working masses they needed clearly socialist words. And to emphasise the socialist character of the NSDAP, they demanded that the party, together with the Social Democrats and Communists, should pronounce itself in favour of the expropriation without compensation of the property belonging to the former princely families.

At a meeting of the leadership in Bamberg in February 1926, the Strasser wing wanted to impose its programme. According to it, Hitler was to be relieved of his office and the party was to be governed by a *gauleiter* junta chaired by Gregor Strasser himself.

The opposition of the North German National Socialists to the "Pope of Munich" and his "gang", however, soon failed. Hitler fought it with tireless speeches, and the only one who could have offered at least as convincing an eloquence as he did remained silent. This was none other than Dr. Joseph Goebbels.

My Weimar comrade, Dr. Hans Severus Ziegler, lived through the Bamberg command assembly. He described Goebbels to me as a dangerous man and possibly a covert communist. I therefore wanted to meet this "Dr. G." personally, who was already qualified as one of the most effective speakers in the party, and on 24 March 1926 I was waiting for him at the Weimar railway station.

From the express descended a personage of small stature, wearing a light trenchcoat, which emphasised mostly a thin, ascetic face in which gleamed a pair of burning, dark eyes. I thought that had to be him.

I took his briefcase. As I stepped off the platform I noticed that he was limping heavily. He walked slowly and wore an orthopaedic shoe on his right foot. I later found out that he had, from birth, one leg shorter than the other.

I took Goebbels to the "Chemnitius" hotel. He told me he wanted to breathe in the air of Weimar, and we walked through the city, shrouded in the first shadows of night. It was he who carried most of the conversation with his melodious voice, infused with a Rhenish accent. As we were in Weimar, the subject of the conversation was Goethe. I confided to him the surprise I had experienced when Hitler had compared Goethe's poems with those of his friend Dietrich Eckart.

Goebbels laughed:

-Goethe as a poet is beyond dispute.

Opinions on Goethe as a politician vary.

I then asked him whether he also accused Goethe of having remained passive in the liberation struggles.

He said something like this:

-He was a scoundrel who, while writing poems, forgot his oppressed people.

I experienced an impression of displeasure at these words and he realised it. So he said:

-But let's leave such things. Let us talk better about ourselves. In my opinion, you were born as unfit for politics as I was. Our interests are different. But the calamities of our people impel us to political action.

Goebbels had read my poems and said he found them good. I tasted his praise like honey. And from that moment on, I saw in Goebbels, who was then twenty-eight years old, ten years older than I was,

¹⁷ a kind of soul mate whom I immediately began to admire.

Hitler soon succeeded in detaching Goebbels from the North German front and winning him over to his own cause.

Thus, at seven months of our first meeting, was nominated *gauleiter* from Berlin. I went to Munich to continue my studies.

We saw each other when Goebbels had something to do at the national headquarters or when I visited him in Berlin.

I certainly had the feeling at the time that his position in favour of Hitler had been dictated more by opportunity than by conviction. Both spiritually and politically, they were fundamentally out of harmony.

Of course, he never made it public, but covered up his disagreements with reproaches against the party leadership in Munich.

-Answer me, Herr von Schirach: can you lead a party from Munich and imagine that you are going to conquer the whole of Germany? That really can be done from Berlin. Whoever has Berlin has Germany.

Perhaps Goebbels and the Strasser brothers could have formed a counterweight to Hitler in Berlin. But this was prevented by numerous antipathies and enmities. Gregor Strasser could not forgive the man who had once been his youngest confidant for siding with Hitler. In the North German NSDAP, Goebbels was now regarded as a kind of Judas. So much so that in one of the publications of Strasser's "Kampf Verlag" an article appeared in the spring of 1927 entitled: "Consequences of racial mixtures". One paragraph read:

"It is known that the mixing of races leads to a disharmony of the spirit. If we accept the leading role of the spirit, this disharmony will also be reflected in the physical. And the balance of the body will be affected, either by disease or by congenital defects".

This could only refer to Goebbels, and he certainly understood it as well, for from that moment on he began an all-out war against the Strasser brothers.

The consequence was that Goebbels drew closer and closer to Hitler. He had recognised, moreover, that his intellect and oratory skills lacked something that Hitler possessed to a considerable degree: the ability to communicate to others. So, however much it might affect his pride, Goebbels had to resign himself to being the herald of a higher will: that of the "Führer". And from Hitler Goebbels eventually learned that the masses can never be won over by arguments, but only by a tireless hammering of words.

On the boiling Berlin asphalt, Goebbels put into practice the formula with full success. When he took up the post of *gauleiter*, the The Berlin NSDAP was a group of little importance and fragmented by internal contradictions, ignored by the left-wing parties and ignored by the right-wing bourgeoisie. Goebbels provoked the Communists with rallies and marches through the red-light districts and the bourgeoisie with anti-Semitic demonstrations on the Kurfürstendamm.

So it soon became known. The communist newspaper *Rote*

Fahne [17] le described him as as "bandit major of Berlin". But the

Not only did this label not seem to bother Goebbels, but he appropriated it to enhance his own propaganda.

On 2 July 1929 the people of Hamburg were told of a big demonstration to be held in the "Sagebielschen Salen". "The biggest bandit in Berlin, Dr. Goebbels, will speak. Underneath it appeared, printed in much smaller characters, my own name. I had always had a great fear of the public, and for the first time I was obliged to speak to a gathering of five thousand people. No wonder, therefore, that I was convinced that there would be an incident. Next to Goebbels, I entered the packed hall.

-You'll see how much easier it is to talk when more people are listening," Goebbels said to encourage me. I had

reason. Within minutes, I was calmness itself. I spoke for three quarters of an hour. And the five thousand listeners listened to me with the utmost interest and without being overcome by sleep, as I had feared.

Goebbels shook my hand in acknowledgement. I had been "emancipated", as actors are wont to say. But my speech was only a prologue to the appearance of Goebbels himself. A voice came over the loudspeakers:

-This is the "Berlin's greatest bandit", our comrade, the *gauleiter* Dr. Joseph Goebbels.

Goebbels stepped forward towards the speakers' rostrum. He wore an alpaca jacket that glistened in the light of the floodlights. The crowd was expectantly silent.

Goebbels spoke of the most burning issue of 1929, the "Young Plan".

These were the reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. In the spring of 1929, a commission of experts under the chairmanship of the American financier Owen Young had established the amount of reparations and drawn up a plan for their implementation. According to the plan, Germany would have to pay

The victorious powers were to receive an annual tribute of DM 2 billion over a period of 49 years. These payments were scheduled to continue until 1988.

It was an enormous sum, which would weigh on the nation for two generations. The president of the Reich Bank, Dr. Schacht, had accepted the opinion of the committee of experts and was ready to sign the agreement. For his part, Foreign Minister Stressemann acknowledged that the Young Plan offered some advantages over previous agreements: the annual instalments were a third less than in the past. In return, the evacuation of the Rhineland by occupying troops would begin in 1929, and Allied control of the German economy would end.

Goebbels began his speech of 2 July 1929 thus:

The German people have gone through the stations of their Golgotha and now the executioner is about to nail them to the cross...

He described that Golgotha:

-The heroes of the front, entirely unheeded, believed that they would collect their historic payment. But the hope of a beautiful and dignified life, as the November murderers had promised, was dashed by the Versailles Decree. This dictate meant the continuation of the war. A people which had disarmed itself could expect nothing else. German labour and the German people had to be excluded from the international community. Since this desire for exclusion was not to be openly expressed, the war guilt was used as an excuse. Such a falsehood is at the heart of the Versailles Treaty and its recognition, the principle of execution of its policy....

So said Goebbels, who three years later, after the conquest of power, admitted:

-I never read of the Young Plan other than the epigraph. But my intuition considered it from the beginning totally inadmissible.

I remember quite accurately the colloquium that followed the speech.

A young war wounded Social Democrat and member of the "Deutschen Friedensgesellschaft" asked for the floor. ¹⁸. He said:

-I lost a leg at Verdun. Since then I know what war is, as race hatred, as a crime against humanity. A man is a man, whether he is a Christian or a Jew.

Goebbels replied:

-My friend, I am sure there is no one in the room who does not respect the fact that he has given a leg for his country. But it is not his wooden leg that is up for debate, it is his way of thinking. And you, apart from your act of war, are a coward if you do not have the courage to go and express your thoughts where it is dangerous: in the occupied territories, in front of the bayonets of the French. Jew or Christian? Yes, you are a renegade. And when I see your blue eyes and your blond hair, I cannot but say: I am sorry to see you in such company.

In Hamburg, in front of 1,500 Germans, a man who had never even been a soldier could say that. The crowd cheered him. No one came to the aid of the loner with the wooden leg.

No sooner had I returned to Munich than another surprise awaited me. Large red posters with the inscription "Down with Young Slavery!" were pasted on the advertising columns. The NSDAP was preparing a chain of rallies. The following speakers were to speak in all the big halls of the city: Adolf Hitler, Gregor Strasser, Dr. Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, Baldur von Schirach and others. I called the party headquarters.

-You can't do that to me. I have no idea what the Young Plan is.

On the other side of the thread was the acting head of Propaganda, Heinrich Himmler, who was already "Reichsführer" of the S.S. at the time, and who was nicknamed in the party "the gentle Heinrich".

-The Chief has ordered it that way," said Himmler. It is not possible to change anything in the programme.

I took my protests all the way to Hitler:

-You know I have no oratorical facility. Hitler said:

-Goebbels called me. He is of a different opinion. You're upstairs now, Schirach.

This chain of rallies was the biggest National Socialist propaganda campaign ever carried out. Suddenly there was money for posters, leaflets and travel.

The riddle was soon solved: a "Committee for the Demands of the German People" had been formed in Berlin, which was entirely directed against the Young Plan. Its chairman was Councillor Hugenberg, former head of Krupp and later owner of the Scherl publishing house, shareholder in numerous provincial newspapers, owner of a large news agency and member of the board of directors of the film company U.F.A. ^[18]. The second influential person on this committee was Franz Seldte, a Magdeburg liquor and spirits manufacturer and federal leader of the "Steel Helmets", the league of former combatants; Adolf Hitler was appointed to the third position.

Many National Socialist leaders took a dim view of this coalition. Hugenberg appeared to many of us as the personification of reaction, of the most backward and dusty nationalism. What could those of us who considered ourselves a workers' party have in common with him?

Hitler took it upon himself to sweep away all such mistrust.

Hugenberg contributed funds to the propaganda funds and undertook to publish extensive information about the National Socialist assemblies in his newspapers. From

that way, the readers of the

BerlinerLokal-Anzeiger, of the

Nachtausgabe by the subscribers of all the newspapers at

The provincial companies, whose shareholder was Councillor Hugenberg, would find out at breakfast time what Adolf Hitler, Goebbels and Strasser had said the night before. What only a couple of thousand subscribers to the press had read up to that point

The National Socialist Party was to be published in editions numbering in the millions.

The "Committee for the Demands of the German People" submitted a "Freedom Law", a bill against the enslavement of the German people. According to paragraph 4, the signatories of the Young Plan and their plenipotentiaries were to be condemned as traitors to the fatherland. It was planned that the German people would vote on this bill in a referendum.

On 29 September 1929, the French began to evacuate the regions of the Rhineland still occupied by their troops. Gustav Stresemann died on 3 October. On 22 December the referendum on the Young Plan was held. Only 5.8 million voters (13.8 percent) approved the "Freedom Law". Despite intense propaganda, the "United National Front" suffered a considerable defeat. But the defeat did not include us National Socialists. The anti-Young propaganda had brought us no less than 68,000 new party members, most of whom had previously belonged to the "nationals". As for the university elections of 1929-30, the National Socialist Students' League won thirty per cent of all the votes.

I wrote the the following *Akademischen Beobachter*: "This
at at

This gigantic triumph shows us once again how far the student anticipates the imperatives of his time. We are convinced that the spiritual course taken by us is that which the times are forcing us to take. There was a time when there was a chance to annihilate the National Socialist movement: if the heads of the NSDAP leaders and leaders had been cut off years ago, there would be no party today. But this opportunity was not seized. So there is nothing left for the authorities to do but to bear patiently the inevitable and wait until the time comes for a legal solution.

Great words, written by a young man in his twenties. But they might well have remained empty prophecies had not a great catastrophe shaken Germany and the whole world. On 24 October 1929, the so-called "Black Friday", the

New York Stock Exchange. The stock market courses, relying on the unlimited resources of the world economy, collapsed overnight into a bottomless pit. Billions of dollars were blown into nothingness. The collapse of the New York stock exchange triggered the world economic crisis, which in turn triggered the collapse of the international credit market. For the German economy as a whole, the impact was particularly severe, as reconstruction was primarily carried out with foreign funds. Billions in short-term loans were cancelled overnight, and the effects of the measure were felt throughout the economy: exports declined, production fell by 18 per cent in the course of a year, and the number of unemployed rose to 4.4 million by the end of 1930.

All German parties should have tackled the difficult situation together. But the "grand coalition" government disintegrated over a minor problem: whether unemployment insurance contributions should be raised from 3.5 to 4 percent of wages. Since it was impossible to form a majority in the Reichstag with more than a dozen parties, Hindenburg appointed the Catholic Brüning to the post of chancellor of a minority cabinet that could only govern with the help of the emergency laws. This was the first implicit declaration of democratic bankruptcy, and its beneficiary was one and only one: Adolf Hitler.

VIII

30 July 1930

For hours he had been waiting at the "Deustches Haus" hotel for a call from Wachenfeld House in Obersalzberg. I was to speak to Hitler. Next to me sat a gentleman in his forties, who kept hurling the most vociferous curses at our leader. He was the "Oberste S.A. Führer" ^[19] Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, who for short was usually called "Osaf". The former officer and former commander of the "Freikorps" ^[20] could not understand why Hitler was retreating into the mountains while the party was burning on all four sides.

The crisis in the S.A. was particularly severe. One in two of the 60,000 men in the S.A. were out of work. Many did not know what to live on, apart from the fact that they had had to buy their brown shirts, boots and travel expenses out of their own pockets. Hitler, on the other hand, had bought Barlow Palace on Brienner Strasse in Munich for 1.5 million marks. The conversion of the palace into a "Brown House" was to cost another million, and every party comrade - the NSDAP had meanwhile grown by some 250,000 members - had to pay a special contribution of 2.50 Marks towards the work.

-My men won't let themselves be dragged down much longer by all this megalomania," exclaimed Pfeffer von Salomon, beside himself.

The Reichstag had been dissolved and the new referendum was to be held on 14 September. Goebbels had predicted "an election such as the party bonzes had not yet seen". In order to maintain his ascendancy among the Storm Troopers, "Osaf" demanded that the national ticket should be made up of at least half of the candidates from the SA.

Finally, on Wednesday, 1 August, Hitler received "Osaf". I was obliged to wait in the back office. The discussion between Pfeffer and Hitler went on loudly. An hour later, the former came out, pale as a sheet of paper. Hitler, on the other hand, showed not the slightest trace of agitation. I asked for a thousand marks to meet some urgent payments, and three minutes later I had Hitler's signed cheque in my pocket. Pfeffer drove me in his car to Munich.

-Of all the S.A.'s, it has chosen only five as candidates.
- he commented.

Shortly afterwards, Pfaffer was deposed and Hitler himself assumed, as head of the party, the joint leadership of the SA and the SS.

A large section of the Berlin S.A. openly and openly rebelled against these measures. They occupied the new "gau" headquarters on Hademannstrasse and gave vent to their anger against the "bonzes" by devastating it from top to bottom. Those who remained faithful had to call in the police to help them.

to protect them. In the meantime, *gauleiter*, Dr. Goebbels, was the
was in Silesia on an election tour.

Hitler took the plane and flew to Berlin. With a squadron of S.S. entered the S.A. premises. He was greeted with hostility, and many former fighters ostentatiously turned their backs on him as he spoke. Hitler exhorted the S.A. not to lose their temper, for the movement was on the full course of its rise to power. To make the protesters happy, he raised the party dues by twenty "pfennig" entirely for the S.A. as a bonus, and promised them free legal aid when they were arrested in a street fight or while protecting an event. In this way, the situation was somewhat calmed down.

Fourteen days later, on 14 September 1930, the NSDAP, with its 6.4 million votes and 107 seats in the Reichstag, became the second largest party in Germany. Two years had been enough to increase the number of its votes eightfold. The party comrades felt themselves carried away by the

The brownshirts in the Reichstag believed that the time had come to realise the National Socialist programme. The one hundred and seven brownshirts in the Reichstag believed that the time had come to realise the National Socialist programme. On 15 October, under the leadership of their leader, Dr. Frick, the faction submitted its first bill to the new House: the limitation of the discount rate to five per cent and, in addition, the nationalisation of the big banks.

Hitler, on the other hand, did not seem to be in a great hurry. A year earlier he had finally found backers in heavy industrial circles. He had negotiated their support against the recognition of the existing economic order: no state plans or state economy; free competition and unlimited authority of entrepreneurs in business. His financiers took the planned nationalisation of big banking out of his head, and the parliamentary faction submitted to Hitler's superior will and changed the bill.

It was then that the party chairman, Adolf Hitler, became "Führer". Hitler regarded the party programme, which dated from 1920 and which he had at the time solemnly declared to be intangible, as a trap which held him in its grasp. He had long rejected as illusory the claim that the Nazi-Socialist workers' party could interfere with the Marxist mass movement and believed that the NSDAP's opportunities lay not among the proletarians, but among the embittered businessmen, artisans, civil servants and peasants. They flocked to the party and their yearning was not for a socialist revolution, but for "Freedom and Bread".

When the movement was still very small, Hitler had often said to me: "I dread the day when the crowds will come to us". And I knew the reason: for each of the leaders I knew, the party programme was different: for Gregor Strasser, socialist; for Alfred Rosenberg, mythical in character; for Hermann Goering and some others, Christian in a certain sense. Some wanted a class state, others a monarchy.

The Third Reich had a federalist structure and those over there, a rigidly centralist one. Some cursed Prussia, the others the diversity of the various German races. In this way, every National Socialist had practically his own National Socialism. For the new mass movement the risk of fragmentation increased day by day.

Hitler knew this danger. So he said:

-National Socialism is a concept of the world and not a programme. Our aim now is to conquer power and then we shall see.

Accordingly, he reduced the disputed 25 points of the party programme to a couple of catch phrases on which there was no room for differences of opinion among "national" Germans: "the world war 1914-18 had been organised by the Western powers to annihilate rising Germany"; "the Jews were our misfortune". "The parliamentary system was impotent." "Service to the community begins with self-service."

With words like these, Hitler won the "Reichstag" elections of 14 September 1929. And since nothing is as triumphant as victory itself, he appeared from that moment on as the man who had been right. The man called Adolf Hitler had been right, but not his party or his programme.

This, of course, led to a split within the NSDAP.

The so-called "programmatists" - among them many National Socialist deputies under Gregor Strasser - regarded Hitler as a brilliant orator and propagandist, as a herald, but did not regard him as a politician. Moreover, he was a "stateless person", so that he could neither vote nor be elected in Germany, and therefore could not hold any ministerial office. As soon as he had "blown the whistle" and obtained a majority for a government or coalition, he would have to

to disappear down the hatch and leave the field free for the "programmatists" of the NSDAP.

What is certain, however, is that more and more Germans believed in the "herald". They saw in him the strong man, capable of driving those sinister "parliamentary ghosts" to the devil and, above all, of bringing "Freedom and Bread" to all Germans.

On 13 January 1931, Hitler inaugurated the "Brown House" in Brienner Strasse. He had previously spoken to me at length about his architectural plans; he wanted to achieve a neo-classical style and the "Brown House" was to be the example and model for all future buildings. I confess that at the time of the inauguration I was somewhat disappointed: the "Brown House" with its marble staircases and long, pastel-coloured carpets looked to me like a mixture of a hotel lobby and a luxury motor liner.

21

Hitler took us to the "Senatorensaal". the most important part of the party headquarters.

-This is where the council of our movement will hold its sessions and take the most important decisions," he announced.

I stayed in the "Senatorensaal" with him and his old friend Hermann Esser after the other guests had left. Hitler looked out of the window and fixed his gaze on the Nunciature across the street. He said thus:

-I do not dispute the Pope of Rome's infallibility in matters of faith. And no one can dispute with me that I understand politics more than any other man in the world. Therefore, I proclaim for myself and my successors the dogma of political infallibility.

The "Brown House" was soon in a hot state of mind. From Berlin came news of a new rebellion by the S.A. The "Oberste-S. A. Führer

Ost" ^[21]^[22] Walter Stennes, and there was also a rumour circulating that the Dr. Goebbels had that time taken a stand with the rebels, against Hitler.

As far as I was concerned, I was only relatively interested in the news of the planned revolt in Berlin. For subversive action was also being prepared within the "Students' League" at that time. And the subversive action was directed precisely against me. Since 1928, when I had taken over the national leadership in my twenties, complications had arisen quite frequently. The opposition against me was led by a few older university students, who, to tell the truth, knew rather more about university politics than I did. Their aim was to make the "National Socialist Students' League" the spiritual and doctrinal leadership body of the party. I, on the other hand, saw the student organisation as the shock troops of the National Socialist revolution. So the leaders of the opposition demanded my outright dismissal.

On March 31 Hitler received my opponents, Dr. Anrich of Tübingen and Reinhard Sunkel of Berlin. Under the impression of the threatening action of Goebbels and the East German SAs, Hitler welcomed them with a shout:

-Every time a great man appears in Germany, the dwarves are always on his trail!

And then he threatened them with expulsion from the party if they did not return to my side.

Immediately after these events, Hitler went to Weimar. A secret meeting of the commanders had been convened there, to which Goebbels had also been summoned. Goebbels assured Hitler that he had absolutely nothing to do with the planned revolt and expressed his desire to go to Berlin immediately to put the situation in order. But Hitler did not seem to trust him too much and kept him on his side. He declared Stennes dismissed and appointed Hermann Goering "political commissar for the Upper East".

Stennes counterattacked and occupied with his S.A. the drafting of the newspaper from Goebbels, *Der Angriff*, publishing a vibrant appeal:

"Munich has forgotten that the S.A. have always been the vanguard of the party, with their capacity for sacrifice. The "Brown House" has been built at a cost of millions, while the S.A. men have not a penny to put soles on their worn-out boots. The S.A. has carried out thousands of actions on the orders of the party, in the Reich, in the regions and in the municipalities. But today the S.A. is believed to have done its work and is despised; today it is regarded as the evil soul which still speaks of the betrayed party programme.... Flags held high, ranks tightened, the S.A.'s.

march ^[23]. Stennes takes over.

Hitler did not dare to go to Berlin that time. Accompanied by Goebbels, he returned to Munich. At a large rally in the Krone Circus, the party members reiterated their support for him. Hitler was confident that this demonstration would have its effect from a distance. And so it did: within a few days Stennes lost the game. Shortly afterwards he was sent as a military adviser to China.

In the "Student League", however, the revolt continued. The anti-Schirach front gained a powerful ally in the leader Gregor Strasser, under whose leadership the entire party organisation was placed. The "League" was the only section which escaped his authority, for it was placed directly under Hitler. Thus I found myself mixed up in the secret struggle between Strasser and Hitler. A group of heads of the various university sections seceded from the "League" to place themselves under the orders of the local headquarters, that is to say, of Strasser. Commissioners of Strasser, armed with twenty-three forged signatures of as many section heads, moved from university to university, giving the impression that the whole student organisation was in open rebellion against me.

I went to Hitler to tell him that I was ready to give in to all these pressures. He started shouting:

-We are not a parliamentary club where you resign when you want to! If I do not dismiss you personally, you will remain in your post. Summon the commanders immediately.

Fifty "League" commanders from all over Germany were waiting in the assembly hall of the "Brown House" on 2 May for Hitler to address them.

Hitler came. I introduced him to the assembled student leaders, convinced that this would be the last time he would do such a thing.

He began his speech:

-When the student league was founded, it was not founded to create an intellectual group, but to gain, through it, leadership for our mass movement. Comrade von Schirach understood this. In a time of depression and general sluggishness he gave considerable impetus to the movement. This forward-moving movement...

And then Hitler went on to speak on his favourite topic: the "Führerprinzip" ^[24].

-It is said of me that I am a herald, a good speaker, but not an organiser. I consider myself capable of judging some things better than others and I think it necessary to defend myself against the narrowness of this concept. This is my illness and it has to be admitted as it is. I renounce manifestations of loyalty, which are ultimately of no value to me. I desire only discipline. I do not aspire to any affection, one can even feel hatred towards me, but the organisation must remain intact....

Today, thirty-six years later, a shiver still runs down my spine when I reread this speech by Hitler, which dates from 1931 and which remained unpublished. What arrogance the man had! But at the time I was fascinated by the apparent

Hitler's sincerity, because of his fanaticism, and my own comrades - friend and foe - could think of nothing else.

To cap it all, Hitler turned directly to my opponent, Reinhard Sunkel of Berlin:

-I stand by Schirach with all my authority. I have no other more faithful and more constant collaborator than this young comrade. It would be better to let me cut myself to pieces than to leave Schirach in the quagmire. I am now again the veteran of the front, who looks after his comrades and protects them at the risk of his own death.

What happened on 2 May 1931 in the assembly hall of the "Casa Parda" would today be called "brainwashing". The leaders of the opposition finally withdrew, one by one, all the accusations they had made against me.

From that moment on I felt myself bound much more strongly to Hitler and obliged to contribute all my energies to his triumph. I undertook a radical struggle in all the universities, and the result was entirely satisfactory. I thus achieved the first absolute majority for Hitler. But first I was imprisoned for the first time.

IX

A few hundred students were gathered on the esplanade in front of the University of Cologne. It was the morning of 2 July 1931. At 10.15 a.m. lessons began in most of the lecture halls. A quarter of an hour earlier I had paraded the National Socialist students from Cologne, reinforced by members of the S.A., in front of the arcades. They were in civilian clothes, because in Prussia the ban on uniforms for all political formations was still in force.

Those who wanted to go to class tried to hide in the crowd. Passers-by watched the bustle curiously. For several days now, the newspapers had been full of reports of student riots in German university towns. On 27 June there had been fierce clashes between nationalists and communists at the University of Berlin. Would a student uprising also break out in Cologne?

The streets were filled with people. I climbed to the top of the steps and began my speech, which soon turned into an uproar.

-Comrades! The Rector of this University has forbidden you and your professors to protest against the Treaty of Versailles on June 28th, the twelfth anniversary of that shameful treaty. Is it undignified and undisciplined for young Germans, together with their very worthy professors, to protest against a national disgrace? But the absurdities do not end there: His Magnificence, the Rector of this University, has not issued the ban of his own accord, but has done so at the dictation of the Reich Chancellor, Heinrich Brüning. The chancellor of the laws of exception does not consider it expedient that here on the Rhine we should

reveal truths that may be unpleasant for France...

As I uttered these last words, I saw policemen appear in both directions on Claudiusstrasse. They soon ordered the onlookers to keep moving. The response was whistles and signs of discontent.

Undeterred, I continued to talk about the tense political situation. A year and a half of economic crisis had brought Europe, and especially Germany, to the brink of bankruptcy. To avoid total collapse, US President Herbert Hoover had proposed a moratorium on the payment of reparations. France, however, demanded from Germany unique "peace gestures": postponement of the construction of a new armoured cruiser and the disbanding of the nationalist paramilitary leagues, including the "steel helmets" and the S.A. We National Socialists saw Hoover's moratorium as a means of keeping the Brüning Cabinet alive. And we wanted the opposite: the downfall of Brüning, the dissolution of the Reichstag and the calling of new elections which would give us absolute power. To this end I had organised assemblies and demonstrations in all the universities. And for this purpose I moved from university to university stirring up unrest.

The Prussian Minister of Culture, Adolf Grimme (S.P.D.), threatened tougher measures: control of the school card at the entrance to the university to keep "troublemakers who were enemies of the university" at bay; expulsion of unruly students and sending provocateurs to the emergency judge.

I was the national leader of the "National Socialist Students' League", but not a registered student. The police had not given me time to do so. A comrade from Cologne had just lent me his school card so that I could pass through the checkpoint at the entrance to the university. The staircase from where he was speaking was academic territory and, according to a right

But on the other hand, open-air meetings were forbidden under the "special law of the Reich President for the suppression of political unrest" enacted in March 1931. But, on the other hand, open-air meetings were forbidden according to the "special law of the Reich President for the repression of political disorders" promulgated on 28 March 1931. Would the police dare to act against our demonstration?

It is possible that such tension made me speak a little faster than before. The fact is that I finished my speech ahead of schedule and could only exclaim: "For our dear fatherland and the Führer of all Germans, Adolf Hitler, and the Führer of all Germans, Adolf Hitler.

Hitler: *Sieg Heil!* ^[25]. This was followed by the "Deutschlandlied" and the "Deutschlandlied".

arms were raised in a Hitler salute. At that very moment a riot broke out. Some students, who were members of the corporations, ostentatiously kept their caps on. Blows and insults were exchanged and two police vehicles arrived at full speed. The officers disembarked and deployed quickly. I thought that if I fell into their hands, I would have to take many months of imprisonment for granted, as I would be considered the ringleader of the whole racket. This was a "luxury" I could not afford, since on 15 July the 19th Student Congress was to begin in Graz, where I intended to increase our influence.

The students were retreating towards the university building to escape the rubber truncheons of the police. A friend from Cologne threw his mackintosh over me and said: "Hide!

I raised my hood and managed to slip unnoticed through the chain of "Schupo" ^[26]. I did not notice, however, that a woman was following me. And as I passed a group of police officers, she exclaimed: "Catch him! This is the instigator!" The woman was an agent of the criminal squad.

A mobile car took me to police headquarters and from there, after interrogation, to the so-called "Klingelpütz" prison. On the ground floor, the warden accompanying me pointed to a cell door and said:

-That's where Pitter Kurten spent his last hour last night.

The Düsseldorf sex murderer, convicted and confessed of nine crimes, had been executed there, in "Klingelpütz", on the morning of 2 July 1931, by guillotine.

My status as a political detainee did not earn me any better treatment than ordinary prisoners. The eight days I had to wait for my trial felt like an eternity.

On 10 July my case was heard before an emergency court. The public prosecutor asked for four months' arrest for violation of one of the emergency laws enacted by the Reich President. The court finally sentenced me to three months. I appealed and the arrest warrant was lifted.

A large crowd was waiting for me in front of the Palace of Justice. The *gauleiter* of the Rhineland, Dr. Robert Ley, had mobilised thousands of comrades to welcome me. They repeatedly shouted "Heil" and sang the "Horst-Wessel-Lied" ^[27] as if they had just released me from years of imprisonment. It was indeed the task of our propaganda services to give the status of martyr to anyone who had become acquainted with "the dungeons of the system".

In the same month the Weimar Republic faced its most serious crisis. Two months earlier, the Austrian banking establishment "Osterreichische Kredit-Anstalt" had collapsed.

The financial catastrophe in the neighbouring country caused panic among bank customers in Germany. The bank counters were under siege, and both gold reserves and foreign exchange reserves were rapidly depleted. On 13 July, the "Darmstadter und Nationalbank" in Berlin, one of the four big German banks, had to suspend payments. Fourteen days later, the Dresdner Bank followed suit. The government ordered a "bank holiday", the salaries of employees and civil servants could only be paid in instalments, and compulsory foreign currency savings were imposed. Anyone wishing to travel abroad had to deposit 100 marks at customs.

The vulture of bankruptcy seemed to hover over Germany. And the "national opposition" was triumphing. The catastrophe had to accelerate our victory. We did not try to find out the deep economic reasons for the crisis, since the culprits were clear to us: international Jewish capital and the shameless politicians of the Brüning government. More and more hungry and disillusioned people believed our words, and more and more people from the educated and bourgeois strata were pinning their hopes on Adolf Hitler.

For my part, I was determined to take full advantage of the circumstances.

And so it arrived on 21 July 1931.

At the University of Graz, the "Deutsche Studentenschaft" ^[28], which brought together all the student associations of the Reich, Austria, Dantzig and Sudetenland, had been meeting for a week. Until then, the traditional guilds, which brought together some 130,000 German and Austrian students, had been in the lead in this association, which also appointed their representatives. Having won thirty per cent of all the votes in the student elections of 1929-30, it was my wish to achieve in Graz, through the "National Socialist Students' League", a victory which was at the same time one of the most resounding demonstrations. The negotiations and contacts with the other groups were conducted by our rapporteur for university politics, Walter Lienau, a student of agricultural science, a solid Frisian and a former member of the student bodies.

When I met him at Graz station, he greeted me with a desolate expression:

-It looks very bad, Baldur.

Within the guilds, opposition to the politicisation of the student body was evident. The recent turmoil caused by the "League" was of particular concern to the gentlemen who were in charge of the

state functions. And the corporations' student assets depended on them financially.

Lienau proposed, in view of this, that we should keep our reserve and postpone the "seizure of power" in the "Deutschen Studentenschaft" until a year later.

But I was of a different opinion:

-We don't have time, Walter. Now is the best opportunity to take over the leadership of the student association.

-And who is to get it? - asked Lienau.

-You, of course," I replied. And I added, when I saw his hesitation, "I take the responsibility for myself. You have to stand for election.

The reason for my optimism was that the National Socialists had a seat on almost all the councils. This was the success of our three-year policy, the fruits of which had to begin to be reaped.

All night long, discussions and negotiations took place in the cellars in Graz. All the next day these things were discussed in the university lecture hall. At midnight the vote was held: Walter Lienau was elected as the first representative of the "Deutschen Studentenschaft", and other key positions went to representatives of the "National Socialist Students' League".

That same evening I called Hitler, who was at his home in Munich. At first he was speechless and then he said:

-You don't know, Schirach, what it will mean for me to be able to say in the forthcoming negotiations: the majority of the young intelligentsia is behind me.

After the victory in Graz we succeeded in winning in all German universities. In the following university elections, the "League" won between 50 and 65 per cent of the votes. In other words, an absolute majority. From then on, the student self-administration councils consisted only of the "League".

by National Socialists. This means that we had a major influence on student life in those difficult years. The number of unemployed throughout Germany was four and a half million, and more than fifty percent of the students received only fifty to sixty-five marks a month from home.

The Bruckmann family of publishers, famous in Munich, had moved from Karolinenplatz to number 10 Leopoldstrasse, a boulevard in the Schwabing district. In their own house, the Bruckmanns had given me a three-room flat.

-It feels good here," said Hitler as he looked at my new home on 14 October 1931, following a visit he had paid me.

Hitler had arrived from Berlin, where Hindenburg had just received him for the first time. He had pinned great hopes on this conversation, but the contact turned out, in the end, to be a complete failure. Hitler looked tired and discouraged.

-I respect the old man," he said, "but the truth is that he doesn't understand anything that's going on. To him I am still a Bohemian corporal and a refractory element to order. He puts me on the same level as Thálmann.....

Hitler's dream of coming to power through a coalition between the N.S.D.A.P., the German Nationalists and the Zentrum had vanished. This caused me to show a renewed interest in the internal problems of the party, and I took the opportunity to tell him of my plans. University politics was like a rope around my neck. We had succeeded and now I wanted to do something new.

For two years he had been in close contact with numerous Hitler Youth groups. The Hitler Youth was then something like a fifth wheel in the party vehicle. Strictly speaking, the Hitler Youth reported to the supreme leader of the S.A., i.e. to Hitler himself. But the fact is that Hitler had very few contacts with the youth. Since they did not have the right to vote, they were of no importance to him. Nor did the other party leaders know what to do with them.

that mass of 35,000 boys and girls. Some groups led a life of their own, as "Wandervogel" ^[29] or scouts. Others formed a kind of youth S.A. and were commanded by people who had not the slightest idea of what a youth leader was supposed to be.

Despite his fatigue, Hitler listened to me with interest.

"I'll tell you something, Schirach," he added at last.

Fourteen days later, he appointed me National Youth Chief, included in the higher command of the S.A. In this capacity, the "National Socialist Students' League", the Hitler Youth and the "National Socialist Students' League" were under my authority. The command ranks were as follows: at the top, Adolf Hitler as supreme commander of the S.A. (Oberster S.A. Führer, OSAF); then, as chief of operations of the S.A., Captain Ernst Roehm, and below him, as chief of the youth sector, I was still the "Gruppenführer" (until then the highest rank after the chief of operations). Despite my lower rank, Roehm did not interfere in my work. However, the dependence soon ended, for when I was appointed as an adviser to the NSDAP in 1932, I ceased to report to the S.A. Operations Headquarters and was placed on an equal footing with Roehm.

Shortly beforehand, I had visited him at his home in the Schwabing district of Herzogstrasse to discuss the details of my new assignment. He was single and lived with his mother and sister. A burly man with a broad, scarred face, he was the only friend who was on a first-name basis with Hitler and who was on a first-name basis with Hitler. They had known each other since 1919. Roehm was at the time an officer in the Bavarian General Staff, and Hitler was under him as a propagandist and orator. He was expelled from the Reichswehr for illegal arms supplies to Hitler in 1923, and, after his conviction at the Munich Trial, Hitler gave him full powers for the reorganisation of the SA and defence detachments. Goering then appointed him Acting Commander of the SA.

had lifted the ban against the party and the S.A. itself, Roehm called the forces he had reorganised "Frontbann". His patron and protector was General Ludendorff. But nine months later, in the spring of 1925, when the S.A. was re-established, the N.S.D.A.P. and the reorganisation of the S.A., the dilemma arose as to whether the latter should be organised as a paramilitary league like those then rife in Germany or as a political fighting troop. There was a disagreement between Hitler and Roehm. In 1928 the captain accepted an offer from the Bolivian government to organise the army on the German model. He thus became Chief of Staff of the Bolivian armed forces. But in 1930, following the dismissal of the then "Osaf", Pfeffer von Salomon, and the suppression of the subversion of the S.A., Hitler called him back to Germany.

X

A couple of hundred National Socialist students gathered in the party hall of the "Union" hotel in Munich to celebrate Christmas solemnities. Hitler and the top party hierarchy had been invited, though without even remotely foreseeing that the "boss" would turn up. Suddenly, we found him in our midst, looking as amused as we had ever seen him. There was a mixture of pride and tenderness in his tone of voice as he made the introduction:

-My niece, Miss Raubal.

The girl standing beside Hitler was of medium height, well-built, with slightly wavy brown hair and cheerful brown eyes. A confused blush tinged her round cheeks as she entered the room and saw the surprise of her appearance. I too was surprised, not by the girl's beauty, but by the presence of a young woman next to Hitler at such a public event.

I had heard of her before and knew that Angela Raubal, called Geli, aged twenty, was the daughter of Hitler's half-sister. Three years earlier (in 1925) he had brought the mother and then the daughter from Vienna, where they were staying. Her half-sister, the widow Raubal, did the housework for her at "Wachenfeld House" in Obersalzberg, while the niece took singing lessons in Munich. "Uncle Alf" had offered to look after Geli's studies, after she had interrupted her medical studies in Vienna because of her poor aptitude for anatomy lessons.

Although the detail was later disputed, I can assure you that she called Hitler "Uncle Alf". I heard it clearly that night at the Christmas party. We were seated at the tables, covered with white tablecloths, in the candlelight; Adolf Hitler was on her left and I on her right. She called him in a clear, cheerful voice "Uncle Alf". I remember being surprised, although I couldn't say for sure why. He was chatting with her

He held her hand and smiled all the time. At eleven o'clock she got up and left the party with Geli, which from that moment on became rather duller. I had the impression that she would willingly have stayed much longer.

This was soon discussed in Munich party circles: Hitler was experiencing feelings towards his niece that were not strictly family feelings. But the chanting party members made their comments in hushed tones, as if they sensed that Hitler was not prepared to take any jokes in the matter.

The first to become aware of this intuition was his chauffeur, Emil Maurice, who had been in his service for many years and had been one of the first members of the S.S. He was unceremoniously dismissed for having dared to fetch Geli from the room of the boarding house where she lived, in the Jardin Anglais.

The second victim was the *gauleiter* Munder from Wurtemberg. He was dismissed with immediate effect for having commented that the party leader took his niece for rides in the "Mercedes Kompressor" and that the two of them went shopping in the most expensive shops on Maximilianstrasse.

In the following two and a half years I often had the opportunity to get used to this unequal couple. We saw each other at concerts at the Philharmonie or at the Opera. And when I went to Obersalzberg to visit Hitler, I often met Geli there too. I learned from Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer, that he had often had to accompany Hitler and Geli on their trips to Lake Chiem. Hitler seemed to enjoy those walks, especially when Geli accompanied him. And when in the autumn of 1929 he rented a new flat at 16 Prinzregentenplatz, he took his housekeeper - and Geli - with him.

All those who dealt regularly with Hitler soon became accustomed to Geli's presence. The fact is that we preferred him to be present, for in that case Hitler seldom indulged in those painful scenes, with endless monologues and tremendous accusations, with which he

He was a gift, not only to political opponents, but also to friends and collaborators. Geli's presence seemed to have a beneficial effect on her character. For her part, she was simple, spontaneous and very feminine.

I have to confess something: I never asked myself at the time about the relationship between Geli and her uncle, who was twenty years older than her. For me, Hitler was a political idol, a man who could arouse the enthusiasm of thousands of people from a platform. The man's private life was of no interest to me, and if I saw or heard anything, I didn't take it into account at the time.

Heinrich Hoffmann later told me that Hitler had confessed his love for Geli. But he could not marry, because his supporters expected him to give himself entirely to the people, without restraint or qualms, without family obligations. Heinrich Hoffmann also told me about Hitler's exaggerated jealousy: no man was allowed near the girl, and she had to give him a strict account of her time when she went out for something. It took all Hoffmann's strength of conviction and diplomacy to get Hitler to allow his niece to attend a carnival party. That must have been around 1930.

Hitler suddenly wanted to show how generous he was and ordered the dressmaker Ingo Schröder to come with a selection of costumes. Geli chose an Indian costume for herself, but her uncle thought it was too daring. He bought an evening gown for her - an expensive dress for what was customary at the time. Thus attired, Geli was able to attend the distinguished and accredited "bal paré" at the Deutschen Theater. Heinrich Hoffmann and Max Adam, the party's editorial director, was appointed to accompany her.

Did Hitler love her? Surely he admired and revered her, while she, for her part, was flattered that this man, whose very presence provoked the enthusiasm of the crowds, sought her company. To this flattery she sacrificed for four years her freedom, perhaps her happiness as a wife, and finally her own life.

On the morning of 18 September 1931, Angela Raubal was found dead in her room. One of Hitler's pistols was found beside her on the sofa.

The latter had left the day before for Nuremberg, where he wanted to attend some election rallies. Hess immediately called the hotel "Deustcher Hof", but Hitler had already left. A "bellboy" from the hotel was quickly dispatched in a taxi with the message that Hitler should return immediately and call Hess from Nuremberg. The latter told him over the phone that Geli had been involved in an accident. When Hitler arrived at his home on Prinzregentenplatz in Munich, the body had already been taken to the forensic medical institute.

Police enquiries revealed that Geli had been in Obersalzberg the day before Hitler's march. Hitler telephoned her and she returned. They had dinner together. Hitler's housekeeper, Frau Winter, overheard a discussion, but did not understand what it was about. Shortly afterwards Heinrich Hoffmann arrived, who was on his way to meet Hitler to leave for Nuremberg. The two men were already on the stairs when Geli waved goodbye to them from the doorway. Hitler retraced his steps, while Hoffmann continued on his way. Shortly afterwards, Hitler joined him.

The housekeeper, Frau Winter, declared that Geli seemed very excited and that Hitler had tried in vain to calm her down. When he had left, Geli said to Frau Winter:

-I don't really get on with Uncle Alf any more.

After the news of Geli's death, Hitler was on the verge of despair. The chauffeur Julius Sehreck, Emil Maurice's successor, was ordered by the party directorate to take away the box of pistols which Hitler always kept at his home. For two days and two nights, Strasser, Goering and Hess kept him company.

On Monday, 21 September, the newspapers reported the news of the "suicide at Hitler's house". Their main concern was that

that his enemies were trying to make political capital out of the tragedy. But, to tell the truth, the press made little sensationalist use of what had happened. Geli was buried in Vienna. In the days preceding the burial, Hitler shut himself away in the villa on the shores of Lake Teger owned by the printer Adolf Müller, in whose workshops can be found at printed on

Voelkischen Beobachter [30]

Hoffmann accompanied him. The evening after the burial they visited the grave in Vienna's Zentralfriedhof. As a stateless person, Hitler could only enter Austria with a special visa.

For Hitler's inner circle, Geli's suicide remained an enigma. Only Heinrich Hoffmann knew that she was close friends with a young Viennese doctor, with whom she may also have been in love. Of course, this alone was not reason enough for Geli to take her own life. She had been of age for two years and no one could legally oppose her will. However, there must have been something so distressing in Hitler's love for his niece that she found their life together as unbearable as a break-up.

Would Hitler's trajectory and with it the fate of us all have changed if he had been able to effect a happy marriage? I can assure you at the present moment that he never loved another woman as he loved Geli Raubal. But I am not of the opinion that a marriage with that girl or, in general, a marriage of Hitler, would have made any difference. Anyone who knew him must reject as absurd the hypothesis that a woman could have influenced him, whether her name was Geli Raubal or, later, Eva Braun. I am of the opinion that in his relations with women, Hitler experienced both great erotic tension and strong sexual inhibition. And perhaps an analysis of his lust for power, his fanaticism and his demonic destructive rage would lead us to the conclusion that he was not in a position to make the woman he loved happy.

Hitler spent considerably more money than he earned. Until 1929 he had lived modestly in two furnished rooms in house number 41 in Thiersstrasse. However, he paid one hundred marks a month rent for House Wachenfeld in Obersalzberg. He also looked after his half-sister and, until her suicide, his niece, to whom he indulged every whim. He drove his "Mercedes Compressor", one of the most expensive cars of the time, about 100,000 kilometres a year, had his own chauffeur and a bodyguard, and liked the best hotels. All this cost a lot of money.

The histories of the period are full of references to secret financiers from the world of big business and high finance. The fact is that between 1924 and 1929 Hitler had no such funds at his disposal. Until 1929, the party had to live exclusively on membership dues. The monthly membership fee was one Mark, of which twenty *pfennig* were assigned to the central headquarters in Munich. The 100,000

party members (at the end of 1928) thus amounted to 240,000 Marks per year. The party employees and a few party bosses and the

S.A. received modest salaries (e.g., the *gauleiter* of Berlin, Dr. Goebbels, 200 Marks), and yet most of the income was spent on staff costs and rent. The rest was earmarked for the election campaign.

Hitler received no salary from the party. Officially, his livelihood was the royalties from his book *Mein Kampf* and payment for the editorial articles he published in the *Voelkischen Beobachter*. At a time when the circulation was increasing, He was paid about eight hundred marks per article. The party publishing house belonged to the N.S.D.A.P., and Hitler was its chief adviser. Max Amann, who had been a sergeant-major in the same company as Hitler during the war, ran the publishing house along strictly commercial lines. The members of the S.A. and S.S. came to be a kind of free promoters of the publications, and at that time, Hitler attached more value to a subscription to the *Voelkischen Beobachter* than to a membership in the party.

Hitler's income as a writer is known from his tax returns:

1925 - 19,842 marks

1926 - 15,903 marks

1927 - 11,494 marks

1929 - 15,448 marks

Compared to these taxes, the expenses were almost double. To justify them, he declared to the finance office that he had taken out bank loans to cover the difference and claimed tax exemption for the interest on the debt. He fought with the tax office over the deductibility of his propaganda costs until long after he became Reich Chancellor. And finally, in 1934, the provision was enacted to write off the debt of

405,494 marks that the Reich Chancellor owed to the tax authorities.

Anyone who lived as close to Hitler as I did knows that the tax declarations transcribed above were undoubtedly false. It is true that he earned and spent more money. But it is no less true that he had no secret financiers at the time. He was his own "manager".

Because Hitler was an attraction for many who were not National Socialists. People went to his speeches as they might to a variety show. So entrance tickets were demanded, party leaflets and publications were sold, and money boxes were set up everywhere to collect money from the audience. The funds collected in this way sometimes amounted to several thousand marks. Hitler did not demand a speaker's fee, but only the payment of expenses. The amount was not calculated on the basis of receipts and disbursements, but on the actual profit made by the assembly. Hitler did not take care of all this himself, but delegated his *factotum* and "travel marshal".

[31] Julius Schaub to deal with the leaders of the "gau" or the regional leadership. The excessive activity of the N.S.D.A.P. - where other parties organised one meeting, we organised five - was therefore also financially motivated. For my part,

I also financed the "National Socialist Student League" and the Hitler Youth through the formula of the assemblies.

For Hitler, 1928 was a very weak year, both politically and financially. I thought I guessed at the time that he had resigned himself to it entirely and regarded the movement only as a basis for an independent life.

Hitler himself, who constantly repeated in the assemblies or before the S.A. formations that victory was at hand, said half an hour later in a private conversation:

-It will still take twenty years or a hundred years before our idea succeeds. But what, in the end, does one person mean in the development of a people, in the development of humanity? I tried then to perpetuate these views of mine in a few verses:

*It may be that the columns here present, That
these brown columns without end,
They break up, dissolve,
blown away by the
winds... Maybe, maybe...*

*I will remain faithful, forsaken by all, I will
carry the flag, alone,
My mouth will seem to
utter mad words But only
with me will this flag be
lowered That will be the
proud shroud of the fallen.*

At the time of his depression I became aware of another predominant feature of Hitler's character: his hypochondria. He thought he was sick with cancer and was sure he would die young. While sitting he used to move his body up and down. At first I thought that these movements were an expression of great nervous tension. But one day he confided to me that he was frequently assailed by great pains in the diaphragm and gastric region.

For a long time, Frau Elsa Bruckmann tried hard to take him to the doctor. Hitler was terrified of being recognised. Like all hypochondriacs, he preferred to remain uncertain about his pain, real or imagined.

One should not therefore believe that Hitler was a weakling. One day I saw an extension cord hanging on the wall in his flat in Thierstrasse, and he told me that he exercised with it every morning. The muscles of his arms and pectoral muscles were thus strengthened and hard. In any case, that was the only sport he did. He couldn't swim, or ski, or even dance.

That must have made me a little suspicious to my young nature at the time. A man who demanded the cult of the body and maximum physical fitness for German youth, and who did not himself master any of the sporting activities likely to excite young people, must necessarily have been suspicious. But what is certain is that he is this is a reflection made very *a posteriori*, since at the time no applied the normal proportions to measure Hitler. i

Frau Bruckmann finally managed to get him to a doctor. He was recognised by Dr. Schweningen, the son of Bismarck's chamber physician. Hitler did not consider it beneath his dignity to be treated by him.

Dr. Schweningen found no dangerous symptoms, but only a chronic irritation of the gastric mucosa. He said:

-If you stop eating sweets and stay away from anything meaty for a while, your stomach will return to normal.

Hitler strictly adhered to the recommended diet. After about three months, his pains had disappeared. That was in early 1929. From then on, he remained a vegetarian, although he was unable to curb his penchant for pastries.

XII

The "Schellingstrasse" in Munich, on the edge of the Schwabing district, is as grey and dreary as many other streets in the big cities of the world. But for me it was the axis around which my life revolved. At 50 Schellingstrasse was the national headquarters of the N.S.D.A.P.; at 50 Schellingstrasse was the headquarters of the N.S.D.A.P..

on 39, the editing and printing of *Voelkischen Beobachter*; in the the

number 29, the offices of the "National Socialist Students' League" and, at the same time, my home, and at number 62, the "Osteria Bavaria", Hitler's favourite restaurant.

In Schellingstrasse I also met the woman who was soon to play a major role in my life. She was about seventeen at the time. She was a very elegant type of girl: brown hair cut short, unusual make-up for the time, a pullover and a short, narrow skirt, silk stockings and very high heels. At first glance I took her for French. Most of the time she took a boxer dog for a walk, and I confess that I did my best to get to know her. I considered her the prettiest girl I had ever seen in Munich.

One day, I was sitting in my usual place, at the window of the "Universität" café. Suddenly I saw a boxer running down the street on a leash. I quickly thought: "This is the French girl's dog".

I ran out, without paying for my drink, and managed to catch the dog. On his collar was a tag with the address: "Hoffmann. Schnorrstrasse, 9". The street also belonged to the Schwabing district and was very close by. I knocked and they opened the door. The girl from "Schellingstrasse" appeared before me. The dog got away from me and went into the flat. Before I could say a word, the girl thanked me and closed the door.

A few weeks later, I was looking in the shop windows of the Von Kitsinger antique shop in Schellingstrasse itself, when someone said to me behind my back:

-Greetings, Mr Schirach!

I turned around. Behind me stood a rather squat, powerful-shouldered, light-eyed gentleman with a somewhat sly look. I had known him since the day I had first gone with Hitler, to Erlangen. He was Heinrich Hoffmann, his photographer. I knew that Hoffmann accompanied Hitler on all his trips and was a frequent guest of the family. The "Chief"¹ liked his company, for he was a lively and brilliant conversationalist.

As he was waving to me, I saw behind him the girl with the boxer shorts. She was trying to compose an expression of boredom.

-Will you please introduce me to her? - I asked Hoffmann. He turned half-heartedly and absently to the girl and said:

-Ah! This is Henny, my daughter....

It happened shortly before the Nuremberg National Congress in 1929.

-Come and see his picture," Hoffmann invited me. His studio was very close by, at 25 Amalienstrasse, above the café "Grössenwahn", which Ibsen had made famous. Hoffmann was in charge of editing cards with the photographs of all the National Socialist leaders. That day he showed me the picture that was to become the "Schirach postcard". It showed me in the company of the Italian diplomat Santoni, whom he had invited to the Party Congress as the first Fascist observer to attend.

In Hoffmann's postcard section, a young blonde with a very good figure caught my eye. She was wearing a white gown, with a closed collar like a doctor's gown and a belt.

-This is Eva Braun, the expeditionary officer," said Hoffmann. That was the first time I had heard the name. Eva Braun remained in charge of the postcard expedition even after she became the Reich Chancellor's mistress. Hitler had himself regularly informed on which postcards were most in demand, and this was a kind of "Gallup Poll" with which he checked the popularity of his staff.

Heinrich Hoffmann, the son of a photographer from Regensburg, had practically grown up with the camera. He learned from the court photographers in Darmstadt and Bad Homburg - a meeting place for European princes before the First World War - how to photograph crowned heads of state. Some of the most famous photographs of Wilhelm II were Hoffmann's; he had also obtained plates of the last Russian Tsar, Nicholas, the tenor of the century, Enrico Caruso, and Richard Strauss. But he was not satisfied with the then commonplace "posed" photographs, and was one of the first photographers to obtain snapshots with the heavy plate camera, and his pictures were published in all the illustrated magazines of Europe. He was a fashion and society photographer in Paris and London, the right-hand man of E. O. Hoppé, the most famous photographer in the world at the time.

Once recognised as a master of gallery, press and advertising photography, Heinrich Hoffmann settled in Munich after his transhumant years. On 1 August 1914 he photographed the crowds in the Feldherrnhalle jubilantly saluting the mobilisation. Nineteen years later we find, with the help of the young Adolf Hitler in the masses, no less enthusiastic than the rest of them.

In 1919, Hoffmann, wearing a red armband, entered the headquarters of the Munich General Council to perpetuate the first organised soviet on German soil. And in 1922, when Adolf Hitler made himself known to the world with his speeches and parades, an American agency offered the Munich photographer no less than a thousand dollars for the image of this wild man from Bavaria.

Hoffmann thought he could easily earn the exceptional price. He lived in the Schwabing district and one of his best friends and companions was the writer Dietrich Eckart, Adolf Hitler's patron and paternal friend. It was Eckart himself who told him that Hitler would not allow himself to be photographed. This refusal was nothing more than a cunning political ploy: as long as the people of the

If they heard about Hitler, but did not know what he looked like, they would be forced to come to his assemblies and events to satisfy their curiosity. So they flocked to them. So much for the intrigue about Hitler's appearance, which the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus* organised a competition among its cartoonists entitled: "What is Hitler like?"

None of the cartoonists were able to provide an image of Hitler, as the bodyguards ensured that no photographer or cartoonist approached him. An American agency finally offered \$20,000 for exclusive rights to a photograph of Hitler. But Hitler turned down the offer. It was Dietrich Eckart who announced that Hitler might enter into a deal for \$30,000, as he needed the money to organise the S.A., which was to be his revolutionary army.

Hoffmann had photographed emperors and kings and regarded Hitler's demand as a manifestation of a megalomaniac. Moreover, Hitler could be considered a "historical personality" and therefore had no rights to his own photography. And finally, Hoffmann was in the best position to "shoot" his camera on Hitler, as his studio was located in

located opposite the editorial office of the *Voetkischen Beobachter*. One day he saw Hitler's car parked in front of the editorial office. Hoffmann took his 13 by 18 "Nettel" camera and focused on the door of the house. When Hitler left the building, after several hours, Hoffmann shot the photograph, which must have been worth a thousand to twenty thousand dollars. But at that very moment he was grabbed from behind, pinning him down. Hitler's bodyguards wrenched the machine away from him, removed the plate and smashed it on the pavement. Hoffmann protested vociferously, but Hitler did not honour him with a single glance as he hurried away.

Shortly afterwards, Hermann Esser married. He was at the time one of Hitler's closest friends and Heinrich Hoffmann's friend and protégé. The young couple, who had very little money at their disposal, begged the photographer to allow them to hold the wedding reception at their home in Schwabing.

Witness and guest of honour at the wedding was Adolf Hitler. He recognised in the host the photographer who had been mistreated in the Schellingstrasse by his bodyguards and was quick to apologise.

-I don't want to be photographed before I have achieved any political results. But I promise you that when the time comes, you will be the first to take a photograph of me. What bothers me is that they try to get a snapshot of me by surprise.

The wedding banquet began. When coffee was served, Hoffmann begged the guest of honour to accompany him to his office, where he handed him a negative and a copy of it, showing Hitler.

The latter was puzzled. It was a photograph of him, secretly taken by Hoffmann during lunch. The plate had been hastily developed and its positive had been obtained.

-Something loose," said Hitler.
Hoffmann held the cliché up to the light.

-Anyway, intense enough to charge twenty thousand dollars?

And as he uttered these words, he broke the negative before Hitler's eyes. This is how the friendship between the two began in 1922.

The entirely apolitical photographer seemed to mortgage himself entirely to the career revolutionary. In Hoffmann's house Hitler found what he had not known since the age of eighteen: a family life. For Hoffmann's children, Henriette and Heinrich, Jr. - then aged ten and six respectively - "Herr Hitler" became the ideal family friend, almost a second father.

When Hitler noticed one day that Henriette, at the age of ten, was still reading excessively childish books, he gave her Schwab's "The Most Beautiful Days of Classical Antiquity" as a present. He also took a book with him one day about Schliemann's excavations at Troy and explained the illustrations to her. When Henny told him

He confessed that music bored her and that she often "smoked" her piano lessons, typed out the motifs of "The Ring of the Nibelungs" with two fingers and explained the development of the opera to her. Hitler also helped the girl to do gymnastics on the two gymnastic rings in the corridor, and on Sunday mornings he took her to cultural film screenings or accompanied her to the Munich museums. He also saw to it that Henny got her first skis, and on the occasion of her confirmation, he gave her a tennis racket. When Frau Hoffmann died in 1928, Hitler took the children hand in hand to her mother's grave.

In the spring of 1930, I returned after a somewhat lengthy trip to the offices of the "Students' League".

32

National Socialists". The printing of *Die Bewegung* newspaper of the "League". In the office, three girls wrote addresses on the delivery boxes. I was surprised to recognise one of them, Henny Hoffmann. It turned out that she had suddenly discovered her sympathy for the "League" by offering herself as an office assistant.

Once the postage for the magazine was paid, there wasn't much left in the box, but enough for cakes, cream and coffee - an invitation for Miss Hoffmann! In the evening we took the newspapers to the post office and then we all went dancing.

I danced only with Henny Hoffmann, with whom I had fallen completely in love. I was also able to see that she was not indifferent to me.

A few days after that evening, I received an unexpected visitor in my room at 29 Schellingstrasse.

-Two gentlemen wish to speak to you," my employer announced.

The visitors held in their hands the multicoloured student caps. Narrow bands of green, white and red crossed over the waistcoats of their correct temos. They stood in the doorway, clicked their heels together and the eldest of the three said:

-I come as a representative of the revered Franconia Corporation and I have the honour to ask you to accept the challenge of this corporation.

It was a challenge to a duel. I was not surprised, because I knew what it was about: the Franconia Corporation had insulted a member of the national leadership of the NSDAP. I had demanded that the corporation apologise for this excess. The word "excess" was enough to make those gentlemen feel insulted. And an insult could only be erased, in the opinion of the students, with blood.

Those student guilds were accustomed to sabre-rattling, and both the duel and the whole ceremonial surrounding it appeared to my eyes to be utterly ridiculous. But as national head of the "National Socialist Student League" I could not let myself be "pinched". The student combat leagues were the most active part of the student body. They and their "protectors" were perhaps potential voters for National Socialism. So I accepted, against my convictions, the rules of the "weapons test" as stipulated by the corporation.

-I accept the challenge," I said to the envoys of the Franconian corporation. And to take away the joy of seeing me under the blade of their sabre, I added:

-But only with a gun.

It was unaccustomed, but my visitors did not allow themselves a single gesture of disapproval. They begged me to appoint a representative with whom the place and time of the duel would be discussed. I did so. The heels of my visitors clicked again, followed by a polite bow and a solemn farewell.

In the offices of the "League" the announcement of the duel caused a great commotion. The girls were the most affected, and I did not notice that our most recent assistant, Miss Hoffmann, had suddenly disappeared.

Henny rode her bicycle to Prinzregentenplatz 16, where Hitler had his new home. He was always visible to her. He met her at once and Henny explained that he was going to fight a duel.

Hitler was angered. He rejected the duels. In the course of many conversations I had managed to convince him that we must not oppose the duels if we wanted to win the university youth for ourselves. But at that moment he forgot all that and immediately drew up the following circular order: "All members of the NSDAP and its sections are forbidden to take part in duels, as well as to be witnesses or representatives of the parties who may wish to fight each other. Signed: Adolf Hitler.

He tried to reassure Henny as he handed her the paper.

-Take this personally to Mr. Rosenberg, at the *Voelkischen Beobachter*. It has to appear in the next edition. Henny cycled back to the Schellingstrasse. Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German, who was editor-in-chief of the newspaper, He frowned as he read Hitler's order. In the first place, because he was averse to the expedient method of circular orders. Secondly, because he felt that, as a former member of the student guilds, he was bound by their code of honour. But he obeyed, wrote in red pencil the notation "Compose urgently" and gave the paper to the printer.

Henny returned triumphantly to the offices and said to me:

-The Führer has forbidden it!

At that moment I felt like killing her. The position I had so painstakingly acquired among the student body was at stake. [\[32\]](#)

I ran to the *Voelkischen Beobachter* and immediately went down to the printers. Talking to Rosenberg was pointless, since as editor-in-chief he had to obey Hitler's orders.

He knew all the operators, as he had composed and printed there *Akademischer Beobachter* for more than a year. Almost my

They were all social democrats, and while they were compiling Hitler's diary, they loudly and unabashedly mocked its contents or discussed it with the editors. In spite of this, they composed and printed that publication which they hated so much, as neatly and correctly as they would have printed any other.

I found the form where they had adjusted the ban on duels signed by Hitler. Trying not to be seen, I removed the lines and replaced them with a notice of the same size that I found on the form on the right-hand page. Nobody noticed it.

Hitler was seized with a fit of rage when he opened his newspaper in Nuremberg the next day. He telephoned Rosenberg urgently, accused him of having allowed sabotage at the printing works, and ordered the editor-in-chief, Max Amann, to open an investigation to clear up what had happened. The former sergeant major turned the editorial office and workshops upside down. When I heard what had happened, I went to Rosenberg and admitted my guilt.

He looked at me with astonishment and said only:

-You'll see how he copes with the boss.

For the first time I got to experience one of Hitler's rages.

-He should be thrown out of the game immediately! - he exclaimed -. But since you have not been a soldier, you don't really know what an order is.

I was deeply impressed by this. Until then, Hitler had respected my opinions, often allowed himself to be persuaded and never interfered in my work. With the order to ban duels, he had suddenly jeopardised the reputation of the NSDAP in the student milieu. At risk was what I had so patiently

I had been building up over the course of two years. So I thought it was not me who was wrong, but him.

I told him as soon as he let me speak. I pointed out to him that in the university elections of 1929-30, thirty per cent of the 100,000 students had cast a National Socialist vote. Its results had represented the NSDAP's greatest political success since 1925, when the party had been re-founded in the "Bürgerbráukeller".

Hitler paced up and down his office, but he did not interrupt me. When I had finished speaking, he went to the window and turned his back on me. Then he suddenly turned around and smiled:

-You have been lucky again, Schirach. As you know, in the Austrian army, one earned the decoration of Maria Theresa when one disobeyed an order but won a battle. This time you have won, but the next time you will lose your head.

The conflict was thus resolved. I could leave. When I was at the door, Hitler called out to me to say:

-In any case, I think Miss Hoffmann's behaviour in this matter is magnificent.

-I am not of the same opinion.

-Consider the reason why the girl came running to see me," said Hitler. She feared for her life.

Shortly afterwards, I was engaged to marry Henny Hoffmann. Hermann Goering and his first wife Karin took her to Berlin for a long stay. Henny lived with the Goerings in Badeschen Strasse in Wilmersdorf and with my sister Rosalind, who was at the time one of the leading singers at the State Opera in the capital.

As for the matter of the duel, that too was eventually settled. The corporation that had challenged me did not want to admit the gun as a weapon and withdrew the challenge. However, there was a consequence for me. Someone tipped off the Munich public prosecutor's office and I was sentenced to six months' arrest for violating article

201 of the Code by "accepting the challenge to hold a duel with deadly weapons".

Of course, in the end I didn't have to serve the sentence.

XIII

Henriette Hoffmann and I were married on 31 March 1932. From Munich's oldest registry office in the "Alter Peter", we went with our witnesses, Adolf Hitler and Ernst Roehm, to the former's home, where the wedding banquet awaited us. On the third floor of the building, which at the turn of the century had been a stately mansion, and after passing through a door with a plaque reading "Adolf Hitler", we entered through a long, dark corridor into the nine-room flat rented by Hitler. The furniture in the dining room was conventional, and on the walls hung paintings by Grützner and Professor Löwith, who was also the only Jewish painter whom Hitler not only valued, but even revered.

Order reigned in that house. The atmosphere was solidly bourgeois, without the slightest hint of revolution. A well-to-do manufacturer or merchant could have lived like that.

Our wedding banquet was an extraordinary opportunity for Hitler's housekeeper, Frau Winter, to demonstrate her mastery of the culinary arts. Hitler looked down on the gigantic ox roast and commented:

Woe to you meat-eaters!

For his part, he ate only "spaghetti" with tomato sauce and an apple.

On a huge table they had placed the wedding presents. Among them was the guest book for our new home on Königstrasse, next to the English Garden. Hitler had written the first entry: "At the turn of an era. Adolf Hitler".

For the truth was that we were convinced all those days that there was going to be a change in our times. In the election for Reich President on 13 March, more than eleven million voters had voted for Hitler. They represented thirty per cent of all voters. Hitler

He had finished behind Hindenburg (49.6 per cent) but ahead of communist leader Ernst Thálmann and the head of the "steel helmets", Duesterberg.

Many National Socialists believed in Hitler's triumph and were disappointed by the result. But Hitler himself considered it a solid triumph to have won thirty per cent of the vote. We had thus become the strongest party.

Despite his victory, Hindenburg failed to win an absolute majority, so the referendum had to be repeated on 10 April. The national opposition then had to decide between the 84-year-old Hindenburg and the 42-year-old Hitler. Hindenburg was no longer the candidate of the right-wing parties, but of the "Zentrum", the Democrats and the SPD.

Our conversations at the wedding banquet table were dominated by politics. Hitler explained the gigantic preparations being made for the election campaign. He had leased a three-engine plane, with its entire crew, from the "Lufthansa" and thus wanted to address five events a day. But he did not succeed in carrying out his plans. Since the masses of workers could only be mobilised at night, he would have had to travel at night, and flights without visibility and in such weather were not feasible anywhere in the world at that time. Moreover, Hitler feared that his stomach would not be able to withstand so many repeated flights.

Hitler lifted the table and led us into his living room. Mrs. Winter served champagne and for him a lemonade. The guests wished Henny and me congratulations, and then went on to talk politics again. In spite of the great preparations, Hitler was convinced that he would not become president of the Reich in the second election either.

-The old man will win again," he said. But we'll get a couple of million more votes, and Hindenburg won't live forever either.

Two hours later the party was over. My wife and I wanted to set off on our short wedding trip in the daytime: a couple of days' skiing in the Tyrol. Hitler walked us to the door. As a farewell, he said he would come and visit us if he had time. And he gave Henny a card for our cook, Anny. It read: "I eat everything that nature willingly offers me: fruit, vegetables and vegetable fat. Please do not serve me what animals do not offer me of their own free will: meat, milk and cheese. From the animals, I only accept the eggs that the hen gives us".

Hitler's wedding present was a long time coming: it was "Lux", a beautiful shepherd dog who had won first prize at the Berlin dog show. He was still in training. When we went to fetch him four weeks later, he proved to be a tremendous problem for the house of a Nazi leader. "Lux" jumped angrily every time a visitor made the Hitler salute. He had undergone such rigorous training that he saw an adversary in every person who raised his arm in front of him.



Illustration 5. Hitler followed by Von Schirach, reviewing the Hitler Youth during the Hitler Youth Congress of

Nuremberg



Illustration 6. Hitler greets the crowd at the Nuremberg stadium, in the back seat Hess and Von

Schirach

XIV

We had been married for twelve days. With the financial help of my parents and my father-in-law, we had rented a beautiful flat at 31 Koeniginstrasse in Munich, next to the English Garden. It had been built according to the plans of the painter Franz von Defregger, who had lived there until his death.

Hitler called in the afternoon of that day, which was exactly 11 April 1932. I remember the date perfectly well, because the day before was the day of the presidential election. He said he wanted to visit us to talk to me. He was in a great hurry, he said.

Fatigued by the many election rallies I had attended and with swollen tonsils, I lay on a couch listening to the radio commentary on the election results of the previous day. Hitler had won 13.4 million votes and Hindenburg 19.4 million. That result had made Hindenburg Reich President once again. But Hitler had also gained a great deal: he had gained no less than two million new votes over the first election four weeks earlier.

He arrived at about eight o'clock. As he took off his trenchcoat and put his inseparable whip in the cloakroom, he said to me:

-Something unpleasant has happened, Schirach. It's about the militia leader.

After the wedding feast twelve days earlier, Roehm had left the same evening for Berlin to carry out "important political dealings". What he had actually discussed, I learned from Hitler, who was pacing up and down my office in a state of the utmost nervousness.

For a long time, Roehm had had a very intimate exchange of letters with the Berlin physician and psychiatrist Dr Heimsoth, known as a character who tended towards homosexuality. The correspondence had been taken from his office desk by an assistant and offered to the SPD, although

only in copies. The originals had again been bought by Roehm through an agent of his, a Dr. Bell. Hitler had then believed his friend's word of honour: according to him, they were only ordinary forgeries. But at the end of March the photocopies had reappeared in the hands of a Social-Democratic leader. That was the reason why Roehm had left in such a hurry for Berlin on the day of our wedding. On 1 April, arrangements were made at the socialist leader's "headquarters" to retrieve the letters that were so compromising for him. Roehm did not show up empty-handed: the party's information service had supplied him with information and rather spicy details about the amorous affairs of Prussia's Minister of the Interior, Cari Severing, a Social Democrat herself. The socialist leaders immediately laid down their arms and both sides decided that they would not publish the compromising material.

But Hitler had no confidence in this "peace".

-Roehm has deceived me," he said. But he is my friend and I cannot leave him in the lurch. Besides, he is our best man for negotiations with the Reichswehr. Of course, he must be prevented from having any dealings with the youth, otherwise we shall lose the confidence of the parents. I shall issue an order making you solely responsible to me in future as head of the Reich Youth.

Two months later - he had already turned twenty-five years old - Hitler appointed me to the party's executive committee. I resigned as head of the "National Socialist Students' League" and became solely responsible for the Hitler Youth.

-I am going to organise the biggest youth movement Germany has ever known," I promised Hitler.

The importance of Roehm's contacts with the Reichswehr for Hitler's seizure of power was soon to be demonstrated. On 13 April Brüning's Minister of the Interior, Groener, proposed an "emergency decree for the security of the state authority" for the signature of the Reich President. The decree in question

It prohibited the S.A.'s throughout the Reich. Behind the scenes, Roehm began to prepare a plot against Chancellor Heinrich Brüning. Roehm's ally was the chief of staff in the Reichswehr Ministry, General Kurt von Schleicher, who in those turbulent months had become the most influential adviser to the octogenarian Hindenburg. Secret talks between Hitler and Schleicher were held through Roehm.

Hitler pledged support for a new "national government under the presidency of the right-wing Catholic Franz von Papen", with the following conditions: dissolution of the Reichstag, new elections and repeal of the S.A. ban.

The behind-the-scenes game quickly led to success: on 30 May, Hindenburg forced his Chancellor Brüning to resign. In addition to the joint action of Schleicher, Hitler and Roehm, Brüning's downfall was also due to the fact that some East Prussian landowners who had their estates next to the very large estates owned there by Hindenburg told the old man that the Chancellor was preparing to expropriate the large estates in accordance with a land reform programme he had outlined. To Hindenburg's ears it all sounded tremendously Bolshevik. [\[33\]](#)

The new von Papen government soon acceded to Hitler's demands: the S.A. marched through the streets in their brown shirts and the Reichstag was dissolved, setting a date of 31 July for new elections. This election would give the final resolution: an absolute majority for Hitler and the NSDAP.

The elections were preceded by the bloodiest pre-election battles known to Germany. Never before had an election been preceded by the violence that erupted in June and July 1932. In Prussia alone, 30 communists and 38 nationalists were killed in the course of 322 street battles.

On 31 July 1932 there was an atmosphere of victory in the canteen of the "Brown House". The party leadership had organised a special telephone service to report on the elections, and the provincial headquarters were tirelessly supplying the figures from the many polling stations throughout Germany. Hitler appeared repeatedly to have the figures handed over to him, while youth boys on their bicycles secured the link between the "Bürgerbrau" and the "Löwenbrau", where the Munich co-religionists were preparing, with beer and military marches, for a seizure of power in which they were absolutely certain.

Shortly before midnight it became clear that we had won a great victory. Almost everywhere we had won at least twice as many votes as in the Reichstag elections of 1930. But would that mean an absolute majority? In Hitler's working cabinet, in the "Brown House", optimism was growing.

At first light the final results were known: 230 seats in the Reichstag belonged to us. Never in the entire history of German parliamentarism had one party been so strongly represented in the Reichstag. And yet there were seventy-five seats short of an absolute majority.

After a night spent entirely in white, I left the "Brown House" in the morning, tired and dejected. I went first to the home of my father-in-law, Heinrich Hoffmann, where I met Hitler. He was just finishing his breakfast and greeted me with an open smile:

-Heil!

It was only at that moment that I learned that I had become a representative in the Reichstag at the age of twenty-five. It was indeed on his personal instructions that I was nominated as a candidate by the party's executive committee.

After breakfast, Hitler nervously paced up and down the room.

Seventy-five places have not led us to absolute triumph. But that doesn't have to mean a break in our trajectory, Schirach. Roehm has to put his ties back into play.

-But you are the leader of the strongest party," I replied. That means you should automatically be appointed chancellor.

Hitler nodded:

-Yes; but I consider it impossible with the "Zentrum" as a coalition partner. I want all power now or I accept nothing.

I understood. Just as two months before, Chief Roehm in conjunction with General Von Schleicher, who later became Reichswehr Minister in the Von Papen Cabinet, had overthrown the Brüning Government, so now the aforementioned Papen had to be dethroned in order for Hitler to become Chancellor of the Reich.

XV

On 11 August, I was working at home on a manuscript when my wife rushed into my workroom. She had just come from her father's house, where she had been visiting.

-Imagine. Eva tried to commit suicide.

I had known Eva Braun, that beautiful and always cheerful blonde, for three years and could not even imagine what had prompted the girl to seek death.

-"Because of Hitler, of course," said Henriette, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Eva Braun, the daughter of a professor of industrial technology in Munich-Schwabing, was educated at the Catholic boarding school in Simbach an Im. She later attended business school in the Bavarian capital and in 1929 she joined Heinrich Hoffmann's photography business. She was seventeen years old at the time, well-developed and her blue eyes reflected a candid expression.

When Hitler was in Munich, he went to Hoffmann's almost every day, looking through the new photographs and leafing through the illustrated magazines. He was good friends with all the shop assistants. He paid for singing lessons for the red-haired Anni Hünne after she had had her voice tested by a concert master at the State Opera. And he was often in conversation with Eva Braun, whose naive and flirtatious nature seemed to please him.

Sometimes Hitler would drive Henriette and Eva Braun when they wanted to go swimming in the Ungerer Bad or dancing somewhere. At other times he would present them with sweets and chocolates or tickets to the opera and theatre. Hitler's niece Geli Raubal, his great love, was still alive at the time.

A few months later, Eva Braun told my wife that she had secretly slipped a piece of paper into Hitler's coat pocket.

It said: "I'm sorry you are so sad. Eva."

After that, Eva was repeatedly invited by Hitler to go for car rides around Munich. But they never went alone. Either Henriette would join the party, or the

beautiful daughter of the *VoDkischen Beobchter*, Müller.
printer of the *Nothing*

It was clear that Eva Braun meant more to Hitler than just one of the many girls he surrounded himself with to the best of his ability. But Eva was soon to say that Hitler loved her and was willing to marry her. Nobody took this seriously... until 11 August 1932.

Eva did not turn up at work that morning. Heinrich Hoffmann's brother-in-law, the surgeon Dr. Platte, arrived instead.

Platte told, still excited, that Eva Braun had called him that night. Summoning up the last of his strength, he told her that he had shot himself in the chest. Because of Hitler. He had abandoned her and she felt very lonely.

Dr. Platte found Eva Braun at her parents' home - her parents were away on a trip - still alive. He transported her to his clinic and operated on her.

On the morning of the same day, Hitler had received a farewell letter from Eva Braun in Obersalzberg. He was just about to leave for Berlin, where he was to be received by Hindenburg on 13 August. In Munich he interrupted his journey and ran to my father-in-law's house, who informed him of what Dr. Platte had told him.

-Who could imagine such madness? - Hitler shouted.
I've never had anything with that girl!

Her emotion was easily understandable. This was the second time in the space of a year that a woman had wielded a pistol for her cause. The first time, Hitler's opponents had not used the matter against him; would they be so elegant this time too, just as he was about to become Reich Chancellor?

-Can the doctor keep quiet? - Hitler asked.

Hoffmann assured him that he would take care of it, but Hitler insisted on speaking to Dr. Platte personally.

In the evening they met at Hoffmann's own home. Hitler asked the doctor:

-Tell me the truth, doctor: is it possible that this young lady only faked suicide to attract interest in her?

-Not at all. The shot was aimed directly at the heart," answered Dr. Platte. It is a miracle that he survived the shot. We removed the bullet, which was lodged a few millimetres from the heart.

Hitler thanked Dr Platte and then turned to my father-in-law:

-I'm going to worry about that creature.

And so began the unusual relationship that the world would only learn about thirty years later, after their mutual suicide in the *bunker of the Reich Chancellery*.

I never knew whether Hitler had visited Eva Braun while she was still in the clinic.

The next day he resumed his journey to Berlin. On 13 August he was received for the second time by the elderly Reich President Hindenburg. The conversation lasted only eight minutes and was difficult. Hindenburg seemed unwilling to make Hitler the nation's chancellor. He wanted the head of the strongest party to accept the post of vice-chancellor, with Papen as head of the government. Hitler rejected the proposal.

On 28 August I sat on the Munich-Berlin express. As the youngest member of parliament, I was to take part in the opening session of the new Reichstag. My mother had sent me congratulations from Bayreuth, with her best wishes.

"Wonderful, I always knew my son would be something one day!

As far as I was concerned, my election as a Member of Parliament made little impression on me. Much more important, in my view, was my election as a Member of Parliament.

I understood that for the first time in my life I was to receive a regular monthly income of 800 marks and that I had a free travel pass for the Reich's railways. Until then I had not received a single penny from the Hitler Youth fund, and I had repeatedly been at a loss as to how to finance my numerous journeys in the line of duty. Something else I was particularly pleased about: the immunity I enjoyed as a member of parliament. Justice was still bothering me about the Munich duel and the student riots in Cologne. Now I had nothing to worry about.

XVI

In a trembling, barely intelligible voice, President Clara Zetkin, seventy-five years old and elected as the oldest member of the Reichstag, opened the first session of the new parliament. She was almost blind and could barely read the manuscript of her speech. Beside her sat the head of the Communist faction, Torgler, and "blew" at her: "The Red Army will not remain inactive if the working masses of Germany rise up against the Von Papen regime, against the predominance and hegemony of the barons and the *junkers*...."

According to the "parliamentary usages" hitherto in force, these words should have triggered the tumult of banging desks, shouting and flying inkwells, followed by a pitched battle between National Socialists and Communists. But we contented ourselves with a few isolated shouts, which were answered by the communist deputies with their *slogan* calling for the "Red Front". That was all.

The reason for this unaccustomed discretion? Hitler, who was not a member of the Reichstag, had urged at the meeting of the parliamentary faction, all of whose members wore brown shirts, to maintain the strictest discipline. What he himself had described as "impossible" on the morning of the elections had happened: we were negotiating with the Zentrum and the "Bayerischen Volkspartei" [34]. Suddenly the "den of charlatans" that was the Reichstag had become important in Hitler's struggle for power. With its three hundred and twenty-seven seats, the N.S.D.A.P., the Zentrum and the "Bayerischen Volkspartei" had an absolute majority. A Brown-Black coalition could overthrow the von Papen government and get the Reich President to dissolve the Reichstag again. Hitler, however, did not want that solution. A dissolution of parliament meant new elections. And an election campaign cost millions. The party coffers were empty at the time, and even the N.S.D.A.P. was in debt because of the last elections.

-We will now move on to the election of the president," read Clara Zetkin after she had finished her painful opening speech.

That was the big moment for us. Our candidate had long since been chosen: Hermann Goering. He sat in the front rows of the brownshirts, in the right wing, with the blue star of the Order "Pour le mérite" hanging around his neck. And so, with the votes of the N.S.D.A.P., the Zentrum and the "Bayerischen Volkspartei", he was elected president of the Reichstag.

We cheered and hooted for long minutes with our "Heil" when Goering, who had never made a secret of his contempt for parliamentarism, sat down in the presidential chair.

In the evening, Goering invited the faction to a cold dinner at his home. I was already familiar with the five-room house at number 7 Badenschen Strasse and it never ceased to amaze me that he was planning to gather two hundred and thirty people there.

But I was in for a surprise.

I had met Hermann Goering in 1929. We attended a meeting together in Würzburg at which we both spoke. We stayed at the house of the doctor, whose name I have unfortunately forgotten. I addressed Goering as "my captain". At dinner I wanted to discuss the meeting with him and what we intended to say at it. But Goering refused my proposal and said:

-I still don't know what I will say next. I think about it when I'm in front of the audience. Let's eat quietly now, which is the most important thing, and then we'll have a few glasses of champagne. You'll see how well you feel afterwards.

Goering was no longer the handsome, radiant hero who had charmed the great actress Käthe Dorsch. His body was beginning to take on respectable dimensions, and, as I soon learned, this was not only due to his appetite, which was considerable. Shortly before the meeting she disappeared into her room, apparently to put on a clean brown shirt.

Our hostess stared at me with a questioning expression.

-Do you know what you are doing in there?

I couldn't even imagine where I wanted to end up.

-This man is a morphomaniac.

When she saw the look on my face, she explained that she herself had been a morphine addict for years. Shortly before her wedding, her husband had kicked her out of the habit.

-I was just as dull as Goering at the time.

I soon forgot what the Würzburg doctor's wife had told me. And in the years that followed, when I was at Goering's side, in his role as Hitler's commissioner in Berlin, then as Minister-President of Prussia, as Air Minister, and finally as Reich Marshal, I heard nothing again, until the autumn of 1945.

on his morphinomania.

In the years 1930-31, before our marriage, Henriette had spent many months as a guest in Goering's Berlin home. I went to pay her a few visits at 7 Badenschen Strasse. At that time Goering's first wife, the Swedish Karin, née Von Fock, was still living there.

In the evenings, there was always someone present. Politicians, journalists, industrialists and princes met with the National Socialist deputies and party leaders. It was Goering himself who would put the beers on the stove and make the mayonnaise in the kitchen. He was a splendid host. The atmosphere in this friendly and welcoming, though not luxurious, house was one of relaxation.

31 August 1932 was completely different. The former five-room flat had been converted, by the appropriate building work and the demolition of partitions, into a luxurious flat that spanned the entire floor. In the fully carpeted hallway, chandeliers glittered among the heavy draperies. In the large rooms, gothic chandeliers as tall as a person shone, casting their sieved glow over valuable

Madonnas and antique furniture. Valuable paintings hung on the walls. And behind the gigantic Renaissance-style table, an ancient piece of Germanic statuary could be seen under a gilded canopy.

In the living room, Goering himself led us to a gobelin. On the tapestry was a map of central Europe with many dots marked with red embroidery.

-These were the villages and castles of my ancestors," he said. What you see here, Schirach, corresponds to the way of life to which I have been accustomed since my childhood.

At that time I believed in the castles of Goering's ancestors. Only in Nuremberg did I learn that this noble ancestry was no more than a figment of his imagination. His father had been a civil servant. And the Vendenstein Castle near Nuremberg, where he lived in his childhood years, had been bequeathed to his mother by a former admirer, a Jewish banker.

In spite of the castles he showed me on the tapestry, I wondered that night how he would maintain the train of that dwelling. As a former captain he received a small pension, to which had to be added the eight hundred marks of his allowance as a member of parliament. It was also said that he had a representation of aircraft engines. But, all in all, that was not enough for such a luxury.

Adolf Hühnlein, head of the N.S.K.K. ^[35], with whom I later entered into conversation, was careful to let me in on the secret:

-Goering is a close friend of the Thyssens, who have provided him with the money for this new home.

Late in the evening Hitler appeared. Most of those present did not even notice him, for he had locked himself in with Goering, Goebbels and Roehm for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to outline the party's new tactics for the forthcoming Reichstag sessions.

XVII

It was with great nervous tension that he awaited 12 September 1932, although he had no inkling that this dramatic session of the Reichstag would go down in the history of the Weimar Republic.

Shortly before 3 p.m. I took my seat in one of the central rows of the Chamber. Before us on the government bench sat the Von Papen cabinet. The Reich Chancellor, clad in a smart frock coat, was smiling left and right with a preconceived sense of triumphant confidence. The agenda, which I had on the desk in front of me, consisted of a single item: "Discussion on a clarification of the Reich Government". Herr von Papen wished to justify his special decrees of 4 and 5 September, aimed at stabilising the economy. They gave one and a half million of the six who were out of work the possibility of no longer being a burden on the state. But the burden of these measures fell entirely on the workers themselves: the abolition of tariff wages and the interruption of trade union action.

From his chair, Goering led the session:

-I give the floor to Mr Torgler, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

A sustained murmur was heard in the crowd. The feeling grew louder. The National Socialist chairman of the Reichstag had given the floor to the leader of the Communist faction instead of to the Chancellor. On the government bench I saw a visibly excited Herr von Papen whispering with the Minister of the Interior, Baron von Gayl. Foreign Minister Von Neurath, Finance Minister Schwerin von Krosigk and Minister of Posts and Communications Von Eitz-Rübenach were trying to hide their faces and conceal their expressions. The government would later be called the "barons' cabinet".

-We propose," said Torgler, "a motion for the lifting of the emergency decrees. We also propose, as the second item on the agenda, our censure of the government of hunger and misery over which Von Papen presides.

A thick silence coupled with extraordinary surprise spread through the ranks of the National Socialists. The Communists had brought us into a pure dilemma. It was by no means our intention to overthrow the von Papen government, for we were thus giving the Reich President the opportunity to apply Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution and dissolve the assembly. Dissolution meant new elections. And elections cost money which we lacked.

-I ask if there are any counter-motions to Deputy Torgler's motion," Goering asked.

Silence. In the front rows, the representative of our faction, Dr. Frick, was in lively discussion with Gregor Strasser and Dr. Goebbels. It was easy to guess that they were not unanimous on the reaction to the surprising Communist motion.

-I determine, therefore," Goering said again, "that this....

Dr. Frick rose. He proposed to adjourn the meeting for half an hour. He wanted to gain time for an exchange of views among the members of the National Socialist faction. The Communists regarded this as a declaration of war.

-I Papen's servants! Social fascists! - they shouted behind us as we made our way to the fraction meeting.

Goering appeared radiant in the hall. He was immediately surrounded by the party hierarchy. Gregor Strasser spoke to him with some excitement. Strasser wished to avoid at any price the dissolution of the Reichstag because he was convinced of the possibility of a coalition government between the N.S.D.A.P. and the "Zentrum". Since Hindenburg did not wish, at any price, to see Hitler in the post of Chancellor, there was no doubt that Strasser himself would have been the key man in that government. This would have enabled him to displace Hitler himself. Much of the faction was

The party organisation was also dominated by Strasser, who was a supporter of Strasser.

-The Führer has to decide," said Goering.

Hitler, who was not a member of parliament, was at the "Kaiserhof" hotel, where he was informed of the dilemma. Time was pressing. Hitler drove to Goering's official office in the Reichstag President's Palace, which adjoined the parliamentary building. The faction leadership was there to receive orders. Hitler gave his instructions.

The half-hour adjournment had already elapsed and we Members were almost all seated in our seats. At the last minute Goering, Frick, Strasser and Goebbels appeared. From the look on their faces I knew what Hitler had decided. Frick and Strasser looked intensely pale; Goering and Goebbels were radiant. This meant that Hitler had given a new slogan: with the Communists against Von Papen.

But even Herr von Papen had taken advantage of the half-hour's adjournment. When Goering reopened the session at 3.46 p.m., I saw Secretary of State Planck hold out a red folder to the Chancellor. There was an immediate reaction among all those present. Each of the parliamentarians knew, as every German interested in politics knew, what significance was to be attached to the red folder in the Chancellor's hands. It contained the Reich President's decree dissolving the Reichstag. Papen had procured the momentous document in the half-hour's adjournment.

Von Papen asked to speak, but Goering pretended not to see him.

-We will now vote on Mr Torgler's motion of censure," he said.

The chancellor protested gesticulating, wielding the red folder and shouting:

-The regulation! The regulation!

Goering continued to play deaf. We, for our part, jumped out of our seats as if propelled by springs. Goering waved his bell, shouting:

-Silence, please! The vote is now open!

-I protest against this act of contempt for the government," cried Von Papen. In accordance with the rules of procedure, I ask to speak.

-We are busy with the vote now," Goering interrupted him. I have to complete the vote before I can decide anything else.

And having said that, he turned his broad shoulders to the Reich Chancellor.

Voting continued. I slowly made my way to the ballot box. But suddenly I saw Von Papen approach the president's table with very quick movements and hold out the red folder. Goering pretended not to see it. For the second time, von Papen sent his secretary of state to him. But Goering made the vote go on. With a congested face, the Reich Chancellor left the parliament followed by his entire cabinet.

Shortly afterwards Goering himself reported the result of the vote with a triumphant gesture: by 512 votes to 42, the Reichstag expressed its censure of the von Papen cabinet. Only then did Goering open the red folder and read out the decree of dissolution signed by the president. He then spoke briefly to declare it useless, since it bore the signature of a chancellor whom the people had rejected.

It was clear that Goering was upsetting the order of things. According to the constitution, the Reichstag was dissolved as soon as the president signed the decree to that effect. The Von Papen cabinet therefore remained in office despite its parliamentary defeat.

Nevertheless, a new Reichstag had to be elected. That meant a fourth election within eight months and also a heavy financial burden for the party. We had reached the peak of our popularity among the voters. The last parliamentary elections had only brought us an increase of 300,000 votes over the presidential elections. The next elections could only represent an erosion if we did not redouble our drum with renewed i m p e t u s . For this reason

cause acquired from suddenly a great importance
political importance the planned youth congress in
Potsdam.

XVIII

It had happened a few months earlier. After a dinner party at my home in Munich, Hitler turned to his favourite activity: drawing. He did it from memory. In front of him was one of those cards which he always carried with him to make notes as they occurred to him for the speeches he had to make. Sometimes he drew on the back of the menus. Most of the time, male and female heads came out of his pencil. But when I looked over his shoulder at that one, I recognised the outline of an emblem: a thin quadrilateral, with a broad sword inside, the swastika and oak leaves on its hilt. In the blank space Hitler traced in very prominent characters: "Party Congress N.-S." Underneath he wrote: year 1932. But he immediately crossed out the figure.

-Unfortunately it will not be possible," he said, looking at me. Only when we are in power will we be able to organise a party congress again.

For me, those words were a kind of sign of the times.

-But I will organise a youth congress in Potsdam this autumn.

Hitler was rather sceptical. He feared for the political consequences if not enough participants turned up. The last Party Congress in Nuremberg in 1929 had been attended by only 35,000 comrades. And among them were almost all the Hitler Youth - 2,000 boys and girls. With such a small number, no impressive rally could have taken place. Of course, since then, the Hitler Youth had increased in number.

34,000 members. I told Hitler so, anticipating that at least half of them would come.

-You have to speak to young people," I said. As soon as it spreads, there will be many more people attending.

-If it is not a success in numbers, it would be a severe blow to my entire policy.

Just as at the time of the first student assembly he had said: "I will come if the hall is full", he was once again expressing his concern for success. He did not have much confidence in me and he did not know the youth who followed him. Then he added:

-Youth have no money.

Unfortunately, he was right. In those days, the Hitler Youth consisted of 69 per cent young workers, 12 per cent schoolchildren and 10 per cent trade apprentices and clerks. Almost half of the boys and girls were unemployed or the children of unemployed parents.

-Money is not important," I said. We will self-finance our youth congress.

I knew the enthusiasm of my youth better than the one whose name they bore, and I was sure that I could carry things forward. Since my appointment as national youth leader I had tried to stick to my task. Not only did I speak at mass rallies and organise meetings of officials, but I spent many evenings in the H.J. centres ^[36]. In centres partly set up in back rooms of student houses, partly in cellars and basements which the young people themselves arranged and made habitable. He knew the efforts that all this cost, and he knew how strong the camaraderie was among them. And he also knew, after long discussions and conversations with his rank and file, the spirit of sacrifice and service that animated them.

That is why he thought he knew how to proceed with the financing of the youth congress. In order to advertise his organisation, he did not just want to print a poster as usual, but to reproduce it in postcard size and also in the format of a superstamp. He also planned to copy it onto badges that could be pinned to the lapel. The Hitler Youth would sell the stamps, postcards and emblems. Half of the net profit was to be used by the national headquarters for the installation of

The other half would be used to pay for travel and food expenses.

In order to issue the youth appeal for the Potsdam rally and to publish the postcards, stamps and emblems, I needed, above all, a sufficiently strong drawing. I went to the most qualified painter and draughtsman at the time, Professor Ludwig Hohlwein from Munich. He asked me for the drawing for no less than a thousand marks. It was a very high sum for our income. But I didn't care: I wanted to have the best of the best.

We immediately agreed on what it should be. Professor Hohlwein drew me a sketch which I immediately judged to be excellent. In the foreground was a beaming young Hitlerite in his brown shirt. In the background were the flags of the HJ. and an eagle.

For the insignia I used the outline which Hitler himself had drawn in my own house for the forthcoming Party Congress. I changed the inscription "National Party Congress N.-S. 1932" to "National Congress of the Hitler Youth. 1932". I handed in the drawing for the badges to be made and in this way

Hitler himself unwittingly helped to finance the National Youth Congress.

Young men and women were very passionate about selling: in the street - even though it was forbidden - at party meetings, in families, schools and workplaces. A postcard cost twenty pfennig; a sheet with twenty stamps, a frame, and another frame, an emblem to fix on the flap. Very soon, the stamps appeared on street walls, on school tables and benches, on windows and on letters. Even sections of the youth, who until then had had nothing in common with the Hitler Youth, were fascinated by the multicoloured cartoons and pasted them on a massive scale. We were obliged to make further editions and

The first settlements from the sales volunteers soon arrived at our headquarters in Munich.

I had to talk to Hitler. I was summoned on the evening of 11 September 1932 to his Berlin headquarters at the "Kaiserhof" hotel. That hotel had been built in Bismarck's time for the rural nobility who used to spend the winter season in the capital of the Reich. Its ambience and atmosphere seemed to breathe both the style and the dust of those days.

Hitler occupied an entire flat on the first floor: an alcove with a bathroom, a room for his assistants, and a living room. The living room was a room that spanned the corner of the building, and from its western window one could see the Reich Chancellery directly over Wilhemsplatz. Only a hundred metres separated Hitler from power. But those hundred metres were difficult to cover, for Hitler had pledged himself to reach it by democratic and legal methods. The French ironically called him "Adolphe Légalité". In his struggle for power, the "Kaiserhof" therefore acquired strategic importance. It was an asset in the war of nerves against the government. The distance between the chancellery and the hotel was just as significant for the Chancellor as it was for Hitler, but the other way round.

For my part, I went to the Kaiserhof almost every time I went to Berlin. Not only because of Hitler. My father-in-law, Hoffmann, one of his most loyal supporters, had also had rooms on the fourth floor for years.

But on that occasion I went straight to the "boss". I showed Hitler the poster drawn by Professor Hohlwein. He was enthusiastic. In view of his enthusiasm, I dared to take out a case and offer it to him:

-The Hitler Youth has a little present for you. He opened the case. Inside appeared, on dark velvet, a reproduction of the insignia in silver.

He couldn't help but wince:

-This is my sketch for the emblem of the next Party Congress! -
he exclaimed.

A long discussion followed. I informed Hitler of the great success of the sale.

Hitler listened to me in silence. I think he even forgave me for having used the emblem he had devised. But he remained suspicious of the success of the enterprise.

-Schirach, Schirach; you have got me into something of doubtful result. I fear it will be a great failure in the end....

But my confidence was boundless.

XIX

1 October 1932 was Sunday. On the Potsdam airfield, a veritable canvas city had been erected. 50,000 boys and girls could find accommodation there.

But would they come? At noon Hitler called me at our office in Potsdam. I was in Berlin, at Dr. Goebbels' house on the Kaiserdamm.

-What does that look like, Schirach? - he asked me.

In spite of my good will I was unable to give him a precise answer. A few special Hitler Youth trains were scheduled to arrive at the Potsdam station, and they were to arrive in the course of the afternoon. But most of the people would be arriving in lorries, and I had no idea what their exact number might be.

There had also been some difficulties. My father-in-law, Heinrich Hoffmann, had informed me from Munich that the school authorities had forbidden truancy for the youth congress. The police had stopped the lorries and made the schoolchildren get out. The Saxon government had unannounced banned the movement of uniformed youths. At the last minute, everything could collapse. Hitler knew this, of course, as well as I did. He told me personally that he had the greatest fears about the number of participants.

-I shall remain here in Goebbels' house until he informs me that the Potsdam stadium is full. Otherwise I shall neither speak nor appear.

In the evening, the special trains arrived fully loaded. On the approach roads, columns of lorries were jammed together: loudspeakers, marches, trumpet blasts, bands... everything contributed to a hellish din. The organiser, Karl Nabersberg, soon didn't know where his head was at. Unplanned groups were arriving in the tarpaulin city, and others, who had given advance notice, were unable to find a place to stay. They had to improvise

reception rooms, empty factory halls and farms in the surrounding area. To prepare the 40,000 meals, a somewhat special menu was used: mutton sausage with grits. And while the trucks and trains were still arriving, the march to the stadium for the evening rally began.

I called Goebbels' house to convey to Hitler the certainty of success. But I found Frau Goebbels alone.

-The Führer has left with my husband," she said. He is to wait for them at ten o'clock in Michendorf, at the Leipziger Chaussee, to inform them whether everything is ready.

At ten o'clock I was at the Leipziger Chaussee. From a distance I recognised Hitler's car in the stream of incoming columns. The car stopped and Hitler got out.

-We have been driving around the roads for two hours and seen so many trucks with young people that we are sure of your success, Schirach.

He invited me to climb up next to him. We had to walk the last hundred metres to the stadium at a very slow pace. At the entrance, the head of the organisation, Nabersberg, told us that the police had closed the stadium... because it was too full. This was no legal trickery. The grandstands and the indoor space, which normally had a capacity of 50,000 people, were occupied by 70,000 boys and girls. And the trucks kept on coming.

Thousands of torches shone in the night. The H.J. brass bands played marches and war songs, while drums and fifes resounded.

I walked to the speakers' platform and raised my hand. The music fell silent and there was absolute silence. I introduced Hitler with a few brief words.

I said thus:

-Your youth, my Führer, is here to pay you with this rally the homage of his loyalty and faith, such as no youth has ever paid to a human being before.

A resounding ovation followed. The stadium was boiling as Hitler stepped forward out of the darkness into the glare of the floodlights illuminating the grandstand. For the first time I saw for myself how intense and sustained the cheers of seventy thousand young people can be. Tears welled up in Hitler's eyes, moved by the sensation he had experienced at that moment and which would later become habitual for him.

I believed in Hitler from the very moment I met him, at the age of seventeen. In the eight years since then I had learned to admire him. Like many who knew him closely, I saw in him a fundamentally good man who had to force himself to toughness, otherwise he would not have been able to carry out his superhuman task. This Hitler, as I saw him, was the one I presented again and again to the youth with fervent words. It can thus be said that I contributed, out of deep and intimate conviction, to forging that myth of the Führer which the German people were also so ready to embrace. This unbounded and almost religious veneration, to the which I contributed, as did Goebbels, Goering, Hess, Ley and so many others, strengthened Hitler's own conviction that he was in intimate communion with Providence.

The causes of the German catastrophe are to be sought not only in what Hitler made of us, but also in what we made of him. Hitler did not come from outside; nor was he, as many today believe, a demonic beast who seized power. He was the man whom the German people themselves loved and whom we all made master and lord of our destiny through unbridled veneration. For only the people who have the desire and the will to possess a Hitler can give a Hitler. It is a kind of collective destiny among us Germans to lavish on people with extraordinary qualities - and no one can dispute this in the case of Hitler - an excessive veneration which ends up

for suggesting to them the notion of the superhuman and absolute infallibility...

For seven and a half hours the youth paraded before Hitler on 2 October 1932. More than a hundred thousand boys and girls had come to Potsdam; that is, three times the number recorded in our membership records. The next morning the enemy press wrote accusations against this "children's crusade" and informed us of the number of little boys who had fainted from exhaustion, of the many who had gone without food, and of the neglect of sanitary standards at the rally.

In the past, Hitler himself was quite sensitive to such criticism, but on this occasion he merely dismissed it with a smile as he said to me:

-This march of the youth to the gates of Berlin was the death blow for the Von Papen government.

After the dissolution of the impotent parliament, the National Socialists went to the polls again on 6 November 1932 and lost two million votes out of fourteen million. The time had come to seize power. In any case, we were still the strongest party. But Von Papen's successor in the chancellery was not Hitler, but the hitherto Reichswehr Minister, General Von Schleicher. This caused many political prophets to start calling Hitler a dead man.

In such a critical situation a call came to me from Berlin, specifically from the "Kaiserhof" hotel. Hitler's adjutant was on the line.

-Come to Berlin immediately. Hitler needs you urgently.

I was not amused by the call. I had prepared to take part in two or three meetings. I wanted to build on the success of Potsdam and win over the entire youth to our organisation. But Hitler came first in the order of preference.

When I entered the "Kaiserhof" I found him having his usual tea in the back right-hand corner of the foyer. On the balustrade, a string orchestra was playing Viennese melodies. All the tables near Hitler were occupied, mostly by old ladies. The future "strongman", who was waiting in the "Kaiserhof" for power to fall into his hands, had become a real attraction in the hotel that stood symbolically in front of the Reich Chancellery.

-I am sorry to have taken you away from your work," Hitler said by way of greeting, "but I have to give interviews to two American journalists, and Hanfstaengl is unable to do so.

Ernst Hanfstaengl, known as "Putzi", was in charge of the foreign press. Of half-American origin, he was the only one among those who usually surrounded Hitler who was fluent in foreign languages.

The two American journalists for whom I acted as interpreter that night at the Kaiserhof Hotel asked Hitler the usual questions, and he gave them the usual answers as well. Something along these lines:

Question: "You make some very radical speeches, Herr Hitler, will you be repealing the constitution of the Weimar Republic when you become chancellor of the Reich?"

Answer: "Presidential candidates also make demagogic speeches at home. Does that mean that any of them have abrogated the Constitution of the United States of America?"

It was a completely trick answer, but the Americans seemed satisfied.

-Isn't it a waste of time? - I asked Hitler. Why didn't you send them both off at the same time or give them a press conference?

Hitler laughed.

-Each of them pays me a dollar a word. That's about two thousand dollars per interview, that's about four thousand dollars.

in total. This finances my stay in Berlin and my travel expenses. The party's treasury can't cope with so many expenses.

To tell the truth, the Party's coffers were exhausted after the election campaign. On the other hand, Hitler was beginning to be doubted. 400,000 S.A. members, half of whom were out of work and had to be housed in the organisation's homes and barracks, were calling for revolutionary action. And the head of the Party organisations, Gregor Strasser, was beginning to deal, behind Hitler's back, with Chancellor von Schleicher. The movement was in danger of disintegration, and the situation called for a swift counter-attack:

trips, speeches, rallies.

The election of Lippe-Detmold to the Lippe-Detmold Land Assembly contributed to this.

These elections, at one of the most Germans, *laender* acted as a "test"

[37] Lippe, in Lippe, everything is in the **balance**"

rhymed the

Berliner Lokalanzeiger. Hitler, Goebbels, Ley, Frick and other hierarchies

had spoken out in Detmold, in Lemgo and even in the smallest villages. The result: 17 per cent more votes than in the Reichstag elections last November.

It was indeed unusual for personal circumstances to have an effect in such circumstances. But so it was. Despite the tense wait of those days, Hitler had excused me from going to the elections because my wife was expecting our first child. As he saw it, my place was at her side at that time. And for his part, he took the first opportunity of being in Munich again to visit her in the clinic.

At the end of January 1933 I travelled on the Munich-Berlin night express with Hitler. He was carrying a newspaper in the pocket of his jacket. It was the *Berliner Tageblatt* of 23 January 1933. I went to

he held it out, pointing to the first page. A paragraph of the editorial signed Theodor Wolff was underlined, and I read the following:

"When Lippe's election results were announced in New York, Germany's share of the vote dropped by four points. Not because Lippe was regarded as a great power with a lack of knowledge of geography, but because further complications are foreseen in Germany, and in view of the results of this significant electoral consultation, everyone can calculate what such crises represent for German credit at present and what would await it should the National Socialists, their inspirers and associates succeed in winning the game".

I gave the paper back to Hitler.

-Another Jewish trap," said Hitler.

-What solution do you envisage for the Jewish problem when we are in power? - I asked.

Hitler made an inconclusive gesture with his hand.

-We'll see.

Lest there should be any misunderstanding, I will add that I was a convinced anti-Semite at the time and remained so for quite some time. I was twenty-five years old at the time and was national youth leader of a party whose programme stated: "One can only be a citizen if one is a comrade. And only those who have German blood, irrespective of their denomination, can be comrades. No Jew can therefore be a comrade". The swastika on the white circle of our red flag had long since become a symbol of Jew-hatred. And wherever the S.A. marched, the cry resounded: "Wake up Germany, die Judah!"

When I think about it today, I can't help but wonder: what reason did he have to hate the Jews?

At the age of seventeen I had read Henry Ford's book, *The Jew. international, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, The Handbook of the*

Jewish Question, by Fritsch, and *The Foundations of the 19th Century*, by

Chamberlain, a book which had made such a deep impression on Emperor William; to this must be added the feeling of

The usual jokes about Jews were told, even by Jews themselves, but in reality there was only a sense of rejection of the Jews from the East. Those of European origin had soon assimilated into the rest of the population. As for a possible anti-Semitic upbringing in the family, the opposite was true. A frequent guest in our Weimar house was Counsellor Sachs from the Prussian Ministry of Finance. He was Jewish. Every year my mother spent a few weeks in Berlin and stayed with the architect Dernburg. Dernburg was also Jewish. These friends of my parents knew that my father was a member of the N.S.D.A.P. and that I was a "Hitler's boy".

Hitler, for his part, hated the Jews. Like the historian Mommsen, whom he admired so much, he saw in them a "leaven of decay", a disintegrating element of peoples, and he knew how to convey this conviction, which often turned out to be propagandistically negative, to the masses who listened to him.

But even so, very few people in Germany had enough imagination to think of bringing the battle cry "Death to Judah" to fruition. There were many of us at that time who did not even think of the possibility of such an end. Hitler took the floor again:

-Those who believe that I am going to expel all Jews fall into a primal deduction. I don't want them in state posts. Let them keep their businesses and their companies. But they must disappear from politics and justice.

-What about our programme? - I asked, "Can Jews remain citizens?"

-You'll see. Don't think too much about it. Rather than sticking strictly to a programme, we have to conquer power.

A few days later, power was already seized. On 30 January 1933, Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor.

Today we know that everything went differently. In a much more terrible way than the party's programme suggested.

XX

On the evening of 30 January 1933, I was on a trip.

I had gone to retrieve my "Mercedes-Nürburg", which had been taken away from us because of debts. Hitler arranged for me to get it back.

I drove through Cologne with the intention of going to Herford, where I was to speak at a meeting in the evening. I was dressed in our civilian and militarised attire: a brown shirt and a windbreaker. It was forbidden to wear a uniform, but this way everyone who saw us thought: he's a Nazi.

At a traffic signal I had to stop. The policeman looked in my direction and suddenly waved at me. I thought he must have made a mistake. A few days earlier the same policeman had almost hit me during a demonstration, and would have done so if I had not shown him my deputy's credentials. At the next intersection I had to stop again. And again, a policeman waved at me.

What had happened? I sped up and headed for the HJ offices. There I heard the big news: Hitler was Reich Chancellor.

Six days after the conquest of power I was invited by Hitler to a dinner party. It was our first meeting since his arrival at the Chancellery. He had moved there from the "Kaiserhof" hotel, but not to the Chancellor's representative residence since Bismarck's time. That residence was occupied at the time by Reich President von Hindenburg, as renovation work was being carried out on the presidential palace. Hitler had occupied a much more modern residential complex in the Reich Chancellery itself, which had hitherto been occupied by the Secretary of State.

In the lift I went up to the fourth floor. The lower floors were silent and dark.

Hitler stepped forward towards me with open arms. Despite the exhausting activity of the last few days, he appeared erect, energetic and self-confident. His capacity knew no bounds.

-Now we are really starting, Schirach," he said. We have the power and we will keep it. I will never leave here.

I was somewhat sceptical. Hitler was Reich Chancellor, but only two of the ten members of his Government were National Socialists: the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick, and Hermann Goering, a minister without portfolio. Of the remaining eight, four came from Herr von Papen's so-called "Barons' Cabinet", whom we had been fighting relentlessly for months. But Hitler seemed to be very confident.

-He strained the old man's confidence," he said. He then recounted some details of his first private conversations with the Reich President. He had to inform Hindenburg of his activities as a soldier during the World War and of his family background. Only then did the Reich Marshal seem convinced by the personality of this "Bohemian corporal", whom he had so long distrusted.

-It is now a matter of winning over the old man entirely," said Hitler. -. We must not do anything now that might irritate him. The same applies to you. You must be very careful. No strong speeches, no punitive actions against political enemies; the old man is very susceptible to such things.

I reassured Hitler. Of course, the young people, like the party as a whole, were still caught up in the great enthusiasm aroused by the coming to power, but I was not aware of any violence, at least among the youth. They had another task before them at that moment. From all parts of Germany, from the district and local headquarters of the H.J., I was informed that thousands and thousands of young men and women were crowding into the offices to apply for membership. According to the reports, the number must be in the hundreds of thousands. Entire groups of young people, belonging to the paramilitary defence and training units, went en bloc to the Hitler Youth. But in any case, the greatest influx was among young people who had not belonged to any other group up to that time.

organised. Until then, their parents had forbidden them to do so. But since the N.S.D.A.P. had come to power, the parents tried to make up for lost time.

-I need at least ten times as many commanders as before," I said to Hitler. They must be trained quickly, and for that I need money. I receive nothing from the party. Couldn't you spare me some of the state funds? Let's say... 150,000 marks...

Hitler looked at me in surprise.

-How could such a thing have occurred to you, Schirach? I have just been appointed Chancellor of the Reich and you are urging me to go to the Minister of Finance and ask him for money for the Hitler Youth. We don't know where to turn for funds to alleviate unemployment.... That's what matters first and foremost.

Hitler noticed my disappointment and added:

-Be patient, Schirach. First we have to win the next elections and then everything will be given to us. But one thing I want to say to you: I will never get mixed up in your youth activities. You have the organ I lack. Of course, I won't let others interfere either. Of course, you can come to me whenever you need to. For the time being, I invite you tonight as a guest of honour to my table.

XXI

The Reichstag elections were held on 5 March 1933. Out of a voter turnout of 88.8 percent, the National Socialists won 43.9 percent (17.27 million), or 288 seats. On 21 March, the beginning of spring, it was proclaimed "National Uprising Day" and the Reichstag was solemnly opened.

I was on the roof of a house opposite St. Nicholas Church in Potsdam. There were many microphones in front of me. From the streets I could hear the buzz of a huge crowd. From façade to façade, garlands had been draped, and not a single one was not festooned with flags. Black-white flags-

red and swastikas, as the red-black-and-gold flag of the Weimar Republic was no longer the symbol of the Reich, by order of the Reich President on 12 March.

The crowd gathered in front of St. Nicholas Church was waiting for Hindenburg. As the radio station did not have enough National Socialist announcers, I had offered to do the report. But there were other reasons for my presence: before the civic ceremonies, a religious service was to be held in St. Nicholas' Church for the Evangelical members of the Reichstag, while the Catholic deputies were to attend a mass in the Pfarkirche in Potsdam. I had never made a secret of my evangelical beliefs, but I considered it wrong to make the separation of the confessions visible on that day of celebration. As a youth leader, I felt as close to Catholic youth members as to Protestants or atheists. My occasional role as a reporter gave me the opportunity to remain neutral, without demonstrative absences from religious events. So did Hitler and Goebbels, who, instead of attending the services, laid a wreath at the graves of the fallen SA. The other National Socialist hierarchs attended the services, including the "Reichsfuhrer" of the S.S., Heinrich Himmler.

I had to talk for fifteen minutes before Hindenburg arrived. To tell the truth, seldom has a quarter of an hour been longer than that. So I experienced a feeling of intense relief as soon as I finally saw the Marshal's car appear.

Half an hour later, I saw Hindenburg and Hitler enter the Garrison Church. Beside the hulking humanity of the former, in his Field Marshal's uniform, Hitler appeared insignificant in his civilian morning coat. In the centre of the temple aisle, Hindenburg paused and raised his marshal's baton in a salute to the former imperial box. Behind a chair, which had been left symbolically empty in honour of the Kaiser living in his Dutch exile, stood the then Kronprinz, with

general's uniform, together with his wife and siblings. The generals of the imperial army and the Reichswehr were grouped together on the back steps. From the baroque scrolls hung regimental flags dating from the time of old Frederick. As Hitler said in his speech, they constituted "the union of the symbols of the old greatness and the new strength".

Anyone who did not know Hitler would have deduced from his reverence for Prussian tradition that he was determined to restore the monarchy. Hitler's words that day in Potsdam were a conscious deception. As he bowed to Hindenburg in the pantheon of Frederick the Great, he had drawn up the bill with which he not only interrupted the validity of the Constitution and brought the Reichstag to an end, but also affected the Reich Presidency itself. This was the famous Emergency Powers Act. Two days after the Potsdam events, the Reichstag gave it its approval.

At the time it seemed doubtful that such an approval could be achieved. Since it was a law that would practically introduce constitutional changes, a two-thirds majority was required. The government coalition consisted of 288 National Socialists and 52 National Germans. Against them were 120 Social Democrats, 92 members of the "Zentrum" and the "Bayerische Volkspartei", 5 from the "Deutscher Staatspartei" and 9 from other small political groupings. In total, 226. The 81 communist seats were invalid, according to the special decrees signed after the Reichstag fire. Nevertheless, the government lacked the necessary two-thirds majority. Only if the "Zentrum" and the "Bayerische Volkspartei" voted in favour could the emergency laws be carried and thus secure Hitler's dictatorship.

On the evening of that decisive Reichstag meeting I met Goering in the chancellery. In my youthful naivety I said to him:

-We will never get that law.

-In all its brilliance and glory," Goering replied.

-The "Zentrum" and minor parties will not vote in favour.

-You are wrong," said my interlocutor, "and tomorrow, at the session, you will have the opportunity to see for yourself.

The Reichstag session of 23 March 1933 was the most momentous of the events that marked the end of democracy in Germany. It was held in the Kroll Opera House, as the Reichstag building had been destroyed after the fire set by the Dutchman Van der Lubbe on 27 February.

We, the two hundred and eighty-eight National Socialists, came uniformed in our National Socialist shirts.

brown. The S.A.'s and S.S.'s had paraded in front of the building. A large crowd was gathered there.

Hitler reasoned for two hours on his proposal for a special powers law.

After a break in the session, the social democratic member of parliament Otto Wels spoke. He naturally spoke out against the law. His words were very courageous, considering that many of his colleagues in his faction had already been imprisoned, and the National Socialist masses in the streets were shouting over their loudspeakers: "Vote for the law or order the coffin". Otto Wels' protest speech, however, sounded like resignation. It was clear that it was only a gesture that could not stop the course of events. Wels undoubtedly sensed what was to come. Prelate Kaas for the "Zentrum", Ritter von Lex for the "Bayerische Volkspartei" and Reinhold Meier for the "Staatspartei" spoke in favour of the special powers law. In a few minutes Goering arranged the vote. The result: 441 votes in favour, 94 against. In the front rows the strains of the National Socialist anthem were playing. I sang it, too, in complete enthusiasm.

Today I know that the passing of the law on special powers marked the beginning of an implacable destiny. A hundred men belonging to democratic parties gave their "yes" to the dictatorship. How could it be expected that the mass of the people, especially its youth, would continue to encourage such a "yes" to the dictatorship?

just a spark of respect and esteem for that form of government, if the democrats themselves did not believe in democracy?

XXII

If the Party had taken over the leadership of the State, it seemed to me entirely logical that the Hitler Youth should, for its part, take over the leadership of the entire youth.

Of the 7.5 million boys between the ages of ten and seventeen, some 5 million were organised in some way at the time. There were some 3,500 leagues, associations and groups. Of these, however, very few were devoted to purely youth activities, since most of the groups were no more than branches and annexes of adult groups and associations. The exceptions were the Socialist Workers' Youth, some of the denominational youth associations, the sports and gymnastic youth and the so-called "confederate" youth. A "National Commission of the German Youth Leagues" was responsible for the representative functions of these groups in close cooperation with the authorities.

Although such a commission had little influence in reality, it was nevertheless a platform for demanding youth leadership for the HJs. I had enough imagination to imagine how youth representation in the state should look and act.

But I was not the only one dealing with youth in the spring of 1933. The Reichswehr had already made great efforts in the last years of the Weimar Republic to bring many youth associations under the influence of its leading figures and to give them an entirely pre-military education.

The main driving force behind these efforts was the head of the ministerial cabinet in the Reichswehr Ministry, the then Colonel Walter von Reichenau, a modern officer and enthusiastic sportsman, but rather ambitious from a political point of view.

On 4 April 1933 I received information from Berlin that Colonel von Reichenau was planning to transfer the "National Commission for German Youth", which had hitherto been part of the Ministry of the Interior, to the Reichswehr.

The Minister of the Interior was Dr. Frick, one of our oldest co-religionists and a good administrative technician. He would no doubt have been satisfied if the commission had been detached from his fiefdom, because that would have meant taking away tasks from the Ministry of the Interior which were not its responsibility under good administrative law. And that is precisely what I wanted to prevent. Just as I had sought and achieved the independence of the Hitler Youth from the Party, so I wanted to secure the autonomy of the entire youth from the Reichswehr and the State. My motto was definite: "The youth had to rule the youth".

I called the stabsleiter Karl Nabersberg in Berlin:

-You must urgently occupy the "Commission for German Youth" tomorrow.

Nabersberg organised a column of lorries to transport the fifty-man guard of the national Youth Headquarters. In reality, he would not have needed so many men, as the two secretaries and the administrator, Maas, would not have been able to put up the slightest resistance to the slightest force. Hermann Maas was executed on 20 July 1944 as a member of the anti-Hitler plot.

The occupation of the Commission's offices was not a heroic act. The indignant General Vogt, the president of the Commission, called in the rapporteur of the Ministry of the Interior and protested. The outraged ministry rapporteur went to the minister, Dr. Frick. The indignant minister called me to the national headquarters of the H.J. in Munich:

-How could you get mixed up, Mr. Schirach, in a matter of such clear competence of mine? Order your people to evacuate the Commission at once.

-But dear Dr. Frick," I objected. - I thought we were making a revolution....

-I urge you...

-As the national head of a **p a r t y** section, he only I accept orders from *Führer* - I said emphatically. - Like minister, there is only one thing you can do: you can order the

police to shoot at these young Berliners. But he will have to shoot, because they will not leave voluntarily.

-Dear Herr Schirach, please don't put me in such a foolish position," implored Frick. Try to imagine what Hindenburg will say when General Vogt comes to report to him.

I left urgently for Berlin. As a first step, I contacted General Vogt. The old gentleman was at first very cold. But then he turned our conversation to the problems of youth. As a soldier, he was naturally interested in preparing young people for military service. But not only through pre-military exercises, but also through sports and contact with nature. For this reason, we soon came to an understanding, and I soon won the general over to the post of adviser to the national headquarters of the Hitler Youth. Then I went to the Ministry of the Interior, where I met Dr. Frick. At first he would not listen to reason, but when I told him about my conversation with General Vogt, he resigned himself to the *fait accompli*.

A few days later, as chairman of the National Commission, I took over the German Youth Hostel Movement. Since 1909, they had built 2,600 hostels throughout Germany with their own means alone. The spiritual father of the

movement was an ancient *Wandervogel*, director of school elementary,

Richard Schirrmann in Hilchenbach, Westphalia. This pioneer used to inspect the entire network of hostels himself, walking through them with his rucksack over his shoulder and his knotted walking stick in his hand. The economic crisis had hit the movement hard. On top of that, we now had thousands and thousands of young people coming to us who had never been in a hostel in their lives, making the network insufficient for my plans. I had new and bigger hostels planned. The money for their construction was to be provided in part by the youth themselves, who applied themselves to the task of collecting it with the same passion shown by the Hitler Youth of the early years towards their little organisation.

I needed an energetic man who understood something about economics. I remembered a friend from my student days, the son of a Hamburg industrialist. He was immediately willing to resign from his father's company and take over the management of the youth hostels. The pioneer Schirrmann was appointed honorary head of the HJ. and remained the German representative at the International Youth Hostel Union. He was dazzled by my financial projects. But he shook his head reproachfully when I showed him the plans for the new hostels. To his mind, it was all too big and too refined. Instead of the camp huts, we had planned large and small dormitories with beds. Instead of the fire pit where the groups could cook their "rancho", large kitchens were planned for three or four hundred people.

-These are not youth hostels, but hotels," said Schirrmann sadly. The old "Wandervogel" was basically right. But in my opinion, the time of the romantic rambler was over with the rise of the mass movements. We had planned the new youth hostels in the proportions we considered appropriate. And now, years later, when I see the long lines of coaches in front of the youth hostels of that time, it seems to me that we still planned them too small. Of course, when I see how few walkers are still there, I have to understand the melancholy and mistrust of Schirrmann, the father of the youth hostels.

At the end of April 1933 I attended a luncheon at the Chancellery one day.

Hitler called me aside after the meal:

-Hindenburg is warned against you. He has informed me that the youth do not behave with due respect towards former officers, teachers and priests.

I knew the reasons for Hindenburg's irritation, which were none other than my public attack on retired Vice-Admiral Adolf von Hindenburg.

Trotha. Admiral von Trotha was head of the "Greater German Confederation". Shortly before, on 30 March 1933, part of the "Confederate" youth had joined this Confederation. In all, about 15,000 boys. These associations, especially the so-called "Deutscher Freischar" and the "Confederation of German Scouts", had undeniably developed a form of youth culture. Their marches, tent camps, songs and games were clearly effective educational methods. As far as their ideals were concerned, they were as nationalistic as those of the Hitler Youth could be. But these associations, proportionately small, were composed almost entirely of upperclassmen. They were

They described *elite* and experienced a dismissive disdain themselves as

to any mass organisation. They thus constituted the main nursery of Reichswehr officers. They had placed the sixty-five-year-old Admiral Von Trotha at their head because they hoped to avoid any forced unification. Von Trotha's relationship with the Reich President and the head of the Reichswehr was thus a guarantee of his own position. I had spoken out against this in the interests of the Hitler Youth by publicly attacking the Admiral.

Hitler had no idea of all these inner workings. But at that moment he seemed to suspect something.

-You know what the old man told me the other day about you?

Of course, he did not know. Hitler repeated Hindenburg's words, even imitating his deep voice.

-That Herr von Schirach is still too young a colonel. I don't like him to do such things. He will have to be called to order.

Hindenburg mistook me for my uncle, Colonel Friedrich von Schirach, who had died in 1924 at the age of 54. What would the Reich President say when he found out that the head of the youth movement, Von Schirach, was not a colonel and was not sixty-two years old as he claimed?

-I will avoid introducing him to you, for if I do he will have a fit," said Hitler.

The problem was acute, however. The 1st May was on the doorstep. For the first time this socialist holiday was to be celebrated by all the people as a "National Labour Day". On the morning of May Day, Hindenburg was scheduled to address the youth in the Berlin "Lustgarten". In such circumstances, a presentation was unavoidable.

-What do we do? - Hitler asked.

A solution occurred to me. I had planned to light the great solstice bonfires on the summit of the German mountains on 24 June 1933. I wanted to light the first of these bonfires myself on the Brocken, at whose signal the others would be lit all over Germany. From the Brocken I wanted to speak to all young people on the radio stations.

-We will move these events to the night of 1 May," I proposed to Hitler. In this way you can excuse me to Hindenburg, and he can continue to be indignant at the actions of the undisciplined colonel.

Hitler found the solution a good one. And in this way I was always carefully concealed from Hindenburg until his death.

A few months after the conquest of power I went with my wife and daughter Angelika from Munich to Berlin. We had rented a charming little villa at 28 Bismarckstrasse in the Kleine Wannsee from Frau von Opel.

Shortly after our arrival, my wife complained that every evening, when she went for a walk, she was followed by an elegant gentleman with silver temples. In a sporty Mercedes, he would pass her several times and propose: "Beautiful lady, don't you want to go for a drive?"

Henriette found that her gallant lover bore a strong resemblance to our Munich friend, aviator and recipient of the Order "Pour le Mérite", Eduard Ritter von Schleich.

Every morning I drove from the Wannsee along the Avus to the youth headquarters on the "Kronprinzufer". After the first third of the motorway there was a car park.

There I saw one morning a slim, elegant gentleman in a jacket. *tweed*, felt hat and a cigar in his mouth. My first impression was that it was Ritter von Schleich. But I soon recognised my mistake. The man was the former crown prince, Wilhelm. He noticed that I was looking at him and gave a nod of greeting.

On my return home, I showed my wife a photograph of the Kronprinz.

-That's right. That's the man," said Henriette immediately.

At lunch in the Chancellery I told Hitler the story of Henriette's courtier. He was indignant.

-Once again, you see what is in that man's head. He cares for nothing but women. And Goering is trying to convince me that the Kronprinz would be the best head of state for Germany if old Hindenburg should die.

The problem of the possible restoration of the monarchy in the event of Hindenburg's death was frequently raised by Hitler at the time. After lunch he called me aside.

-What do you think of Prince Alexander? - he asked me.

Prince Alexander of Prussia was the son of the Kaiser's fourth descendant, August Wilhelm, known as "Auwi". He was twenty years old at the time and a member of the Hitler Youth. His father had been the S.A. leader since 1931, and I had spoken to him several times at meetings and rallies.

-I like the boy," said Hitler without waiting for a reply. Just think, he has even learned a manual trade. He is a blacksmith.

-All Hohenzollerns learn a craft. It is a family tradition. If you want to restore the monarchy, I think it would be better to restore a woman. You could choose Duchess Victoria Louise of Braunschweig and Lüneburg or her sister Frederica.

Hitler shook his head negatively. He wanted nothing to do with women in high national office.

-Are you thus in favour of a monarchy? - Hitler asked.

-On the contrary," I said, "my opinion is that it would mean civil war. The workers put up with a lot, but I don't think they would put up with that. On the other hand, the Bavarians would like to have their Wittelbach again....

Hitler did not reply. Today I am convinced that he thought exactly as I did and that he raised the subject of the monarchy from time to time, just to find out what those around him thought about it.

Shortly afterwards he told me that he had reported the Kronprinz's amorous activities to the Reich President. Hindenburg had not concealed his indignation.

-Your Highness is compromising the dignity of the imperial family. I will call him to order myself.

The harmless episode with the Kronprinz as the protagonist corresponded to the time of the power struggles within the Party and the intrigues, which I also had to deal with as a result of my appointment as head of the German Reich Youth League. Most things came to my knowledge through indirect channels, as I went infrequently to the Chancellery.

The Hitler Youth was growing like a flood. I was constantly travelling, taking part in rallies and marches. But what was most important to me was personal contact with the HJ leadership. We often stayed up all night discussing problems that concerned us. We wanted all the youth associations to be integrated into the YM to form a single organisation. We dreamed of a single German youth movement, independent of parties and denominations, free of all ties. Through this single youth movement we also aspired to achieve a clear separation between the youth and the SA and the Party, not in the sense of forming an opposition, but to form something unique, a kind of youth state within the state. From the "confederate" youth came, rightly

initiatives and examples that were of great value to us.

From them we adopted, for example, the drums and the characteristics of the brass bands, which were so colourful and had such an effect on young people.

The summer holidays were just around the corner. That summer, twice as many boys were expected to attend the camps and to travel to and from the camps as the previous year. The new arrivals had one thing in common: they had never left their mother's side, never slept in a youth hostel or under the canvas of a tent, never cooked their meals or taken part in a campfire, as was the case with previous groups, even those made up of boys under twelve years of age. I could not help feeling a little uneasy at the thought of the time when this unadapted mass would fall upon the youth hostels, the woods and the lakeshore. Surely the ordeal would not be without some accident, disease or forest fire. We had to draw up guidelines and orientations, as well as highlight the chapter of prohibitions, so that the enthusiasm would not lead to catastrophes.

Even more important were the social problems. We still had millions of unemployed. But on the other hand, many young people were working twelve and fourteen hours a day, despite the eight-hour law, because they were cheap labour and therefore always accepted. But the extension of their own working hours gave them little opportunity for adequate rest and recreation.

For us, the youth leaders, these were all pressing problems, and we threw ourselves with revolutionary impetus into their solution. Our slogan for the year 1933 was: "For socialism for the nation". We drew up plans for new laws. But the mechanism of the state was slow and premature as usual. For this reason we had to act many times.

Sometimes on our own initiative and through negotiations accompanied by more or less intense pressure, we achieved better working conditions and more free time for young people in certain sectors. Needless to say, economic circles were quick to complain about interference, the ministerial bureaucracy was affected, and even for our own National Socialist ministers, the Hitler Youth became a kind of nightmare.

-They shoot at you from all sides," my deputy, retired Captain Wilhem Kaul, told me on 5 May 1933.

-Let them shoot," I replied.

-Frick and Roehm will go to the Führer's office tomorrow," Kaul continued. They want a Reich Youth Commissariat to be set up.

-And who will be commissioner?

-Von Tschamer und Osten," said my interlocutor.

I was dumbfounded. The "Gruppenführer" of the S.A. Hans von Tschamer und Osten had been appointed Reich Commissioner for Sport by Hitler himself with the task of preparing German sport for the 1936 Olympiad, which was to be held in Berlin. He was a great sportsman, but he had had nothing to do with the youth movement and its organisation. This is not to the detriment of Von Tschamer und Osten, who later proved to be an excellent and precise organiser, who seemed predestined to carry out his Olympic mission. To this end, he travelled to many countries and with his great diplomatic skills won over even those who were already hesitant to send their Olympic teams to National Socialist Germany.

The curious thing is that the man had become Reich Commissioner for Sport through a mistake. The telegram announcing his appointment to the post had not gone to Major Von Tschamer-Osten, but to his elder brother, the "Gruppenführer" of the S.A., who had a

property in Magdeburg. He had been an officer in the World War, a member of the Saxon Horse Guards and had played various sports, but had never held a managerial position in the field of sport. The mistake had not been rectified. And now it was intended to make Von Tschamer und Osten the Youth Commissioner. In addition to Dr. Frick and Roehm, the Reichswehr Minister Von Blomberg and Propaganda Minister Dr. Goebbels appeared to be in favour of the solution. To this powerful front were added the Prussian Minister of Culture, Dr. Bernhard Rust, and the Führer's newly appointed deputy, Rudolf Hess. All of them wished to secure their influence and leverage over the youth. Although their views and interests were opposed, they agreed on one point: a twenty-six-year-old had no business being head of the German Reich Youth.

This affected all my plans to create a single youth organisation, without social, religious or any other kind of differentiation, and in accordance with the motto: "Young people must be led by young people". The Hitler Youth had begun to put these principles into practice shortly before the seizure of power. For this reason, he saw them as the only possible youth organisation in a National Socialist state. And he was ready for anything, without any minister or hierarch being able to stop him.

Hitler had told me that whenever I needed to see him, I could come to the Chancellery at lunchtime without having to be announced beforehand. I made use of this permission and managed to speak to him alone after lunch.

-You have entrusted me with the Hitler Youth. But if things go on like this, we shall soon have a Frick Youth, a Blomberg Youth, a Roehm Youth, a Rust Youth, a Goebbels Youth and a Hess Youth.

-Not at all," said Hitler, "You are still responsible to me for the youth movement. Of course, you must always act in agreement with the other sections and bodies.

This was easy to say, but difficult to put into practice. At Hitler's express wish, all sections of the Party, including the

The central headquarters of the H.J. had remained based in Munich. But political decisions were taken in Berlin. No wonder, therefore, that many party leaders were always on wheels. The Munich-Berlin night express thus became a kind of rolling "Brown House".

I was not prepared to do this to-and-fro for long and decided to set up the youth headquarters in Berlin. House number 10 on the Kronprinzufer was empty and for sale. The price was 150,000 marks. A derisory price for such a noble palace, but a gigantic sum for the exhausted coffers of the Hitler Youth.

In my haste, I went to the head of the H.J., Dr. Sven Schacht, nephew of the Reich Bank President Hjalmar Schacht. He immediately agreed to arrange an interview with his uncle.

The president of the Reichsbank received me and his nephew in his office at the bank. He listened kindly to my presentation of the financial needs of the Hitler Youth. He seemed to understand the need to get the boys off the streets and into the youth homes, and the urgency we had to set up command schools from which to draw the youth cadres for this purpose.

-Can you make a sum available to me for the financing of the Hitler Youth? - I asked him at the end of my report.

-No," replied the president of the Reich Bank.

Having said that, he did not add another word. I was astonished. I knew from Hitler himself that a few months before, when he was not yet President of the Reichsbank, he had provided several million from industrial funds for the election campaign of the "Reichsbank". N.S.D.A.P. From the position he held, he must surely have had more influence and influence. So there was no explanation for that answer, especially as it was a relatively small amount. What mistake had I made?

Had it been a mistake to evoke the family relationship and turn up with the nephew, or had he had an argument with Hitler that very morning and was therefore in such a bad mood? I never found out, but one thing I did know from that moment on: that when Hjalmar Schacht said no, it was no. He dismissed us courteously, but he did not say goodbye. He dismissed us politely, but we had not managed to get a single frame out of his pocket.

That was the only time I spoke with Schacht during the years of my political activity. We spoke to each other again twelve years later, when we both appeared before the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal.

The next morning I went to a big industrialist whom I knew personally very well. I told him the exact amount I needed - 150,000 marks - and its precise purpose. Without saying a word, he handed me a cheque for the requested sum.

Twenty-four hours later I bought house number 10 on the Kronprinzufer and a few days later my closest collaborators moved in. I left in Munich the entire administrative apparatus and the card-issuing offices. In this way I obeyed Hitler's orders while keeping one foot in Berlin.

This was, as it later turned out, one of the most important decisions for the future of the organisation. Berlin was in a central position and from there the leadership could be exercised better and the people could come there much more easily when they had to be called up. In Potsdam we set up the national command school and the B.D.M. command school ^[38].

On 17 June 1933, Hitler appointed me head of the Reich Youth. In his decree he said:

"The head of the German Reich Youth is in charge of all youth organisations for men and women, as well as of the youth sections of adult organisations. For the founding of new youth organisations and associations, his approval is required...".

It already had the title. But the state's financial resources were not linked to it. I had to continue to use the usual means of financing in heroic times: street and door-to-door canvassing, selling leaflets and propaganda material, and accepting voluntary donations.

Five days after my appointment I dissolved the "Grossdeutschen Bund" [39]. With its 15,000 members, it was the largest nucleus of the so-called "confederate youth". Its leaders had explicitly professed their National Socialist faith, so that I could not understand why these groups continued their independent existence. On the other hand, a good number of groups belonging to the "confederates" had freely and voluntarily joined our ranks. Only a few of their members remained outside our ranks for the entire duration of the Third Reich.

That is not to say that my measure was welcomed by everyone. The head of the Grossdeutschen Bund, Vice-Admiral von Trotha, did not conceal his irritation with me for more than a year. After this time we reconciled. Later, in 1936, he was appointed honorary head of the naval section of the Hitler Youth.

In any case, the "Grossdeutsche Bund" was the only youth organisation that I dissolved on a regular basis at the time. In reality, it had no state authority to do so. It was enough, however, for the declaration of dissolution to be read in the press for it to be accepted, and it could simply be called a *bluff*. But it was not so easy everywhere, and I therefore calculated that it would take years before it would be possible for me to bring all the youth organisations together in a single movement.

But events were to move quickly. First the youth sections of the "Defence Leagues" joined the HJ. Later, on 26 June, Hitler declared:

-A goal pursued for fourteen years has been achieved. With the placement under my command of the "Helmets of

Steel", as supreme leader of the S.A., as well as the entry of the "Scharnhorst League" into the Hitler Youth, the unity of the fighting forces of the German nation can be considered complete and finalised. The S.A., the S.S., the "Steel Helmets" and the HJ. will be from now on and for the future the only organisations which the National Socialist State recognises as responsible for the political education and training of adults and youth.

At the same time the S.P.D. ^[40] was banned and the other parties dissolved themselves. The foundation of new parties was forbidden by the law of 14 July 1933, which gave me the opportunity to declare:

-If the N.S.D.A.P. is from now on the only party, the Hitler Youth must be the only youth organisation.

But it had not yet reached that point. There were still 18 Catholic and 19 Evangelical youth associations with an estimated membership of between 450,000 and 800,000. They were opposed to unification and found support in their respective churches. I tried to undermine these organisations by decreeing that the political as well as the sporting education of young people was expressly the task of the Hitler Youth. The denominational groups should therefore confine themselves to religious and soul-curing activity. Practically, Bible reading and liturgy. Everything else - camps and marches, games, sports and small-calibre rifle shooting - was to be reserved for the HJs alone. In addition to this, there was the use of uniforms and flags, as well as two symbols that played a great, now barely comprehensible, role in organised youth: the tahalis and the dagger.

The Hitler Youth zealously saw to it that such privileges were respected by the denominational groups. Numerous boys gave in to pressure and joined the HJ. Others, however, continued to defend the right to a youthful existence to which they were accustomed.

This led to clashes, in which uniforms, pennants and tahalis were torn off. It should be added that the H J were not always victorious.

But the situation was annoying, all the more so because it could cause scandal. The evangelical bishop of the Reich, Müller, was the first to come to me. He invited me to a dinner at the Esplanade Hotel, because Barnabas von Geczy, whom he greatly appreciated, was playing there. The prelate wore not only the prelatric cross around his neck, but also the Order of the Crescent on his chest. He had received this Turkish decoration for his work as a military chaplain on the Dardanelles front in 1916.

Bishop Müller told me that the evangelical youth had given him full statutory powers and it was his wish that all boys and girls under the age of 18 who were in his ranks should join the HJ. We soon agreed on the details. He also agreed to my proposal to sign the agreement in my office at the national headquarters, in front of the cameras of the film news. The ceremony took place on 19 December 1933.

In the first year of the National Socialist revolution, the Hitler Youth had increased its membership from 110,000 to 2.3 million; almost a third of all boys between the ages of ten and eighteen wore the brown shirt.

Six years later I asked the Archbishop of Freiburg, Conrad Groeber:

-Can you tell me the difference between an evangelical and a Catholic gymnastic movement?

The archbishop laughingly raised his eyebrows and, threatening me with his finger, said:

-When he gets to my age he will understand.

For four days we had been sitting around a negotiating table in the conference room of the Ministry of the Interior. Three National Socialists had three Catholic bishops as our interlocutors. The fate of the Catholic youth associations was to be settled in order to implement the recommendations of the

Concordat signed on 20 July 1933 between the Vatican and the Reich Government. In addition to Archbishop Groeber, the Catholic Church had seconded Bishop Berning of Osnabrück and Bishop Bares of Berlin. The Reich Government was represented by Director General Buttman of the Ministry of the Interior, State Secretary Dr. Stukkar, representing the Ministry of Education, and myself, spokesman for the National Youth Headquarters.

The negotiations had reached an impasse. The bishops wanted to show their patriotic feelings, but without leaving their youth associations in the lurch. They knew the conflicts of the girls and boys. For my part, I was determined to carry forward the H.J. slogan, but also not to take the responsibility for the negotiations breaking down.

I proposed a compromise formula: I would withdraw my ban on being a member of a Catholic youth association and a Catholic youth organisation at the same time.

H.J. In return, the Catholic bishops would prohibit Catholic groups from marching and camping in the summer of 1934 and from wearing their uniforms. The prelates agreed. On 29 June, at midnight, we parted in the best of dispositions. The next day we were to meet again to formally sign the agreement.

XXIII

Early that day, 30 June 1934, the telephone rang early in the morning in our Wannsee villa. On the other end of the line was the Secretary of State, Dr. Stuckart.

-Stay at home because all hell seems to have broken loose in the city. The whole Government quarter has been surrounded by the Reichswehr. It is said that there has been an S.A. uprising, but it is not known precisely what has happened.

A *putsch* of the S.A.? I regarded that as entirely absurd. I knew that Hitler was in Essen, where he had gone to witness the wedding of the *gauleiter* Terboven, while the Chief of Staff, Roehm, was having a water cure in Bad Wiessee. Who, under such circumstances, was carrying out a *putsch* against whom? I called the National Youth Headquarters. My assistant seemed as surprised as I was.

-I've been on the phone for an hour," he said.

- In our regional headquarters, everything is quiet. Only the district chief of Munich seems very excited. He informed me that the Führer had suddenly arrived to order the arrest of all members of the S.A. headquarters.

My first reaction was to call Goebbels and Goering. Surely they must know something of what was going on. But at the last instant, I hung up the receiver. If there was indeed a power struggle going on, no one could know who was against whom. For me, the most important thing was that, as on other occasions, the H.J.'s should not be mixed up in anything.

I turned on the radio. All the stations were broadcasting the normal programme. My assistant and other leaders came home. Shortly afterwards we also received the first news by telephone: there had been arrests in Berlin as well. But we still didn't know who the detainees were and who had ordered their arrest.

Finally, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, the music suddenly stopped. Hitler's decree was read out: the chief of the general staff of the

S.A., Ernst Roehm, was dismissed and expelled from the Party, and Obergruppenführer Lutze from Hanover was appointed new Chief of Staff.

We looked at each other hesitantly.

A few weeks earlier he had spoken to Roehm over lunch at his Berlin headquarters in Tiergarten. The reason: a drunken S.A. leader had beaten a member of the HJs to near death. He wanted to make it clear once and for all that the S.A. had no authority whatsoever over the young people.

I was delayed, and when I arrived, Roehm and his senior staff were already seated at the table. To my astonishment, I noticed that a grey Reichswehr uniform also appeared among the brown warriors. It was the head of the ministerial cabinet of the Reichswehr Ministry, Walter von Reichenau, who had just been appointed commanding general.

I was surprised, as I said. Until then, Reichswehr and SA had been like cat and dog. It was common knowledge, moreover, that Roehm aspired to the post of Reichswehr Minister. The Reichswehr, for its part, wanted the S.A. to be assimilated into the reserves and thus come under its control. Had the two adversaries suddenly joined forces?

General von Reichenau took his leave immediately after the meal. Roehm invited me into his smoking room. An orderly placed a plate on the gramophone and the sounds of the S.A. fight song filled the air. People, to arms! Roehm was keeping the beat with his meaty hand on the tabletop of the little table.

-This is my anthem," he said. What we need is a people's army. But those people on Bendlerstrasse don't understand that. And for Adolf, the Reichswehr is currently the apple of his eye.

-Are things not going well between you and Hitler? - I asked.

-You know I'm no angel," said Roehm.

He knew it, indeed. Two years earlier, Hitler had removed the Hitler Youth from the authority of the Chief of Staff because of Roehm's publicly known homosexual relationships.

-I am faithful to Adolfo," said the man in question. If he told me today that I was a hindrance to him, I would go back to Bolivia. I could never try anything against him.

As I said these words, Roehm looked me straight in the eye. I did not see him as an angel at that moment either, but as a man of unreserved honour. He promised me that in the future, no member of the S.A. would become an educator of young people.

-Some people think that I am no longer suitable company for Adolf," said Roehm.

He shook my hand:

-The important thing is that we have reached an agreement. Between us, everything has been cleared up. I will also clear things up with Adolfo. He is my friend and he will remain my friend.

Four weeks after this conversation, Roehm was dead, executed by S.S. men in a cell in the Munich-Stadelheim prison. Hitler had at first opposed the execution of his old friend, but for some time Hess had been pointing out to the Führer the impossibility of putting up with the homosexual S.A. Chief. Hitler authorised another seventy-three executions. Among the more than one hundred dead resulting from the Roehm affair, some were the most senior SA chiefs, two were generals, and there followed a long theory of men who were regarded as enemies of National Socialism, but who had also known of Roehm's dubious morality. But in spite of everything, I could not quite grasp what had happened on 30 June 1934. Could I have been so thoroughly wrong about Roehm?

-I still can't believe that Captain Roehm wanted to stage a coup d'état," I told Hess some time later.

Without a word, Hess took a written paper out of a drawer in his desk and held it out to me. It was a list, apparently found in the S.A. headquarters in Berlin. It contained the names of those whom Roehm wanted to have shot after the triumph of his coup d'état. Among the names was mine.

-Is that enough for you? - Hess asked.

The document looked authentic. I had no idea then how cleverly political documents can be forged. The thought that Hitler might have ordered the execution of his old friend for reasons of political strategy had never occurred to me, not even in my dreams. And yet the shadow of doubt did not leave me from that moment on. At our last meeting, Roehm had shaken my hand with a gesture full of camaraderie. I could not believe that an old soldier like him had planned my execution at the same time.

After Roehm's death, a man I had never taken very seriously before appeared in the limelight: Heinrich Himmler. I had known him from my youth as a humble agricultural technician with a diploma.

XXIV

It was at my friend Harry Liedtke's house in Berlin's Scharmützelsee that I first broached the subject of concentration camps. One evening in the summer of 1935, Kathe Dorsch told me, rather alarmed, that the playwright Richard Billinger was in a concentration camp.

Harry Liedtke, an irresistible heartthrob from the days of silent films, and his former wife, Kathe Dorsch, a figure on the German stage for two decades, had been with me shortly before at the Deutscher Theater. We had seen a performance of Billinger's comedy "Stille Gäste" ^[41], and had no idea of the reasons that could have landed this completely apolitical author in a concentration camp.

Kathe Dorsch, who had long known Hermann Goering, the chairman of the Prussian Council of Ministers - who in his younger years had been one of his most devoted worshippers, wanted to go to Goering's office the next morning to secure Billinger's release.

Some time later, Billinger was released. Years later I got to know him personally. But it was during that evening at the Scharmützelsee that I spoke with Kathe Dorsch at greater length about him. I had the opportunity to repeat the conversation with the actress shortly after Billinger's release, and Käthe told me that, after his release, the author did not want to talk about the concentration camps, as he had undertaken to keep absolutely silent on the subject. This silence and the hypothetical reasons for it worried me a great deal at the time.

At the time, I knew nothing about concentration camps other than that they had been set up with the approval of the former Bavarian Minister of Justice, Dr. Gürtner, who held the same post in the Reich government. At the time, I imagined that a sentence in a concentration camp was more humane than a sentence in a prison cell, since it offered greater opportunities for movement. I also considered it to be consistent,

especially after the passing of the special laws, to keep political opponents out of public life, as they could cause difficulties in the establishment of the new state. As a young man, I could not even imagine that anything inhuman could happen in such camps. And one of the reasons for my thinking this way was my complete confidence in the righteousness and legal sense of the Reich Minister of Justice. How could that refined jurist have given another person, namely Heinrich Himmler, the responsibility for the running of the camps if he had not been absolutely certain that the legal regulations governing internment would be respected?

However, despite my firm belief in the above, the silence to which Billinger had been forced and the fact that an author pampered by the Austrian bourgeoisie and celebrated by the entire German public could have disappeared for a few months in the concentration camps still disturbed me.

So I took advantage of the next commanders' meeting in the "Brown House" in Munich on 24 September 1935 to speak to the Reichsführer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, on this subject. While I was talking to him, other national hierarchs joined us. It turned out that of the fourteen present, who constituted the Party's top brass, not one had ever seen a concentration camp in his life.

"We have nothing to hide, my lords," said Himmler with extraordinary kindness. I am pleased to invite you and these other gentlemen. We can visit the Dachau concentration camp tomorrow, and you will be free to inform yourselves there. You will talk to the prisoners, and if you have any further questions, both the camp headquarters and myself will be glad to answer them.

The next morning we drove to Dachau. A column of twenty uncovered cars passed through the entrance gate and parked in front of the administration building. A column of black-uniformed S.S. was formed up, armed with

rifle. A "Standartenführer" gave Heinrich Himmler the news. From his lips came out a number of figures coupled with abbreviations unknown to us:

-Eight hundred PH; eleven hundred and ten PVH. Himmler hastened to give us the clarifications.

"PH" stood for "political prisoners", who had shown themselves to be active in their enmity towards the state. "PVH" meant "prisoners on remand". These were, as a rule, leaders and prominent members of the banned political parties, who were thus prevented from any adverse activity. The other inmates were criminals, drunks, refractory to work, etc. A special group consisted of two hundred Jews.

We went around the camp in groups. A double wire fence bounded the huge expanse. At each of the four corners stood a wooden watchtower. Between the barracks - which had been the halls of an old gunpowder factory - were carefully laid out avenues and there was also a gigantic assembly area with two football goals. Everything was of grand proportions, of a strict and almost repellent sobriety, but very neat.

A formation of detainees passed us on their way to work. They wore cut-off uniforms and caps.

round. On his left marched a S.S., who, on seeing us, ordered:

-Caps off!

Instantly, the caps disappeared from the heads. We inspected one of the barracks intended for accommodation.

Double bunk beds, acceptable mattresses and clean bedding.

One of the S.S. commanders preceded us to another of the barracks, where the camp library was set up. The detainee who was acting as librarian came forward towards us.

I looked at him dumbfounded. During the whole time that the HJ. had been dependent on the S.A. we had been in contact for service reasons. He was the former deputy and chief of information of the executed Roehm. When I transferred the headquarters to Berlin

We had stopped seeing each other. I could never have imagined that our next meeting would take place under such conditions.

We looked at each other in confusion. For my part, I tried to cut the visit short and left the barracks. On the way back to the administrative building I approached *Reichsleiter* Walter Buch, the Party's supreme judge.

-What is Count Du Moulin doing in a concentration camp? - I asked him.

I got only a laconic reply from Buch:

-It was complicated in the Roehm *putsch*.

My next question was addressed to Himmler.

-Why wasn't Count Du Moulin executed like the others who took part in the *putsch*?

-He is not here because of Roehm's *putsch*," said Himmler.

-but for homosexual activities.

Two completely different answers, both of which left me completely unsatisfied. The count had been nothing more than an assistant to Roehm and, as such, a faithful servant of his boss. But in my heart I was reluctant to consider him a traitor. I was sure that he was not a homosexual either, which was then grounds for arrest.

The only thing I could do on his behalf was to inform Himmler about him. I do not know whether this did him much good, but I can testify that my questions dismayed the S.S. chief. However, from my later experience as a detainee, I know that the interest of someone in a high position at least serves to relieve the prisoner somewhat of the despotism of the lower-level guards.

Much later I learned that Count Du Moulin had been released from prison at the end of 1936.

At the end of the visit, Himmler invited us to the administration building. From the foyer we watched a parade, in columns of four, helmeted and rifle-wielding, of the guards. The men paraded before Himmler, who was later to become lord and master of all concentration camps. At

At that moment, no one would have been able to guess the man's plans and projects.

For my part, I had seen him for the first time in the autumn of 1928. I was waiting in the office of the national headquarters of the N.S.D.A.P. in Munich for the arrival of Rudolf Hess, then Hitler's secretary. From the office window I watched as a man in a leather coat and felt hat was struggling to start the engine of a "Dixi" in the courtyard below.

It was raining. The man was trying hard to start the car, but no doubt something essential had got wet and the engine was not responding to his urgent requests. Seen from the window, the scene looked like something out of a comedy film. The secretary, Mrs. Scheubner-Richter, approached me.

-Ah, it's Herr Himmler. If he doesn't get his engine started he won't make it in time for dinner. He recently got married and owns a small farm with chickens outside in Waldtrudering....

At last, his "Dixi" was on the move and he sped out of the courtyard.

Shortly afterwards I had to establish service contact with Himmler. He needed a speaker for the election campaign to be held at the colleges. This came under his jurisdiction as National Propaganda Chief.

A number of files were placed on his desk. He looked at me sympathetically through his rimless glasses. I have to confess that I did not find him unfriendly, although I was surprised by his appearance, which did not match the image I had drawn of a propaganda chief. He looked more like a bookkeeper.

Of course, although he was head of propaganda, he did no propaganda at all. In his files he kept records of the best speakers available to the Party. When Himmler was obliged to speak at any meeting or rally, he always managed to have several weeks to draft the texts of his speeches, which almost always consisted of paragraphs.

taken from those previously uttered by others. The same can be said of the texts: he generously distributed leaflets, posters and leaflets whenever the occasion arose, but I do not think he ever wrote a single text for these propaganda tools.

A receding chin made Himmler's face look incomplete. No doubt aware of this, and in order to acquire a more manly appearance, he had grown a narrow moustache that shaded his upper lip.

I remember my surprise when, shortly after my first interview with him, I saw Himmler in S.S. uniform at a meeting in the Lowenbraukeller: a brown shirt with a black armband, black riding breeches and a black cap with a skull and crossbones.

The S.S. then numbered only about three hundred men in the whole of Germany. It had been formed from Hitler's own personal guard and consisted of men ready for all kinds of service, both during the day and at night. The pale Himmler did not fit in well with the other members of these units. However, he was soon appointed "Reichsführer" on an interim basis, and finally, on 6 January 1929, he became the definitive National Commander of the SS. I am still at a loss to understand the reasons which brought him to that high post, other than Hitler's desire to see the SS in safe and faithful hands. For the fact is that Himmler did not fulfil any of the conditions required for such a leadership.

This was also demonstrated by the reaction that the appointment of the new "Reichsführer" provoked among the former S.S. Hitler's chauffeur, Julius Schreck, used to call the qualified agronomist "gafudo" or "substitute". And there was no lack of times when Himmler's "Dixi" was caught from behind as the "Reichsführer" was about to leave the "Schellingtrasse", so that the front wheels were spinning in the air. Himmler put up with all this disrespect with inexplicable patience.

In the spring of 1929 I went to Weimar during the Easter holidays to visit my parents. At about the same time Himmler began his first inspection trips as national head of the S.S. Shortly before leaving, he inquired about a cheap hotel in Weimar.

-When you come to Weimar, you can stay with us," I offered.

My father was away on a trip. Himmler arrived in the evening and tired from the railway journey. He apologised to my mother for arriving unannounced. The truth is that my mother was used to my taking my friends and acquaintances without prior warning.

During dinner, Himmler brought his glass of wine to his lips only a few times. When we retired to the library, my mother asked him what he wanted to drink.

-If I may ask you for something, I would like a cup of chamomile," he said.

-. I have a very delicate stomach.

My mother asked him about the causes of his illness. He explained that he had contracted typhus when he was an agronomy student. Since then he had been forced to wear an abdominal binder. He seemed to be pleasantly surprised by my mother's interest and the general atmosphere in my parental home.

As the son of a Bavarian professor, he had grown up in a financially limited household, even though he could not be described as poor. After that visit, he experienced a feeling of gratitude and affection for my mother that extended to me personally. Later on, I was one of the few whom she invited to her home with the best of intentions. Perhaps this sympathy helped to prevent my position from becoming more dangerous when I fell out of favour with Hitler in 1943.

Then, in 1929, Himmler was not only travelling to recruit troops for his S.S., but also to raise funds for these groups.

I remember that I had the address of an industrialist based in the town of Apolda, famous for its bell foundries and textile mills, who was particularly generous when it came to national causes.

The next day Himmler left on the morning train for Apolda. I accompanied him. We arrived too early and were forced to wait for two hours in a café until the appointed time for the appointment. Profit made: five marks.

The manufacturer received us very courteously. For half an hour Himmler enlightened him on the aims of the NSDAP and the Defence Sections [\[42\]](#). To tell the truth, I had never before sensed such dialectic ability in him.

-If that's the way things are, I don't want them to go without my contribution," said the maker. He got up, opened the box, and returned with the five frames, which he placed on the table.

-I think you misunderstood me," said Himmler nonchalantly.
-. I had thought of a big contribution.

-I'm sorry," said the hosiery maker in a dry voice.

You don't know how many people come to me asking for money. I give them all five marks and the sum sometimes becomes considerable.

Himmler stood up and said goodbye coldly. He left the five marks on the table.

I vividly remembered that episode during the Party Congress of 1934. In the foyer of the Deutscher Hof Hotel in Nuremberg, I saw Himmler among a group of SS Chiefs. Most of them were older than was usual for S.S. chiefs. I recognised a large industrialist and banker.

-Who are they? - I asked Himmler's adjutant Wolff. I learnt that they were the "Reichsführer's circle of friends" of the S.S. Himmler provided the great

captains of industry honorary S.S. ranks, uniforms and daggers. They thanked him for the concession with large cheques.

That Heinrich Himmler was not only diligent, but also ambitious, I had the opportunity to see for the first time in 1930. I was still head of the Student League. The National Socialist students were at that time serving in the S.A., together with employees and workers.

I noticed then that there was an increasing number of S.S. uniforms at the evening meetings of the colleges. I was also struck by the fact that the new members of the S.S. were always the tallest and strongest students or those with a noble title. The S.S. students always sat together, and if at first there were two, then four, then twelve. Their attire and their black skull caps were perfectly distinguishable. The S.A. students joked:

-Joseph wears a black hat and struts more than his brother.

Among the first to approach Himmler's group from the Students' League was Prince Josias, heir to the titles of Waldeck and Pyrmont. He had been a front-line soldier and was studying in Munich.

-Why, prince! - I exclaimed one day when I saw him, "Who put you in the S.S.?"

Somewhat confused, he explained that Himmler had spoken to him personally one day.

-We need men like you," he said. With your experience from the front, you can play a major role in the organisation of the S.S. "We need men like you," he said.

I didn't understand at first what it was all about. Why did the defence sections need a man with frontline experience? Why did their organiser offer leading positions to princes and nobles, as well as to young men who could achieve

a stature that made them particularly suitable for members of the guard?

At the time I thought it was nothing more than an extravagance on Himmler's part. He had reached the rank of ensign during the World War, but without ever having gone to the front. The S.A. chiefs, almost all of whom were former front-line officers, did not regard him as entirely suitable. The then supreme commander of the S.A., Captain Pfeffer, even described him as "rather weak".

Himmler's great hour was struck by the mutiny of the East German S.A. in 1931 under the command of Captain Stennes. Through his intelligence service, the Berlin S.S. chief, Kurt Daluege, was aware of all the details of the plot. In this way he succeeded in separating the S.S. masses from the influence of the insurgent leader. "Men of the S.S.: your honour means loyalty," Hitler wrote to Daluege. In saying this, he composed the motto which the S.S. men would in future wear on their belt buckles: "My honour is loyalty".

From 1931 onwards, Himmler became a kind of chief of police for the Party. It soon became possible to see how an organisation initially intended to maintain order and carry out information was developing into a gigantic mechanism. Himmler, the man with the files, seemed to be the ideal figure for its command. But this did not increase his prestige. We felt that we were revolutionaries, and therefore enemies of all police. And for that reason, we did not hold the Party's own police in any higher regard than the police of the state.

At the end of the year 1931-32, my father-in-law showed me Himmler's new decree. It was a "marriage decree" for the S.S. Henceforth, no member of those units could marry without the express written permission of his "Reichsführer". Both the photograph and the family tree of the bride would have to be examined by the newly created S.S. Race Section. There it would be investigated whether the future

The contracting party was of Aryan descent and if his physical type guaranteed a Nordic offspring.

Both my girlfriend and I wondered how we - both of us brown - would be able to pass that racial "test". We went through all the S.A. and S.S. bosses we knew. Very few responded to the Nordic type of man. Of course, Hitler himself did not answer, nor did Himmler, who looked more like a Czech schoolmaster.

Himmler's "marriage decree" ended with these words: "The S.S. are assured that with this order they have taken a step of considerable importance. Neither misunderstanding, irony nor contempt will affect us. The future belongs to us.

The truth is that at the time we regarded the whole thing as something of a joke. And we would not have hesitated to laugh if someone had prophesied that Heinrich Himmler and his S.S. would eventually become one of the great instruments of power of the Third Reich.

But three years later, the process had begun: Himmler was the head of the political police throughout Germany, he ruled over the concentration camps and was beginning to build up a strong armed power.

On one occasion Himmler invited my wife and me.

Himmler's house at Lindenfyeh, near Gmund, at the northern end of Lake Tegern, was an old-fashioned, silent building, half hidden by a grove of spruce trees. An S.S. sentry opened the gates. Himmler appeared in civilian clothes, wearing lederhosen, grey socks, reeded shoes and a Bavarian-style jacket. The whole house was decorated in the same style, though not authentically, but by more scenographic means than anything else: cushions with embroidered hearts, and so on. In short: nothing authentically Bavarian, but rather a product of how North Germans imagine Bavarians to be.

We sat at a low table. Mrs. Himmler was a cornered, grave-looking woman who treated her husband badly.

I have never seen a man who was so much under the female yoke as Himmler. He was overflowing with kindness and affection when he dealt with her; but the kinder and gentler he was, the worse he was treated. The all-powerful head of the police and the S.S. was at home a left-handed zero who had to say yes to everything. Years later, therefore, I could not conceal my surprise when I learned in a Nuremberg cell that the man had even risked having a mistress.

Frau Himmler always said "Heinrich" in a dry tone when addressing her husband. After dinner he poured himself the usual chamomile. For me he poured a glass of red wine. When he urged his wife to help herself to one or the other, he received the dry reply: "No; I don't want any."

My wife, who knew how to be very witty and always felt capable of animating an after-dinner conversation on her own, tried her best to make conversation. But Frau Himmler silently refused any such attempt, so that Himmler himself, who was vainly trying to support her, finally collapsed in front of this gigantic "iceberg".

Finally, around ten o'clock in the evening, we said goodbye, but not without the usual invitation to correspond.

Two days later, Heinrich Himmler and his wife came to Kochel. We had prepared food for at least six men of the escort. But to my great surprise, Himmler arrived without a single escort. He seemed more cheerful than on the evening of his invitation and even his wife behaved differently. Perhaps the atmosphere at Kochel contributed to this. Our children were playing in the meadow in front of the house. Himmler was enthusiastic about them:

-You immediately see the Germanic race, the Nordic.

-We are not really very Nordic," I objected. Even apart from my Anglo-Saxon ancestors, the Schirachs are Slavs, and we come from Lusatia to be precise.

-No," said Himmler as he gazed at the stone shield above the door. You have a snake.

on the coat of arms and this proves that their ancestors were already in High Germanic times, judges or of princely origin.

-I am sorry to disappoint you," I replied. But the Schirachs were ennobled some 160 years ago by Empress Maria Theresa. And she is the one who had the snake painted on the coat of arms.

Why? I don't know.

When we sat down after dinner in the library, Frau Himmler even took part in the conversation.

As we said goodbye, he said:

-It will be my pleasure to present you with a candelabra for this beautiful house.

My wife laughed when the Himmlers had disappeared.

-Can you imagine what kind of candelabra it will be?

A few days later a box arrived. Sender: Heinrich Himmler. Wrapped in shavings was a gigantic ceramic object, imitating a medieval candelabrum. I remembered that I had seen something similar in Fritz Lang's film "The Nibelungen".

XXV

August 1936. At the Reich Chancellery, Hitler gave a banquet for the foreign personalities present in Berlin on the occasion of the 11th Olympiad. Count Henri de Baillet-Latour of Belgian nationality, President of the International Olympic Committee, had my wife as his partner at the table. Henriette told the old gentleman how pleased she was with this celebration of youth, love and peace. The Count listened to her attentively and then replied:

-God preserve your illusions, *madame*. As for my opinion, is that in three years' time we will have war.

Henriette told me, alarmed, of her table neighbour's grim prophecy. I was not too surprised. However, like Henriette, I did not believe in an imminent war, for I was firmly convinced that Hitler wanted peace. Still, I understood that the Berlin Olympics aroused a certain anxiety in foreign visitors.

Long before the Games took place, I had tried, together with Hans von Tschammer und Osten, the Reich's head of sports, to persuade Hitler to make the two-week-long sporting celebrations as civilian as possible. Tschammer-Osten had gone so far as to suggest that he appear in a summer suit. But Hitler opted for a uniform, and the tribune of honour in the Olympic Stadium took on the appearance of a military arengarium. All around the stadium and at its entrances, formations of the S.A. and S.S. were formed.

Not only the uniforms, but also the perfect organisation impressed the foreign visitors. The programme was carried out with clockwork precision and there was not a single glitch. The mass of foreign visitors could not get over their astonishment. There was no shortage of observers, such as the Belgian Count Baillet-Latour, who could deduce the following: a power that organises with

such perfection in the world's greatest sporting festival, it would prove no less perfect in a mobilisation.

The main star of the 1936 Olympic Games was the sprinter Jesse Owens, a black American. When Hitler was present in the stadium, he used to congratulate the winner in his tribune. When Jesse Owens won the hundred-metre race, he exclaimed:

-Americans should be ashamed that blacks have to win their medals. I will not shake hands with that nigger.

It was useless for Tschammer-Osten to beg him to receive the hero of the Games in the interests of sport. A few hours later, at the Reich Chancellery, I tried to achieve the same goal with political arguments.

-America will consider treatment of Jesse Owens unfriendly
- I said. He is an American citizen and we are no one to judge who the Americans promote. Besides, he is a very polite and educated man, a student at a college.

For the second time in the eleven years that I had known Hitler, he spoke to me loudly.

-Do you think I'm going to be photographed shaking hands with a black man? - he said.

Needless to say, I found that attitude totally wrong; in the face of a racial problem, it did not even admit the spirit of union and fraternity that informed the Olympiad.

Among the guests of honour in Hitler's tribune at the Olympic Stadium sat, day after day, two young Englishwomen: sisters Diana and Unity Mitford. Daughters of the Upper House member Lord Redesdale, they were both ardent admirers of Hitler.

Unity Valkyrie Mitford, the younger of the two sisters, had already told her parents in 1932: "I am going to Germany to meet Hitler. Shortly before the seizure of power, she went to Munich to study German studies there. She wrote to Hitler and received no reply. She phoned him on his home number, but he never got through. Finally he got to know the

Hitler's hairdresser in Munich-Bogenhausen had his blond hair waved there and found out that Hitler often lunched at a place in the Schwabing district, the "Osteria Bavaria". From then on, Unity was there every lunchtime and every evening. He sat at the table next to Hitler's, until Hitler finally asked one day:

-Who is this image of Germania?

He was not slow in inviting the girl to sit at his table. He marvelled that she had learned German in so short a period of time, and was not without pride that a young lady belonging to the highest English classes had, for his sake, made the journey to Germany. He also developed in the presence of the blonde Unity one of his favourite themes: Germany and England were brother nations destined together to become masters of the world.

The blonde Unity travelled all over Europe in a car adorned with intertwined swastika and Union Jack flags, propagandised for Hitler, and returned to Munich to remain close to her idol. Until shortly before the Olympiad, I only knew Unity from my father-in-law's stories. Whenever Unity reappeared in Munich, he was forced to listen to wry remarks about the Führer's British ideal of beauty from his employee Eva Braun, one of Hitler's most passionate admirers.

In July 1936, when I was about to open the sessions of a congress of the HJ. in Weimar, I received an urgent call from Hitler: he wanted me urgently to come to Munich. He was in such a hurry that he sent me his personal plane with his pilot Baur. At the airport, Deputy Brückner was already waiting for me, and he immediately took me to the flat at Prinzregentenplatz 16. At Hitler's home I was introduced to two charming girls, Unity and Diana Mitford. Hitler had asked me to act as interpreter and to translate the conversation with the two enthusiastic ladies, which was to be conducted largely in English. Diana was separated

since 1934 by her first husband, the writer Bryan Walter Guinness. Like her sister for Hitler, she had been enthusiastic about the head of the English fascists, Sir Oswald Mosley. The third Mitford sister had, by contrast, gone to Spain with an English communist to fight General Franco there. The hard-pressed father, Lord Redesdale, was endeavouring, together with his two fascist daughters, to save the "red sheep" of the family. And out of affection for Unity and Diana, Hitler himself later influenced the nationalist General Franco to bring about the return of the youngest of the Mitford sisters.

After our first meeting at Hitler's home, I met Unity and Diana many times. I considered Diana the more interesting of the two. Shortly afterwards she married Sir Oswald Mosley. The ceremony was held at the home of the Munich publisher Bruckmann in the strictest privacy. Hitler witnessed the ceremony.

Through Diana I also got to know Mosley. He turned up one morning at the "Kaiserhof" hotel.

A few days later Hitler asked me what impression I had made and what opinion I had of his party's chances in England. My reply was as follows:

-Mosley is an excellent person, but I consider it utterly impossible that the English could one day be inclined towards fascism. In England, everyone has the opportunity to propagate the ideas he wants. And every Englishman can found his own political movement. He can stand on a chair in Hyde Park and try to win followers for his creed. Everything is allowed, but very little is taken seriously. And Mosley's fascists, despite their ten-thousand-strong numbers, are for the English more a source of mirth than a political factor to be taken seriously. For us Germans, it has to be the strongest political party, the one represented by the *premier*, that counts in our calculations, and not any political sect that sympathises with us. Our interlocutor must be none other than the *sir* Oswald Mosley, British cabinet.

Hitler listened to me with a blasé smile on his lips. The veneration of the Mitford sisters had helped to strengthen in him the idea that there were two England's: one dominated "by Jews and stultified parliamentarians" and the other "convinced of its blood kinship with the Germans, which would one day shake off Jewish domination and form with Germany the great community of Germanic peoples".

-Few women have been allowed to undertake so great a task," Unity Mitford once said to Heinrich Hoffmann. For such an ideal I would be ready to give my life.

The illusion of the "second England" was dashed when Britain declared war on Germany after Hitler's attack on Poland. On that day, Unity appeared, collapsed, before the *gauleiter* of Munich, Adolf Wagner. He told her that she was now an enemy alien and that he was therefore responsible for her safety. He then added that she could continue to live in Germany undisturbed or, if she wished, return to England. Without a word, Unity placed a sealed envelope on the *gauleiter's* table and left.

Urged on by other tasks, Wagner forgot the envelope. He did not open it until nightfall. It contained a photograph dedicated to Hitler, a Party badge and a farewell letter addressed to Hitler. A few hours later Unity was found, seriously wounded, in the English Garden. She had tried to take her own life by shooting herself in the temple. For months she remained in a Munich clinic, paralysed, until, on Hitler's express orders, she was taken in a special railway carriage to Switzerland, from where she continued her journey to England. Shortly after the war, photographs of Unity Mitford attending theatrical performances and other social events in London appeared in several English publications. She appeared to be fully recovered from the paralysis she had suffered as a result of being shot in the head. In 1948, the newspapers reported her death.

XXVI

On 22 September 1936 I was sitting in the imposing office of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, opposite Mussolini. Through the open windows came the cry "Duce!", "Duce!", uttered by thousands of throats. Half an hour before, a formation of 500 H.J.'s, with flags and music, had paraded across the square in front of Mussolini. Mussolini seemed as enthusiastic as his collaborators. At his side was Renato Ricci, head of the Italian Youth. I felt self-conscious that he had to stand while I was seated. But that was Mussolini's style. His ministers had to stand in his presence and he never shook hands with any of them.

-We must learn from the Germans, Ricci," said Mussolini. And he uttered the following words in German: "*Oordnung, Oordnung, Oordnung!*"

I couldn't hold back a smile. That order of the HJ. had been the product of two long weeks of intense exercise. Just as Mussolini held up German youth as an example, so it happened that every time young Fascists visited Germany or every time a Party leader returned from a trip to Germany, the judgment was identical: "Compared with Italian youth, Hitlerite youth is rubbish".

In the evening, Renato Ricci gave a reception to the Germans. He hung from my breast the medal of Commander of the Crown, which had just been awarded to me by the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia. On the way back to the hotel I was accompanied by an attaché from the German embassy and he made it clear to me that the rank was an insult. As a national Party hierarchy I should at least have received the Grand Cross of the same order. I took it for granted, but I had no idea that this would lead to intense activity between the German embassy and the court administration. The next morning, a large package addressed to me was received at the Excelsior Hotel: it was the Grand Cross of the Order of the Italian Crown. I was even more surprised when, on my return to Germany, I received a second one.

I was sent the Cross of Commander of the Order of Saint Maurice by the Italian Embassy in Berlin. Completely inexperienced in such matters, I turned to the protocol service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and on my next stay in Italy, Count Ciano awarded me the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Maurice.

Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs from June 1936, was the most valuable friend I made in Italy. After my first stay in Rome, he picked me up at the "Excelsior" hotel in his car and took me to Ostia, where we went swimming. We both spoke good English, so we understood each other perfectly. Our mutual understanding was also great on the human side. In a way, we were kindred spirits. Just as I admired Hitler, Ciano revered his father-in-law. And just as in my case I occasionally exercised measured criticism and discovered weaknesses in Hitler, so did Ciano with Mussolini. We became, for all that, close friends. Ciano offered me to be his guest whenever he came to Rome, and I made frequent use of that private invitation.

Mussolini liked to converse with German visitors outside official conversations. He had a great knowledge of things German, especially in the order of the spirit; possibly this knowledge was greater than that of a good many of the German hierarchs who took advantage of any political pretext to pay visits to sunny Italy. As far as I was concerned, the Duce gave me a hard time when the conversation turned to Klopstock. He had taken an active interest in Klopstock's works and believed that this poet was as widely read in Germany as Dante could be in Italy. I had to confess to Mussolini that I had read the odd ode by Klopstock, but could never get beyond the first canticle of his "Messiah".

-And even this first canticle, Your Excellency, I read it because it was imposed on me by my master.

Mussolini winced and changed the subject: Goethe. An inexhaustible topic of conversation. Time went by as

propelled by wings. At the end of the audience, Mussolini asked me how long I intended to stay in Rome. I replied:

-The day after tomorrow I have to leave.

-Why doesn't he stay longer? - he asked.

-I stick to an old Chinese proverb," I replied. Fish and guests stink on the third day.

Mussolini burst out laughing with a laugh as impetuous and open as I had hitherto heard from few men.

Mussolini had another peculiarity: he was a giant, provided he always remained seated. Behind his desk, his powerful head and strong torso stood out. As soon as he stood up, that impression was erased. He had very short legs and his hurried steps were more ridiculous than martial. His greatest effect was on horseback.

XXVII

As a representative of the German youth, I travelled extensively at that time and met the dictators and leaders of many countries. I met the Reza Shah of Persia, King Carol of Romania, Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia, King Ghasi in Baghdad, Regent Horthy of Hungary. In all those countries I learned about the different forms of youth organisation. One of the most interesting things I saw was the physical education college in Ankara and the staff of young Turks who were implementing the new educational guidelines drawn up according to Kemal Ataturk's reform plans. He was one of the foreign heads of state who made the greatest impression on me. He was also the only one who immediately addressed what was essential for my work.

-I am extremely interested in the social aspect of your youth movement," he said. Tell me what is being done in the great industrial country of Germany for the benefit of young workers.

He wanted to know all the particularities about our national youth sports championships and did

I informed him of our efforts to achieve a minimum of 14 days' holiday for young workers.

In other countries visited earlier, uniforms were everywhere. In Turkey, everyone wore civilian clothes. No one wore a single decoration either. Kemal Ataturk himself wore a dark double-breasted suit that afternoon when I had coffee with him. He spoke fluent French in a low, calm tone. He was, without a doubt, the most sociable and friendly dictator I ever met. He also seemed to me to be the most intelligent.

At that time a tragic event took place, the background of which was kept strictly under wraps: the last duel, no doubt, to be held in Germany.

My assistant Horst Krutschinna, a very handsome-looking East Prussian with a jovial character, met Mrs Strunck, wife of the then well-known correspondent, at a society party.

military of *Voelkischen Beobachter*. Roland Strunck was at the
the

He was travelling in Abyssinia and reporting on the war in that country. One day he returned to Berlin unannounced, surprising his wife at home in the company of Horst Krustchinna. He did not believe their assurances that nothing had happened to violate marital principles, and provoked Krutschinna into a duel.

Roland Strunck was head of the S.S. For this reason a court of honour was set up consisting of S.S. and HJ chiefs. It was presided over by the former brigade commander Karl Wolff. He read out a statement by my adjutant in which Krutschinna confirmed on his word of honour that he had not had any intimate relations with Frau Strunck. This was no purely formulaic statement to safeguard Mrs. Strunck's honour, but the plain truth. Strunck listened, absorbed in himself, to the reading of the statement. When asked if he wanted to withdraw his challenge to the duel, he answered in the negative.

One of his friends later explained that Strunck had confided to him, months before his death, that he was assaulted at night.

nightmares. In one of them, repeated insistently, he appeared before a court and was condemned to death. The court of honour was thus for him the court of his dreams, and this explained his self-absorbed attitude. The court decided to call for a duel with a pistol "with an exchange of shots until one of the two was unfit to fight".

The duel took place in a clearing in the Hohenlynchen Forest, north of Berlin. As if offended, it was Strunck's turn to fire the first shot. The bullet whistled in Krutschinna's ear. Krutschinna, who was no particular marksman with a pistol, raised his gun, pulled the trigger and hit Strunck, who went down mortally wounded.

Hitler was beside himself when he was informed of Richard Strunck's death. The members of the court of honour were placed under house arrest.

-What a strange conception of honour that is! - cried Hitler. A young man seduces a woman, the husband is outraged, and a stupid court of honour gives the young man permission to kill the husband. I am prepared to put an end to these excesses once and for all.

Until then, duels had been officially punishable by code, but unofficially tolerated as a gentleman's crime. When the authorities found out that a duel was about to take place, the contestants were not locked up in dungeons, but at most confined to their homes on parole. But from that moment on, such tolerance came to an end. Hitler issued an order to the Wehrmacht and all party organisations, inexorably punishing any kind of duel. The curious thing is that nothing happened to my adjutant: Hitler only expressed his wish never to see him again. Horst Krutschinna asked to be discharged from the HJ. and became a personnel manager in a large steel foundry.

Shortly after the war he died in particularly tragic circumstances. A burning spark set fire to his clothes and Krutschinna became a human torch, literally burning alive.



Illustration 9. Von Schirach, Governor of Vienna



Illustration 10. Robert, Richard and Klaus, the Von Schirach sons

XXVIII

On 1 December, Hitler called me at my office in the Berlin Kronprinzufer.

-Congratulations, Schirach. I have just left the cabinet meeting. You have been appointed head of one of the highest agencies of the Reich.

Thus my appointment on 17 June 1933, made by Hitler, was followed, three years later, by the appointment of the Government.

Thus ended a three-year period of tug-of-war over German youth.

The law made public the next day read as follows: "Article 1.

The Reich's territory is included in the Hitler Youth.

"Article 2 - In addition to education in the parental home and school, German youth shall be trained by the Hitler Youth in the National Socialist spirit of service to the people and the community.

"The work of training the entire German youth by the Hitler Youth will be the responsibility of the youth of the N.S.D.A.P. The holder of this office is hereby named "Chief of the Reich Youth". It will have the status of a ministry with its headquarters in Berlin and will report directly to the Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor."

The next day I went to Hitler's office in the Chancellery.

-Are you satisfied? - he asked.

-Partly, partly," I replied.

I was twenty-nine years old and in a high position, with the opportunity to discuss youth problems on an equal footing with ministers and secretaries of state. Without the approval of the national leadership, no law or decree concerning youth could henceforth be promulgated. But the truth is that he did not attach any value to the fact that the entire German youth was forced into the H.J., like a bad schoolboy taken to school by a policeman. The HJ. had then

5.4 million members, i.e. sixty percent of those between ten and eighteen years of age. He was firmly convinced that the remaining forty per cent would attend on an entirely voluntary basis.

In April 1937 I was spending a few days' rest on the banks of the Kochelsee when I was informed of the presence of Lieutenant Colonel Erwin Rommel, who had come from Berlin. He had just been appointed liaison officer between the Wehrmacht and the HJ. I visited him at

.the only thing I knew about Rommel at the time was that he was teaching at the Potsdam War College.

The officer, of medium height and stout build, gave me the impression of a typical Prussian. I therefore found it difficult to suppress my surprise when he began to speak in a thick, soft accent. After a brief conversation, we agreed that he would have an office with two orderly officers at the national headquarters of the Kronprinzenufer.

Rommel stayed for dinner. My wife drew his attention to the beautiful panorama of the Bavarian mountains that could be seen from our house. But Rommel did not seem to appreciate the remark.

-Thank you very much, I know the mountains," he said without looking back at the windows.

Without knowing it, Henriette had given our guest a kind of slogan: Rommel had won the decoration "Pour le mérite" for the conquest of a mountain position in the Julian Alps. He talked about it for almost two hours. I was quite interested in his narration, but Henriette, who had a real allergy to all things military, almost fell asleep.

In May 1937 I made the official presentation of Rommel as Wehrmacht liaison to 3,000 HJ. commanders at a camp set up in Weimar. At the subsequent meeting with his closest associates, Rommel formulated a plan which came as a great surprise to me. He was of the opinion that it would be very practical to use the unmarried, active Wehrmacht lieutenants as instruments of the

Hitler Youth. The young officers had, strictly speaking, nothing to do at weekends.

I had not the slightest misgivings about the young lieutenants, and I was sure, moreover, that the H.J.'s were working in the best harmony with the troops in each of the garrisons where such co-operation had been arrived at. But he doubted whether the young officers had nothing better to do on weekends than to try to get the youthful hordes to learn to set the pace. Rommel thought it would be enough to order them to do so.

Then things appeared to me in all their importance. Already in 1933 I had been obliged to conjure up, with the best of success, an attempt by the Reichswehr to bring the HJs into orbit. I therefore told Rommel that the matter needed to be examined and discussed before any such agreement could be reached. That same evening, he left.

The next morning it was back in front of me.

-I have informed the army chief of staff. He agrees with my proposals. All you have to do is sign them.

He took a piece of writing out of his wallet and placed it on my desk.

I had the impression that Rommel wanted to surprise my good faith and I did not sign. As I understood it, pre-military training was only one part of the H.J. training programme, alongside sport, as well as military education and spiritual education.

Rommel looked grumpy. He then undertook a series of rounds to address the HJ commanders. Subject: the German military spirit. The content of his lectures was always the same: the conquest of Mount Matajur by his group of hussars during the 1914-1918 war. Although always ready to honour the heroes, the more intelligent commanders protested to me. In addition to this, Rommel propagated the need for intensive pre-military training that would have transformed the HJ. into a kind of young Wehrmacht. Conscientious officers, such as Colonel General Fritsch and General Kluge, as well as others, rejected this as much as I did. They entirely shared my view of

that junior commanders could be officers, but not junior command officers.

Rommel soon ceased to be a liaison officer. There were many misunderstandings and differences of opinion between me and the later Field Marshal. And even today I still believe that he had absolutely no understanding of youth training.

It was a splendid summer day in July 1937. I went for a walk with Hitler in the garden of the Chancellery. I informed him of the planned youth work. In the course of the next few months he wanted to send ten thousand HJ. commanders to the World Exhibition in Paris. I noticed that while I was giving Hitler my report, he was nibbling his nails. It was his gesture when he was unsure about something. Half nostalgic and half gleeful, he said to me:

-Once those boys have seen Paris, they'll never like Berlin again.

This assessment did not fail to cause me some irritation, which I immediately tried to suppress. Since the seizure of power, more and more youth groups from all over the world had flocked to Germany. In 1936, no fewer than 224,000 young foreigners had spent the night, individually and in groups, in youth hostels, in HJ camps and on exchange in German families. By contrast, only 3,400 members of the Hitler Youth had travelled abroad in the same period of time. In practice, Italy was the only country in which they could travel freely without causing a scandal with their uniforms and pennants. It was my opinion that something had to be done to break the isolation of German youth.

When I had finished my report, I found that Hitler was still sceptical. He said:

-I am sure, Schirach, that you will be disappointed.

But as always when it came to youth issues, he left my hands entirely free.

Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had for some time been establishing the necessary contacts for a

official exchange of youth groups, especially with France and England. I was supported in my efforts by the French ambassador in Berlin, André François-Poncet, and our representative in Paris, Count Welczek. I was close friends with François-Poncet from the time when he had begged me to admit his son to the Hitler Youth. As for Count Welczek, he had been a friend and regimental comrade of my father's and I had known him since I was a child; at home in Weimar I had often sat on his knee. I was grateful to François-Poncet and Count Welczek when the President of the French Council of Ministers, Camille Chautemps, addressed a message of greeting to the German youth. In it he called the German young men and women "the best ambassadors of their country". President Lebrun received a commission of H.J. commanders at his summer residence in Rambouillet and told them: "You are the happiest youth in the world". The presence of German youth leaders in France aroused a wave of sympathy. In Paris, a Catholic priest who had a youth hostel near the Gare de l'Est put it at the disposal of the German youth.

My efforts to invite French youth groups to tour Germany immediately met with resistance from the Socialists and Communists, who controlled most of the youth organisations. I therefore had the idea of approaching the ex-servicemen's leagues and inviting a thousand children of former French soldiers of the First World War to visit Germany during the summer of 1938.

In October 1937 I went to Paris. At a reception organised by the "France-Allemagne" committee, I spoke to the leader of the ex-combatants, the war-blind Henri Pichot, about my plan. He enthusiastically accepted the invitation.

On St. Sylvester's Eve, which marked the transition from 1937 to 1938, I gave in a speech the slogan to the HJ. for the year that was beginning: "Year of Understanding". Shortly afterwards the British Government also accepted our invitation to co-operate in the education of the youth of both countries. The Prime Minister,

Neville Chamberlain, y the minister of Foreign Office, *Lord Halifax*,

wrote messages of goodwill for the HJ magazine, *Will and Power*.

In the meantime, however, my friend Günther Kaufmann, the editor-in-chief of *Will and Power*, had become disliked by Goebbels. He had published an article in which he openly criticised the Propaganda Minister's film policy. In it, he said quite bluntly that the road to success for the "stars" often led through the minister's bed.

Goebbels was furious. As a first step he had Kaufmann struck off the register of journalists. In practice, this meant that one of my most important collaborators was banned from working as a journalist. I was not too worried, because I knew how to deal with the matter.

I met Goebbels every day at about two o'clock in the fireside lounge of the Reich Chancellery. At that hour Hitler's usual company gathered there and waited for the Führer to appear for lunch in the company of his closest associates. While he was arriving, they drank Cinzanos, smoked cigarettes, and asked the servants how long it would be before Hitler would be finished with his audiences.

I took advantage of the waiting time to talk to Goebbels about Kaufmann:

I fear, doctor, that it will not make a good impression in England if the editor-in-chief of the *Will and Power*, precisely after having written the leaders English politicians some articles for the HJ magazine. It could be seen as a demonstration against the German-British understanding.

Goebbels' features hardened as he listened. But the truth was that Kaufmann remained in his post as editor-in-chief.

After having inaugurated the new HJ. command academy in Braunschweig the day before, I returned to my office in Berlin in the early hours of 12 March 1938. From a roadside inn we heard the intense sounds of military music. The owner had turned up the power of the receiver to the maximum.

-They are going to broadcast a very important piece of news," he informed us. A few moments later we heard over the loudspeaker the special report that in the early hours of the morning German troops (the 8th Army) had entered Austria and that a National Socialist Government had just been formed in Vienna under the chairmanship of Seyss-Inquart.

The news came as a surprise to me, just as it did to most Germans. At the Nuremberg trial they did not want to believe it. The accusers, the judges and even the defenders themselves were convinced that every high-ranking official in the N.S.D.A.P. had to be necessarily informed about the political steps being taken. But the fact is that neither Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, nor the action against Roehm in 1934, nor the restoration of compulsory military service in 1935, nor the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936, were actions previously known to me. Hitler informed only those of his closest collaborators who had anything to do with them.

I would be lying if I did not add that the occupation of Austria did not come as a pleasant surprise to me. Before the conquest of power I had often found refuge in the Tyrol when German justice sought me out. I was familiar with the thinking of the Austrians and knew that the overwhelming majority of the population was in favour of the "Anschluss" with Germany. However, such a decision was expressly forbidden by the treaties of Saint-Germain and Versailles. On the other hand, the Christian Social governments of Chancellor Dollfuss, murdered by the National Socialists in 1934, and his successor Schussnigg had, with their "Heimwehr", a militia organised along fascist lines, exercised intense oppression of their people.

political enemies, both socialists and National Socialists. Thousands had been interned in so-called "prevention camps" or locked up in dungeons; among these thousands were numerous members of the Hitler Youth. Even some girls were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and some 15,000 students of both sexes were expelled from educational establishments for belonging to the HJ. But all these measures had not succeeded in making them give up their struggle against the regime. On a regular basis, burning swastikas flamed in the Austrian mountains. Every year, young men and women made their way over dangerous Alpine roads to Nuremberg to take part in the Party congress. The situation was curious: while confessional youth groups within the Reich continued to fight for their own uniqueness and against their integration into the National Socialist youth movement, young men and women in Austria were speaking out against the Christian Socialist dictatorship and fighting for Hitler's dictatorship.

That day I did not wait for any order from Hitler. Once in Berlin I took my seat on the first possible express, and on the morning of 13 March I was already in Vienna. A large crowd had gathered in front of the Westbahnhof. Everywhere I could see members of the Hitler Youth, who, after four years of illegality, could wear their uniforms for the first time: white shirts, leather trousers and white socks; the girls were dressed in regional costumes.

With the male and female commanders of the Austrian Hitler Youth I founded in the "Imperial Hotel" the "Austria" zone of the H.J. Later I visited the former headquarters of the Social-Christian "Patriotic Front". The building was completely deserted. On a table in the entrance hall was a silver tray full of business cards. They had been deposited there in the last days of the crisis by Austrians loyal to their government and thus wishing to express their sympathy for the Schussnigg regime. He knew that they had also arrived in Vienna, Heinrich

Himmler and his deputy Heydrich. I therefore considered it much better that they should not find those cards there. I put them in one of the pockets of my jacket and later burned them in the fireplace in my hotel room. Later I found out that at that very moment they had already been arrested by the H.H. thousands of "enemies of the state" throughout Austria and transferred to concentration camps.

On the evening of 14 March I witnessed Hitler's entry into Vienna. When he entered the city where he had lived in his younger years as a painter of postcards and advertisements, all the bells were ringing. And even today I still seem to hear the accents of triumph in his voice as he addressed the next day from the balcony of the "Hofburg" to the hundred thousand Viennese who cheered him:

-At this hour of the German people I can make the most solemn declaration of my life. As Führer and Chancellor of the German nation and the Reich, I proclaim before history the accession of my fatherland to the German Reich.....

No one today can imagine the giddiness with which the Austrians greeted Hitler. All the enthusiasm we had hitherto witnessed paled before the loudspeakers of the Viennese "Hofburg": "One people, one Reich, one Führer"!

At the "Imperial Hotel" I witnessed Hitler's reception of the Primate of the Catholic Church in Austria, Cardinal Innitzer. When the prince of the Church gave him the "German salute", Hitler involuntarily gestured for him to lower his arm.

But the Cardinal soon had occasion to temper his enthusiasm for the "Anschluss". In a sermon before a crowd of young faithful in St. Stephen's Cathedral, he criticised the anti-clerical attitude of the Austrian National Socialists. After the divine service, thousands of Catholics marched in song to the archbishop's palace on the Stephansplatz and shouted: "We are not the only Catholics in Austria, we are the only Catholics in the world!"

-We want to see our archbishop! As well as:

-Command us and we will obey!

The *gauleiter* and Reich Commissar Josef Bürckel, for whom the
The next evening he organised a counter-demonstration. The
archbishop's palace was stormed, the furnishings destroyed and the
heads of the ancient images of the Virgin and the saints on either
side of the entrance steps were torn down.

Two years later, when I was appointed Governor Bürckel's
successor in Vienna, I was forced to recall the incident. The Spanish
Countess Pilar de Rivera informed me that many statues in the
archbishop's palace were missing their heads. The Cardinal had not
had the damage repaired, so that all visitors would be reminded of
the vandalism of the National Socialist atheists. On the pretext of
inspecting the state of repair of the building, I sent the architect of
the Vienna municipal services, Dr. Streiter. He came from the same
village as Innitzer. And this undoubtedly meant that he was able to
persuade the Cardinal to allow the mutilated works of art to be
restored at the state's expense.

XXIX

On 9 November 1938 we were gathered in the hall of the Old Town Hall in Munich, those closest to the Führer and old Party fighters, for the annual comradeship evening. At about 9 p.m. an emissary appeared with a message for Hitler. I saw him quickly exchange a few words with Dr. Goebbels, get up and leave the hall. Shortly afterwards Goebbels himself informed us that the legation secretary Ernst von Rath had died of his wounds in Paris.

Two days earlier, the young diplomat had been the target of an attack at the embassy itself by the Jew Herschel Grynszpan, who had been expelled from Germany.

It was the first time in a long time that Goebbels had addressed the Party leadership. His love affair with the Czech actress Lida Baarova had brought him into disgrace with Hitler.

Goebbels reported that in reaction to the Paris attack, in the provinces of Kurhessen and Magdeburg, Jewish shop windows had been smashed and synagogues set on fire.

-I have informed the Führer of this," Goebbels continued. He has decided that such demonstrations do not have to be organised by the Party. But in any case, when they arise spontaneously, they will not be hindered either.

After Goebbels had spoken, I went to the "Bayerischer Hof" hotel. In the foyer, the command staff of the S.A. around Chief Viktor Lutze. He had apparently just made a speech. I was surprised to see the S.A. "Gruppenführer" queuing up in front of the telephone booths. There was no doubt that they were giving instructions. From the expression on their faces and the nervousness of the atmosphere, a big action seemed to be in the offing. I asked questions of some of the S.A. chiefs, but they answered evasively, as if they did not know what was going on.

They wanted to give a precise answer. This aroused my mistrust. I could not help thinking of the events of the spring of 1934. Goebbels had then proclaimed in energetic speeches the need for the "second revolution", which on 30 June of the same year was the pretext for the bloodbath that engulfed the top brass of the S.A. Goebbels later washed his hands of the whole affair, proclaiming his innocence. Was it his intention to once again push the S.A. and its inexperienced chief Viktor Lutze into a "night of the long knives", this time directed against the Jews?

Whatever was planned, it was my intention that the HJs should be kept out of the loop. I waited until a telephone booth was free and called my chief of staff in Berlin to tell him of my fears. We soon agreed on what we had to do: to transmit a circular order to all county chiefs that the HJ. should take no part in any action by the party and the S.A. against the Jews.

That same night I drove back to Berlin by motorway. In the vicinity of Nuremberg I saw the first glow of the fires, and from hour to hour the reddish dots on the night horizon grew larger and larger.

As soon as I arrived in Berlin, my wife called me from Munich. She informed me with natural excitement that the villas of the Jewish neighbours in Bogenhausen had been destroyed and looted. Henriette had given shelter in our house to one of those families who had just become homeless. The world-famous Bernheimer art house had been spared complete destruction thanks to the last-minute intervention of my father-in-law.

On that night of 10 November, a planned and organised destruction of Jewish shops and synagogues had taken place throughout Germany. As an expression, a "spontaneous anti-Jewish sentiment" was the pretext for further violence.

against the Jewish population of Germany. Goebbels' slogan had been carried out "spontaneously" by the SA.

Two days later, an order was issued for a "reparation contribution" from the German Jews in the amount of one billion marks. With this order, the Jews were virtually excluded from German economic life.

Despite the fact that from 1933 to 1938, some 180,000 Jews, at the time of the Nuremberg Laws some 700,000 Jews were living, to which must be added 1.5 million mestizos.

I summoned all the county heads of the HJ. to a special meeting to be held in Berlin. I was convinced that many Party members would be as irritated as I was against the anti-Jewish "progrom", the so-called "Kristallnacht" ^[43], and I was certain that this criminal night would be the end of the political career of its architect, Joseph Goebbels. You can imagine my surprise, then, when Hitler appeared on the evening of 14 November in the VIP box of the Schiller Theatre in Berlin in the company of Goebbels. For the first time at that moment I had the feeling that I was not among ordinary people.

But what could I do? I could have chosen to stay away, but I was convinced that if I could do that, I had to at least try to save what could be saved. "Kristallnacht" seemed to me to be like a

a real throwback to barbaric times.

As a student leader, he had demanded in the late 1920s that Jews' access to academic careers be restricted in order to achieve the percentages that corresponded to their proportion of the rest of the German population. There were no longer any Jewish teachers and students in Germany. As a member of the Reichstag, I had voted in 1935 for the Nuremberg Laws, which withdrew citizenship from Jews and prohibited marriages between Jews and Aryans. I was an anti-Semite, but I thought there was a dignified way to be one. That is why I wanted nothing to do with the "progroms" of 9, 10 and 11 November 1938.



Illustration 11. Hitler greeting members of the Hitler Youth at an audience in the Chancellery.



Illustration 12. Eva Braun with Hitler at a reception at the "Berghof".

XXX

1 September 1939 arrived. For several days, Berliners had been suffering the rigours of the sun. 31 August, a Thursday, had been one of the hottest days of the year. Unable to stand the heat in my rooms at the "Kaiserhof" hotel, I moved to the HJ's international home on the banks of the Havel in Gatow. At a very early hour on Friday, one of my staff woke me up and handed me a telegram: Reichstag meeting at 10 o'clock.

Never before had the Reichstag been convened at such short notice. Something decisive must therefore have happened in our confrontation with Poland. The crisis had been brewing for several months, but in the last days of August it had reached its most dramatic point.

On 23 August, my adjutant "Bobby" Hopken and other members of the youth headquarters had suddenly been asked to join the Wehrmacht. But even then I did not believe that war was imminent. Something similar had already happened in 1938 in the wake of the Sudeten crisis and in March 1939 with the annexation of Czechoslovakia and Memel. In all these cases Hitler had merely simulated an immediate readiness for war. He was therefore convinced that on the present occasion, too, he was playing his bluff.

I was encouraged by a far-reaching event that had taken place just two days earlier. A non-aggression pact had just been concluded with the Soviet Union in Moscow. My father-in-law Heinrich Hoffmann had accompanied Foreign Minister Ribbentrop on that trip. The fact that Hitler had sent his personal photographer and friend to the Kremlin was a well-considered gesture. It was undoubtedly intended to demonstrate the sincerity of his desire for peace with the Soviet Union. Hitler knew, moreover, that Hoffmann was a keen observer. His mission was therefore to be a kind of eye for Hitler, sent to the Kremlin to inform him of details that often go unnoticed by the diplomats in the field. Hitler

was particularly interested in Stalin's state of health. Indeed, rumours circulated from time to time that he was suffering from a serious illness, which forced him to be replaced at many official events by a double.

After Hoffmann had briefed Hitler in the Chancellery, I sat for a long time with my father-in-law in the Kaiserhof. His experience was very interesting to me, but I was much more interested in Hitler's reaction to Hoffmann's report.

-The man smokes like a chimney and drinks like a Turk," said Hoffmann. His health is excellent and I have told the Führer so.

Hitler had then asked him about the way Stalin shook his hand; whether it was a firm or a limp handshake. That was one of the criteria he used to judge people. He also asked Hoffmann whether he had the impression that Stalin would stick to an alliance with Germany, and my father-in-law replied that he had no doubt about it. At the reception held after the signing of the treaty in the Kremlin, Stalin had also raised his glass in honour of my father-in-law.

-Nasdorowje, great German worker-photographer.

For the world, the signing of the pact was a sensation. For many party comrades it was a shock. For as long as Hitler and the NSDAP had existed, the Party's objective had been the annihilation of Marxism and Bolshevism. This explains why many National Socialists hardly understood what was happening. I heard that after the signing of the Pact, several hundred members of the NSDAP had thrown badges into the garden before the main entrance to the "Brown House" in Munich.

In my opinion, this pact was a sign of Hitler's "realpolitik". The age-old danger of a two-front war was thus averted and also, I believed, the "Drang nach Osten" was averted.

[44] of Germany. With this change of diplomatic positions, Hitler had placed himself on the side of Europe. And from then on

we could create a new order in agreement with the Western powers.

When, shortly before 10 o'clock, I sat down at my desk in the third row in the Kroll Opera House, the temporary seat of the Reichstag, I was prepared to listen to a governmental declaration of dramatic tones, certainly, but not a declaration of war. He had, however, heard a proclamation from Hitler to the Wehrmacht, read out over the radio in the early hours of the morning, and he had also heard reports of fighting on the Polish-German border. But despite this, I could not imagine that war had broken out.

Shortly after ten o'clock Hitler appeared, accompanied by Goering. The uniform the Führer wore put paid to my illusions that an understanding with the Poles could have been reached at the last minute. It was campaign grey. I knew what it meant: we are at war. What Hitler said in his half-hour speech buzzed in my ears without penetrating my consciousness. One thing remained, however: "From 5.45 a.m. onwards, fire! And also: "From now on I wish only to be the first soldier of the German Reich. I have put on the warrior's coat which I find most holy and most endearing. I will not take it off until victory... or I will not live through another end...".

After the Reichstag session, I went from the Kroll Opera House to the headquarters of the National Youth Headquarters on Kurfurstenstrasse. Directly opposite, on the other side of the street, was the embassy building on Kurfurstenstrasse.

Polish. From the windows of my office I saw furniture, chests and documents being loaded onto trucks. I turned to my colleagues and said: "Here is your war. But don't think it will be a short war. It may last five, six or seven years....."

My collaborators looked at me with incredulous eyes. They must have taken me for an incorrigible pessimist. Three weeks later, the facts seemed to prove them right. Poland had been defeated in 21 days. Up to that time, France and England had not fired a single shot at us.

XXXI

At noon on 27 September 1939 I had the opportunity, for the first time since the declaration of war, to speak alone with Hitler in the Reich Chancellery.

He had just been told that the commander in Warsaw had asked for capitulation. Hitler was in the best of moods, and he had every reason to be: for four weeks, a weak cover of thirty-two divisions had been opposed in the West by a strength of 110 French divisions, to which were added the first divisions of the British Expeditionary Corps. Despite this, the Allied powers had not attacked. Now, after the end of the "blitz" campaign against Poland, German divisions were moving day and night from east to west.

I was there to discuss a very personal problem with Hitler. More than half of the command corps of the H.J. had joined the Wehrmacht from the beginning of the war. 314 H.J. commanders had fallen in Poland, and I, the leader of that youth, had continued to sit in the safe office of the national headquarters. I pleaded with Hitler to take me into the military ranks.

But the Führer wanted nothing to do with it.

-I think it's stupid for you to waste your time in a barracks. Here, in the homeland, you are more important, Schirach. Don't forget that your boys now have to do many of the jobs of the adults who have now been inducted into the Wehrmacht. His words had the accent of an irrevocable order. But I did not give up. And it was not long before Hitler acceded to my request.

At the end of November 1939, together with the Wehrmacht liaison officer for the H.J., Major Paul Volckers, I visited the units stationed in occupied Poland, where many Hitler Youth commanders were serving as soldiers. In Warsaw I was handed a telegram which read as follows:

"Führer agrees to join Wehrmacht".

How did the Wehrmacht behave when a senior Party leader joined its ranks as a conscript? The problem was not foreseen in any ordinance. So I was taken in like any other conscript who first had to be taught how to march, then covered with dung, and finally accustomed to shouting. For the instructors, the new recruit was a source of great embarrassment. The kind of confusion that could be caused by a recruit whose face everyone knew because he had appeared in hundreds of photographs.

Major Volckers found a solution: I joined the infantry training regiment stationed in Boberitz near Berlin. In that regiment, soldiers already in active service, who had already passed their military training, served in the regiment.

At the beginning of December I presented myself as a recruit to the head of the Regiment of Instruction. The national youth leader became a grenadier. My first commander was Corporal Pinkepank. We occupied a room in the former Olympic village of Dóberitz. And then he started my training, as Pinkepank had the special "mission" to teach me the whole military alphabet. He spared me absolutely nothing, both in the barracks yard and on the manoeuvre ground, not even the interjections that were then customary in military dealings.

The remaining officers and NCOs treated me with a mixture of preterness and respect, which in some cases came across as sympathy. Weekends were reserved for cleaning up. Dressed in fatigues and kneeling on the entrance steps, I tried to make them as shiny as possible. Suddenly, the sergeant major appeared before me.

-Go to your room, Schirach, you don't have to do that!

I obeyed, but I didn't like it at all. I wanted to be a soldier like the others. And so I went to the officers and respectfully begged them not to treat me like a parlour soldier.

From that moment on, completely normal relations were established between Grenadier Schirach and the rest of the regiment. In the shooting exercises I certainly did not get the best marks, but I nevertheless reached what was considered to be normal standards.

"I have just returned from my trip to America and I urgently need to speak to you. This message reached me at the beginning of March at the Dóberitz barracks. The sender was Colin Ross, with whom I had been close friends for years.

Colin Ross was at the time the most famous German globetrotter and travel writer. Unlike other colleagues in his field, he used to spend some time with his wife and children in the country he wanted to write about, and only after gaining a thorough knowledge of it did he write his work. In 1932 he settled in Switzerland. His book "The World in the Balance", which appeared in 1929, had made a great impression on me. Colin Ross prophesied a world catastrophe if the "white" powers did not find new ways of living together with the coloured peoples. Most of the National Socialist leaders took a dim view of Colin Ross, especially because in 1918, when he was a Prussian officer, he had placed himself at the disposal of the Social Democratic government.

It came as no surprise, therefore, when one day in 1933 Colin Ross visited me in my office at National Headquarters. For more than an hour we talked about politics, literature and youth problems. That conversation with the writer fascinated me even more intensely than reading his books. Finally, Colin Ross told me about the purpose of his visit: he wanted to settle permanently in Germany with his children, who until then had attended schools in different parts of the world. He felt that only in Germany could they receive a proper education.

-But there is a difficulty," said Colin Ross. You will forgive me for not having dealt with this issue until now.

full stop, but I wish I knew beforehand what kind of person you were... My family has a Jewish parentage.

I saw no impediment to the family's return to Germany and even helped Colin Ross to find a comfortable home in Munich. To show him that I did not mind highlighting my dealings with him and his family, I invited them to spend a few days at my house in Kochel. Ralph Ross, his eldest son, aged sixteen, was one of the most gifted boys I have ever known. He had already written a book entitled "From Chicago to Chunking" and was showing that he was following in his father's footsteps. Ralph joined the Hitler Youth immediately after his return.

When, in September 1935, the Nuremberg Laws and even the "quarters" of Jews excluded from all sections of the NSDAP were promulgated, I approached Hitler. He was prepared to make exceptions in the case of the H.J.'s and said to me:

-Provide me with lists of names of all the young people for whom you wish an exception to be made. Give them to me personally, without going through anyone.

By this method, in the course of the year, thousands of boys were declared Aryans, and nothing happened to any of them until the end of the war. Of course, these couple of thousand "Aryanised" people did not amount to much compared to the millions of Jews whom no one was able or willing to help.

A deep friendship developed between the Ross couple and myself. In March 1939, when the German troops entered Czechoslovakia, Colin had gone to the USA. A year later he was back and wanted to talk to me. We took advantage of the weekend to meet at the "Kaiserhof" hotel. Colin Ross told me things that I thought were quite serious. He had become convinced during his trip to the United States that Franklin D. Roosevelt would be elected for the third time in the presidential elections in the autumn of 1940 and that America would soon or late enter the war.

-You have to inform Hitler of all this," I told him.

-I will do it to the best of my ability if you will procure me an audience.

Ever since I was a grenadier, I had avoided seeing Hitler. It seemed to me a measure of elegance. But the time was not ripe for such attitudes, so that night I put on my conscript uniform. Then I walked the two hundred metres from the Kaiserhof to the Chancellery. In my pocket I had the key which opened the door of the old Chancellery on Wilhemplatz, where I had my office as national Party leader. From there, a staircase led straight down to the fireplace lounge. Like every noon and evening, I waited on that Sunday eve for the usual company that Hitler liked to surround himself with for his meals.

I was greeted warmly by those present. In that prominent gathering, the sight of a conscript was unusual. Hitler's military aide, Major Engel, received my news with a smile and told me that the Führer was in the library, alone. Hitler turned around in his swivel chair as he introduced me to him:

-Grenadier Schirach of the Doberitz Training Regiment reporting for duty.

He smiled and hastily removed the glasses he was wearing, placing them next to the book in front of him.

-You see, Schirach, I'm getting old and I need glasses," he said, "but I can bear this war better at fifty than at sixty.

He enquired about my stay in Doberitz and asked me, with an expert knowledge that surprised me, about the weapons he was instructing me in.

-French and English gentlemen will soon experience them.

-Will we attack in the West?

-You can be sure of that. And we will beat them. That was my moment.

-Then we'll have to face America," I said.

Hitler laughed and looked at me like an old teacher at a naughty pupil.

-Where did you get such nonsense? We demand nothing from America, and America nothing from us. Even if Mr. Roosevelt becomes President again, the Republicans will not let him go to war against us. Your boss, Senator Taft, is a friend of Germany, as is the American national hero Charles Lindbergh and the automobile king, Henry Ford....

I was of a different opinion.

-In the US, politics is not made by the president of a car company, and the views of an aviator who has crossed the Atlantic are hardly known to the mass of opinion. Taft, on the other hand, is an important politician who has a good chance of becoming president. But he may never become president, because the American people trust the Democrats, not the Republicans, to implement social reforms.

Hitler picked up his spectacles, put them carefully into the case and asked:

-Who made you a party to such gossip?

-No doubt you think that one of my American relatives has influenced me," I replied. Well, my kinship does not play the slightest part in this case. That is why I beg you to listen to the report of a man who has lived for years in America and knows the whole world....

-Who is it about?

-From Colin Ross.

He was sure that Hitler had not read any of the writer's books, but that he at least knew the name.

That same evening Hitler set the date for his audience with Colin Ross: 12 March 1940. He talked to him for an hour. The legation counsellor, Hewel, from the Foreign Ministry and Ribbentrop's usual representative close to Hitler,

made notes of the conversation for his ministry. These notes, though only partially transcribed so as not to outrage a man as confident of American neutrality as Ribbentrop, showed how clearly Colin Ross spoke to Hitler. As he himself later told me, Colin showed no doubt in the conversation that America would enter the war and that the persecution of the Jews in Germany would be the main reason for this.

At the end of the conversation, Hitler had expressed the wish to have a second interview with Colin Ross. But this never took place. Ross was later received several times by von Ribbentrop and sincerely believed that everything he reported to the Foreign Minister was brought to Hitler's attention. I cannot assert that Ribbentrop would have failed to take advantage of such interesting information, but my long acquaintance with the former Foreign Minister leads me to suppose that he was not able to grasp the full extent and gravity of what Colin Ross communicated to him.

Not once, however, did he fail to ask Colin Ross to write a report of what he had just said. The minister acted according to the old formula: when a man is too clever or too dangerous for you, occupy him with memoranda.

Colin Ross wrote countless memoranda. It was not possible for him to change the course of history, but he did, in my opinion, perform the historic service of having underlined in Hitler's eyes the immense power at the disposal of the United States. He told Hitler, clearly and emphatically, that the Americans would not be satisfied with a guarantee of the inviolability of their hemisphere. He told Hitler that the American people were possessed by a missionary spirit and felt called to be judges of right and wrong in old Europe. He also told him that it would not be the great powers of that time that would have the power to decide the future, but the world powers of tomorrow - America,

Russia and, as a third, the one that Colin Ross had already foreseen at the time: China.

But no one is a prophet in his own land. Colin Ross, a German of Anglo-Saxon descent, who had been an officer in the First World War and was admired everywhere in the world where his books were read, could not do more than he could.

He was soon forced to recognise the sterility of his endeavour. But it was a long time before the man gave up. And he found it very difficult to live through the events as he had foreseen them. In the last years of the war he lived with his wife in our house in Urfeld on Lake Walch. When the first American tanks approached the Kesselberg on 29 April 1945, Colin Ross killed his wife and then took his own life.

XXXII

In mid-April 1940, my conscription period in Doberitz came to an end. I was promoted to the rank of corporal and was assigned to the "Greater Germany" infantry regiment. This regiment, which was entirely motorised, was initially almost entirely derived from the Training Regiment. In the course of the war it developed into something quite unique, endowed with its own school of officers, and became for the army the counterweight of the S.S. The regiment that covered Berlin, the battalion that guarded the Führer's headquarters, the famous armoured corps of General Von Manteuffel; all these units belonged to the "GD" regiment [45]

Despite the similarities that could be found at first glance, our difference with the S.S. was obvious. Among other things because we were commanded not by a "Reichsführer" but by a general. Hasso von Manteuffel.

Our regiment was stationed on the Siegfried line in the German-Luxembourg border region.

After a week I was summoned by the regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Count von Schwerin. He said to me:

-I have a suspicion, Schirach, that the patch is going to be fought here soon. Go to Hitler and deny that our regiment is to be the spearhead of the attack on France.

The mission was unusual for a corporal.

So I went to Berlin with special safe conduct, presented myself to Hitler in the Chancellery and explained my boss's wishes. And Hitler agreed. He seemed to have the whole plan of campaign in his memory.

-You can inform Count Schwerin that the regiment will be placed at the tip of an armoured wedge. It will not be long before we are on the move.

Count Schwerin smiled when I passed on Hitler's message. He had understood what he really wanted to know: Hitler intended to care as little about the neutrality of Luxembourg and Belgium as Kaiser Wilhelm II did in 1918.

On 9 May 1940, at five o'clock in the morning, we left for training. A few kilometres later, the company commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kolb, called me. I left the column.

-It's your birthday today," he said. Congratulations and go to the cantonment.

Sleep is always one of the soldier's most intense desires. In the cantonment, a country house, I went to sleep with the assurance that I would not wake up until the afternoon. But my birthday dream lasted only a couple of hours. A knock on the door woke me up:

-Up! -Alarm!

Outside, in the streets of the village, the engines of our trucks were roaring. Ten minutes later we were each at our posts. At dawn the next day the "Greater Germany" regiment crossed the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg into Belgium.

The regiment was the apex of all the decisive attacks of the western campaign: at Sedan, at the Somme, at Dunkirk. For a whole night we remained at Bergues, on the English Channel, under fire from the British artillery and the guns of the warships covering the retreat of the expeditionary corps. The next morning we were withdrawn from that position because of heavy casualties, but were moved to the south-east, with the objective of breaking the Weygand line. In those hectic weeks I was first liaison officer of the 4th Company, then commander of a machine gun section, and after being promoted to non-commissioned officer, I finally reached the rank of lieutenant.

At the end of July, when I was in Lyons, I received Hitler's order: "Report immediately to Headquarters. No one in the division or in the corps knew where I was.

The headquarters at the time. The staff provided me with a "Triumph" sports car, fresh from the window of a car shop in Lyon. I set off in an easterly direction, informing all the headquarters of the situation. But nobody could give me a reason. That's how I arrived in Berlin. From Tempelhof airport, I was transported by an aircraft intended for HQ's postal duties to the vicinity of Freudenstadt in the Black Forest. In a wagon I drove up the forest roads to Kniebis. Suddenly, the forest ceased and on a fir-covered ridge I saw a large number of *bunkers*: it was the Führer's headquarters "Tanenberg". On the esplanade in front of one of the larger *bunkers*, Hitler He walked up and down in the company of Ribbentrop.

Would the presence of the Foreign Minister be connected with Hitler's sudden call? As early as 1938, Hitler and Ribbentrop had been thinking of sending me to the United States as ambassador. The chalice had then remained unquenched and our embassy in Washington was still covered by a chargé d'affaires. I thought it all over quickly, and at the same time I was inwardly ratified in my decision never to become a diplomat under Ribbentrop's orders.

Hitler finished his conversation and stepped forward towards me with open arms.

I made my introduction in military fashion, but he forced my hand down as he said:

-I am glad you came out of it all all right. I know that the "Greater Germany" regiment lost a third of its officers and troops in the western campaign.

The man before me had just achieved a triumph which no one had thought possible in so short a space of time. Only three months earlier I had warned Hitler that America would not see our attack in France idle. Had the fears experienced by both Colin Ross and myself been unfounded? It seemed so. Faith in Hitler's military conditions had reached unspeakable extremes.

-You have got away with it, Schirach," he said, having said goodbye to Ribbentrop. But now I need you for another task. You are to go to Vienna as Reich Commissar.

I was so shocked that I was at first unable to utter a single word. After a quick glance at my face, Hitler continued:

-The situation in Vienna has become delicate. The *gauleiter* Bürckel has failed to win the Viennese to the Reich's cause. I cannot afford to have a hostile city in the far south-east. I have to send to Vienna someone with psychological tact, and I think you are the man for the job.

I had known Joseph Bürckel since 1935. He was then *gauleiter*. We had always understood each other very well, especially when it came to the implementation of social plans. It was therefore unpleasant for me to hear criticism of him from Hitler's lips, and I said to him:

-I don't find it very satisfying to have to expel the *gauleiter*. Bürckel from his post, my Führer.

-Not at all," Hitler reassured me. Bürckel will be appointed head of the civilian occupation administration in Lorraine. That will be very pleasant for him, as a native of the Pfalz. In Vienna you need a special sensitivity to cultural problems. That is why I have thought of you.

-Cultural policy belongs to Goebbels," I dared to insinuate.

-You will receive all necessary powers from myself. You will be appointed Reich Commissar for the Vienna, Upper and Lower Danube gau. No one may interfere in your work, not even Goebbels.

-And who will be my successor at the head of the Reich Youth?

-You can propose it to me yourself, Schirach.

I was at a turning point in my political career. In 1928, at the age of twenty-one, I had taken charge of the National Socialist Students' League and won, in the course of

four years, most of the students for Hitler. He had then organised the Hitler Youth and structured the largest youth movement in the world. Under the slogan "Youth must be led by the youth", he had first achieved the autonomy of this movement from the Party and then from the state itself. The leadership corps of the HJ had been so strictly and thoroughly trained that he was absolutely certain that the future leaders of the Party and the state would come from its ranks. I had just turned thirty-three and was obliged to give up that work.

-I propose Artur Axmann," I said to Hitler.

Six years younger than me, Axmann was head of the regional and social commission of the national youth headquarters. At the age of fifteen he had founded the first HJ groups in the red light district of Wedding in Berlin. Later, before the seizure of power, he had been the main driving force behind the social activities of the HJ. From the beginning of the war he had been carrying out his military duties as a soldier and had quickly been promoted to the rank of non-commissioned officer.

Hitler agreed with Axmann's proposal.

-But in any case, you will remain responsible to me for the youth, in your ministerial capacity. You will keep your office in the chancellery and make frequent trips to Berlin.

This conversation was followed, on 2 August 1940, by the appointment as Reich Commissar and *gauleiter* in Vienna. The same day was appointed Artur Axmann head national of NSDAP Youth and head of the German Reich Youth.

He had not held the position of *gauleiter* for a long time, and Reich Commissar when Hitler begged me to come and visit him at the Berghof. From the car I watched as he hurried down the long steps to welcome me* He wore, as always when he was on holiday, his felt Tyrolean hat and held his grey kid gloves in his left hand.

His appearance was excellent and there was nothing to suggest, in his expression or his person, that Hitler was facing a fundamental decision for himself and for Germany in those days: to continue the war in the West with an invasion of England or to fall back in the East on the Soviet Union, deceived by the non-aggression pact.

Hitler took me to one of the Berghof's guest rooms, the so-called "Blomberg room". It was named after the former Minister of War, Field Marshal Von Blomberg, who was the first to spend the night there. The "room" was actually a flat consisting of a large office, a small bedroom and a bathroom. However, the bathroom could not be used before ten o'clock in the morning. The architect of the house had so ingeniously arranged the water pipes that one of the walls of Hitler's bedroom was buzzing as soon as they were turned on. As he was accustomed to sleeping well into the morning, the guest was obliged to remain unwashed and unshaven until Hitler's valet, Linge, gave a discreet signal: the Führer had risen and the water pipes were ready for operation.

At lunchtime I accompanied Eva Braun to the table. When I offered her my arm, she sniffed for a moment and then exclaimed with an expression of disgust:

-You smell of cigars!

-It's possible," I replied. But they are not just any cigars. They are "Coronas, from "La Corona". The brand that Churchill also smokes.

-However," she added, "the Führer does not want anyone to smoke here.

-I don't smoke here, but upstairs in my room or outside on the terrace.

She did not give up.

-But the Führer doesn't want smoking anywhere in the house either.

-In that case, the best thing would be to ban smoking in Germany once and for all and close all tobacconists.

I found it foolish to continue arguing with Hitler's mistress about tobacco, and after my last remark I remained stubbornly silent.

Eva Braun was usually hidden from the guests at the Berghof, especially if they were foreigners. But when Hitler had his close associates there, she played the role of hostess to the best of her ability, and he allowed her this small satisfaction. The consequence was usually always the same: that she should enlighten the audience with the latest gossip and confidences from the world of cinema. In his room the magazines, programmes and photographs were piled up. It was surprising that the mistress of the man who made the world tremble lived entirely immersed in that fictional universe.

When it was not possible for her to entertain herself with her film gossip, Eva Braun played the role of the dullard and complained of headaches. Thus, while conversing with her collaborators, Hitler would often hold her hand, as a sign of his concern for her.

After the meal, the Führer took me to the spacious lounge with its large windows opening onto the famous panorama where he used to receive his foreign visitors. He was in the best of moods. I had spent the previous few days in conversation with a group of Viennese, especially artists, and that seemed to have convinced him that I had succeeded, in a short space of time, in counteracting the baleful influence left by Bürckel.

I remarked to Hitler that, although Bürckel had committed great faults, especially in the "Aryanisation" of Jewish property, he was not entirely to blame for the hostile atmosphere in Vienna. On the other hand, Hitler did not accuse him of these faults either, but reproached him for small details, which in my eyes were entirely ridiculous: "He took off his jacket in the dining room of the "Imperial" hotel and ate in his shirtsleeves.... He sat in street clothes in the box of honour at the Opera".

-None of this is true, my Führer," I objected for my part. These rumours can only have been spread by people who were not pleased by Bürckel's openly friendly attitude towards the workers. One need only inquire among the workers at the Floridsdorf locomotive works to know that Bürckel had more friends than enemies in Vienna.

Hitler was silent and biting his nails. I asked him from whom he had received these reports on my predecessor's performance. And Hitler replied, irritated:

-From that *Frau* Marion! But now I'm sick of it all, and I don't I'll go back to listening to his stupid talk.

Frau Marion, a Viennese woman, was a close friend of Eva Braun. She was frequently invited to the Berghof in order to make Hitler's mistress's time at the Berghof less tiresome. Her uncle was the General of Health, Dr. Arthur Zimmer. It was from this source that Hitler had drawn his information about Vienna. His decision to stop listening to this "stupid talk" was short-lived. It was precisely one of the greatest curiosities of the Third Reich that its top leaders often took decisions of the greatest importance guided only by rumours and strictly private opinions.

XXXIII

In early October 1940 I was again summoned by Adolf Hitler. This time he received me in the Reich Chancellery. I found him restless and nervous. After the first bombing raids on Berlin and other cities and the harassing attacks by enemy aircraft, which took place every night, a torrent of letters signed by parents complaining that their children were unable to get any sleep at all had reached the provincial governments and even the Chancellery.

-We have to evacuate these children from the threatened cities, Schirach," he said. I know that you are very busy in Vienna, but I beg you to take on this task yourself.

The air raids in those days were almost harmless in comparison with those that had to be suffered from 1942 onwards. But the fact that Hitler reacted so quickly to the letters from worried parents and ordered the evacuation of the child population from the big cities shows that even in the autumn of 1940 he was prepared to admit the worst.

I was thus faced with a difficult task. If we were to make a mistake in the evacuation action, it was easy to panic. And the parents would say: "Now they're taking our children away from us too"!

For this reason, one of my first decisions was not to impose mandatory evacuation. Another was not to call a spade a spade. That is why I said to Hitler:

-The operation will, of course, not be called evacuation, but something less compromising.

Before the conquest of power, I had organised the so-called "sending of children to the countryside". Five hundred thousand citizen children, who until then had never gone on holiday, were sent to the countryside for four weeks.

So I proposed to Hitler that the operation should be called "Prolonged Sending of Children to the Camp".

Nor was it hidden from me from the beginning that we could not count on youth hostels for this action. We would have to seize boarding houses and hotels. But most of those buildings were only usable in summer. They would have to be winterised with double windows, cookers, central heating and larger kitchens. The more I thought about it, the greater the set of problems I faced. For an entire night I worked with my collaborator Helmuth Mockel on a plan that would make it possible to send some two hundred thousand schoolchildren with their teachers and some five hundred thousand kindergartners with their mothers to country residences for many weeks. Three thousand six hundred residences were needed, equipped with beds, toilets, desks, school materials, medicines, supplementary food rations, fruit and vitamins....

Hitler raised his eyebrows in puzzlement when I told him, the next morning, my entire plan.

-You have acted as if these bombings were going to last for years," he mumbled. But deep down he was satisfied and asked me how much it would cost to finance the plan.

-In principle, we will need about two million marks a day, as well as unlimited means of transport. The Minister of Food will have to provide every evacuee with twenty per cent more food than they receive at home. In addition, radio, press and film news programmes will have to work in accordance with my guidelines, so that the public is kept informed of the scope of the operation at all times.

Hitler agreed to everything. And fourteen days later, the first special train full of Berlin children left for the camp. A year later, the number had risen to 250,000, and in the following years millions were evacuated.

After the end of the war, two English officers visited me in my internment. From their questions about the evacuation of children during the war I recognised their identity: they were "colleagues", who had evacuated in England - just as they had done in Germany. - millions of children in the threatened cities.

Henriette and I received many guests in Vienna. Diplomats and artists frequented my villa at 52 Hohen Warte. After all, one of the reasons Hitler had sent me to the Danube city was that my predecessor Bürckel had taken little interest in the capital's cultural activities.

After the Anschluss in 1938, Vienna had been relegated to the shadow of the theatrical metropolis that was Berlin. One of my concerns was to change that state of affairs.

I tried to link different artists closely to Vienna and for this purpose I had to give large receptions and frequently had major figures of the scene as guests.

Henriette and I soon realised that our "open door" policy was costing more money than we had available. We were living beyond our means. We had to do something. I therefore decided to talk to Martin Bormann, who managed the fund of millions called the "Adolf Hitler Donation for Industry", and was also the Führer's private trustee.

I had met Bormann in 1928, during a short period of study in Weimar. I was with a group of co-religionists in the "Kaiser Café". A two-seater of the "Opel-Frosch" type pulled up at the door and a stocky, short-legged man got out. He approached our table and my friends introduced me to him:

-Martin Bormann.

I had heard of him before: in 1924 he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for complicity in a "Fema" murder.

[46] in Mecklenburg. Bormann was 23 years old at the time, a tax inspector by profession, and from 1927 a member of the

NSDAP. After his release from prison, he was not readmitted to the corps and had to take refuge at his mother's house in the highlands. Weimar. With his little "Opel-Frosch" he took the *gauleiter* Fritz Sauckel from assembly to assembly and meeting to meeting.

Two years after our first meeting I met him again in Munich. *Gauleiter* Sauckel had recommended the unemployed comrade to the Party treasurer, Franz Xaver Schwarz. At the national headquarters, Bormann administered the NSDAP relief fund. This fund was a kind of unemployment insurance for the members of the H.A. Bormann greeted me like an old friend and immediately addressed me on a first-name basis. I belonged to the sort of fellows who immediately seek intimacy with the pre-eminent - and for Bormann I was, as national head of students, a personality. - to flaunt their friendship to others.

He did the same with Walter Buch, head of the National Socialist legal department. Buch gave shelter in his house, where he lived with his daughters, to the bachelor who was far from his native region. As a result, a few months later, Bormann had become Buch's son-in-law. He married the beautiful but very homely Gerda Buch, and Hitler was best man at the ceremony.

From then on, Bormann himself entered the circle of the important people. But he soon became insufferable to his former protector, the right-hand administrator Schwarz. The latter wanted to remove him from his side. He was offered the opportunity in 1933, when Rudolf Hess was appointed as the Führer's replacement and a secretary was needed. Schwarz praised his deputy's qualifications and got Hess to nominate him to fill his own vacancy. In this way, Bormann became the Führer's deputy and later became Hitler's shadow and his inseparable companion.

We national leaders had no reason at first to complain about Bormann. On the contrary. Requests made to Hitler were dealt with more quickly than by Hess, who was always very slow in his reactions. Bormann also showed himself to be a good friend, capable of defending the interests and needs of the Party hierarchs close to Hitler, even with apparent disregard of

their own. It took me a long time to realise their true intentions and to recognise their danger.

When Hitler arrived in Vienna on the occasion of Bulgaria's accession to the Tripartite Pact on 1 March 1941, I went to Bormann, still full of mistrust, and shared my economic concerns with him.

-That's no problem, Baldur," he said. I'll talk to the Führer and you'll get an endowment. You must tell me how much you need: two or five hundred thousand marks. It will go very quickly.

I was shocked.

-Only marshals receive endowments when they have won a major battle," I said.

Bormann laughed.

-If you knew how many have received endowments without ever having set foot on a battlefield, you would be even more surprised.

He was no doubt referring to people like the Minister of Economics Funk, who, on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, had received an endowment of 520,000 Marks from the "Hitler Fund". The head of the Chancellery, Dr. Lammers, and the Reich Foreign Minister, Von Ribbentrop, had also received endowments of half a million marks respectively.

He took out his notebook, ready to write down the amount he was told to write down.

But I thought better of it and said:

-You'd better not say anything to Hitler. I'll manage as best I can.

-As you wish," said Bormann, putting his notebook away again.

Some time later I applied to Minister Lammers for an increase in my representation allowance "because of the special requirements of the Reich Commissariat in Vienna". This was granted.

The ceremony on 1 March had a curious consequence. One morning an important visitor was announced to me in my office at the Vienna Ballhausplatz. My assistant said:

-The head of protocol for Foreign Affairs needs to see you urgently. He has just arrived from Berlin on a special plane.

At the door appeared the very tall Baron Von Dornberg. He had composed his attitude for the moment and taking a huge envelope out of his diplomatic bag, he said to me:

-I have been instructed to give you a letter from my minister.

Not a single smile accompanied the gesture. Dornberg was undoubtedly aware of the significance of that moment. When I had read the letter, I found it difficult to suppress my laughter. I also dismissed him gravely and let the baron return, without a reply, in his special plane to Berlin.

I then called my closest collaborator and read him Ribbentrop's letter:

"During my last stay in Vienna, you did not consider it necessary to meet me at the station. This was such a gross disregard of my function and my person that I am obliged to inform the Führer. I also inform him that under these circumstances Vienna cannot host any further international conferences, as your contempt for the Reich Foreign Minister makes it prohibitive....".

This was the "important letter" which the Foreign Minister, whom Goering used to call, from his habit of repeating the same arguments as Hitler, "Germany's first parrot", had sent, through one of the highest officials of his department and by special aeroplane, to Vienna. At the thought, I could not but shake my head hesitantly....

The next time I was in Berlin, I asked Hitler if Ribbentrop had told him about me.

The Führer laughed.

-Yes; he complained of you. But I replied that the Reich Commissar in Vienna would have to arrange a bed at the station if he had to go to receive officially every minister who came there.

And Hitler added:

-I know that Ribbentrop's vanity is sometimes grotesque. But we have to put up with it. On the other hand, he accepted my answer without batting an eyelid, and with that the case was over.

But of course, the case was far from over. Ribbentrop could not forget that he had come to greet my friend Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister and Mussolini's son-in-law. And the fact that I had not done the same for him, the Foreign Minister of the German Reich, constituted in his eyes a crime of lèse-majesté.

A few days later, on the night of 11 May, I was woken up by my assistant, Willi Scholz. He had come from the theatre in Josefstadt and told me that he had had an usher arrested. The man was explaining that Rudolf Hess had fled to England. Scholz was beside himself:

-Those who invent such disgusting rumours must be brought to account!

It was my turn to be irritated that Scholz had woken me up for that reason. May 11 was Sunday, and I had intended to take advantage of the holiday to sleep peacefully. But the peace and quiet had vanished. Just as Scholz was about to leave, one of the officials on night duty in my office called me; a message had been sent by teletype from the Reich Chancellery to be delivered "directly to Commissar Schirach". This meant that I had to go personally to the teletype, acknowledge my presence, receive the message and reply.

I got dressed without being able to stifle an oath, and together with my assistant I went to the Ballhausplatz. After I had identified myself, the teletype began to write. When I had read the first line, I turned to Scholz and said:

-You can go and get your usher back from the police now....

He looked at me blankly. I added:

-I was right. Hess has indeed fled to England.

The broadcasting of the news could have cost the usher his head. For he could only hear the news through the broadcasts of the London BBC, which, as I later learned, had broadcast the information about Hess's landing in Scotland by parachute in its late-night broadcast. Listening to foreign broadcasters was forbidden in Germany on pain of death. Broadcasting "enemy news" was also punishable by the maximum penalty. But the man must have been clever in that case, because according to my reports, the police released him the next day.

On the same day, Monday, 12 May 1941, German radio reported the sensational news to the public: "Comrade Hess, who had been forbidden by the Führer to fly an aeroplane because of a progressive illness for years, nevertheless managed to get hold of an aircraft. Last Saturday, May 10, Comrade Hess left on a flight from which he has not yet returned. A letter left behind is evidence of a mental illness which suggests that Comrade Hess was, unfortunately, a victim of hallucinations....".

The day after this note, apparently written by Hitler himself, all the *gauleiter* and national hierarchies were summoned to the Berghof. We waited in the great hall with its panoramic view. When Hitler appeared, I could not suppress a start. Three days after the escape of his deputy, he appeared still under the effects of the coup. His eyes were bloodshot. He spoke in a low voice, vibrant with emotion.

From his mouth we learned the particulars of that then unbelievable story. On Saturday, at about 6.45 p.m., Hess had occupied an "Me 110" at the special "Messerschmitt" airfield in Ausburg. In the evening, a thick envelope sent by him arrived at the Berghof. Hitler had left it unopened, assuming that it contained one of the long, prize-winning reports with which Hess was in the habit of bombarding him. Only before retiring for the night had he opened the envelope, reading with surprise what his deputy had told him: that he, Hess, considered it his duty to end the war between the peoples.

Germanic brothers from England and Germany. To this end, he visited his friend in England, the Duke of Hamilton, the leader of the English ex-combatants, and asked him to mediate between the two governments.

I did not know the Duke of Hamilton personally, but I knew that he had been in Berlin during the Olympic Games. And in the course of a reception which Hess gave at that time in honour of some foreign visitors, I was told that the Duke was there. He declared, however, that he had never seen Hess before his capture in England.

Whether he had met the Duke fleetingly or had imagined meeting him, the fact remains that Hess flew to England in 1941 and wanted to influence world politics by his actions. This was not the work of a madman, as Hitler would have German opinion believe. It was the act of a man full of illusions and possessed by a fixed idea which never left him for a moment and which, precisely because of its insistence, fostered all utopias.

XXXIV

In the evening of 21 June 1941, I took the night express to Berlin to attend the final German championship match between Schalke 04 and Rapid Wien in my capacity as Reich Commissar in Vienna. I woke up between Prague and Dresden and started up my portable radio. I listened to military music according to the reasons for *Les Preludes*, by Franz Liszt. Then, the speaker announced that Dr. Goebbels was going to read a proclamation from the Führer. It was five past six. Ten minutes later I heard what had happened: Germany had attacked the Soviet Union.

This meant a war on two fronts. In other words, the very thing that Hitler had always described as Imperial Germany's greatest diplomatic blunder. When the Non-Aggression Pact was concluded in 1939, I admired Hitler as one of the most realistic politicians of the day. And in the course of the last few weeks, when rumours of an attack on the Soviet Union became more and more intense, I did not hesitate to call all those who were in favour of it mad.

On 22 June 1941, the "Rapid" boys were beaten 4-3 in a packed Olympic stadium. I have to admit that I did not pay much attention to the match. As the battle between the two teams unfolded on the green turf, images from the history textbooks of my school days flashed through my mind: images of Napoleon's "Grande Armée" on the run, barefoot and ragged soldiers on the march to the West through the Russian wilderness...

I stayed in Berlin until Monday morning. But it was impossible for me to walk the two hundred steps from the "Kaiserhof" hotel to the Reich Chancellery, the short walk I had taken so often in the past eight years. And I did not go that way for the simple reason that I did not know what to say to Hitler.

Again, as a year earlier, after the victory over France, I was vacillating between my tendency to pessimism and the realities of the situation.

The special reports from the Führer's headquarters in the "Wolf's Lair" constantly announced new victories for German troops in Russia. New victories of the German troops in Russia were constantly being announced. Would Hitler achieve a lightning victory, as in Poland and France?

A few weeks later, following a visit he paid me in Vienna, my father-in-law told me that he had asked Hitler at Headquarters what he intended to do with Stalin after the victory over the Soviet Union. According to Hoffmann, the Führer had answered him with the utmost seriousness:

-I will place Klessheim Castle in Salzburg at your disposal. There you can spend the rest of your life, isolated from the surrounding world, as a high-ranking prisoner.

From the beginning of the Russian campaign, Hitler was in the habit of spending months at a time in his headquarters "Wolf's Lair" at Rastenburg in East Prussia and "Wolf's Burrow" at Winniza in the Ukraine. It became increasingly difficult for his close Party collaborators to talk to him alone. One man, whose name was even unknown to many comrades, did not leave his side for a moment: this man was none other than Martin Bormann, head of the Party secretariat since Rudolf Hess's escape to England.

Bormann was thus present at every political and military conversation taking place at Headquarters. He tirelessly took notes and soon saw to it that the stenographers took down Hitler's every word, even those he uttered at the table. The resulting notes were sorted by subject, name and date into large metal files. In this way Bormann became a kind of Hitler's memory.

All letters, memorials and reports were sent to his desk. addressed to the Führer. Most of them were not even close to *being* known to him. Bormann would search his metal archives for Hitler's once-expressed views on the subject and draft his reply accordingly. As Hitler had often expressed contradictory views on a particular subject, he would write his reply accordingly.

Bormann chose the most radical and brutal ones. And Hitler always ratified everything his right-hand man did.

When Hoffman, to whom Hitler generally allowed all sorts of remarks, once voiced criticism of Bormann, he immediately cut him off:

-I want one thing to be clear, Hoffmann. And tell your son-in-law, too: I need Bormann to win this war. I know he is unscrupulous and brutal. He's just like a bull. But I want everyone to know that whoever stands against Bormann stands against me. And that I will have anyone who tries anything against him shot.

At Headquarters, the military detested Bormann. He was contemptuously called "General Teletype", because he was daily pestering the *gauleiter* and Reich Commissars with yards and yards of orders from the Führer. He would stand for hours on end between the teletypes, dictating at one machine as well as the other, and when the servants were not as active as he wished, he would kick them in the teeth.

For me, Bormann was Hitler's evil spirit. Goering laughed when I told him that one day. He called him "the little personage", and in his eyes he was a sort of underling, a mixture of Hitler's secretary and butler. Nor did Goebbels, Himmler and Ley seem to take him very seriously at first. For his part, he tried to appear to them as a friend and servant, whose proximity to Hitler they could take advantage of. A telephone conversation with Bormann saved long journeys and multiple hearings, so that everyone, in the end, tried to be well with him.

The "bull" Bormann tried to bring his rules of life into line with Hitler's. As the Führer did not drink alcohol, Bormann also played the role of a teetotaler. Since the Führer did not drink alcohol, Bormann also played the role of teetotaler. As Hitler detested tobacco, Bormann did not dare to smoke, even in the privacy of his room. He would lock himself in the lavatory to take a couple of puffs. And when Hitler could not surprise him, he would take a bottle of brandy from his desk. I couldn't say whether

Hitler himself was unaware of all this. On the other hand, Bormann played the role of a faithful copy of his boss right up to the very end.

In fact, Bormann resembled one of those extraordinarily active secretaries who avoid annoying their bosses and allow themselves to be "cameleoned" by the managers. The managers were, in this case, the Reich Commissars, the ministers, and the *gauleiter*, the "Führer's champions", as we **w e r e** called. Y Since we were not really a "community of brothers", as Hitler liked to imagine, but rivals fighting for influence and power, the secretary, i.e. Bormann, soon became one of the most powerful men in the state.

Being at the centre of the intrigues was part of his intriguing character. But to tell the truth, he would have had to possess great willpower not to get mixed up in it all. So he often became the *joker* in the game. In short, he was not only Hitler's creation, but all of us who knew him, put up with him and used his services contributed to making him more and more important. That is why I consider it historically wrong to lay all the blame on Martin Bormann.

One day in April 1943, the telephone rang in our Viennese house in the Hohen Warte. My wife picked it up. On the other end of the line was Eva Braun. She told her that Hitler would be very pleased if we agreed to spend the Easter holidays at the Berghof. I found that invitation rather inopportune. Kjiut Hamsun and his wife had announced their presence. I had been a Hamsun reader since my youth and had been looking forward to the meeting. But Hitler's invitation took precedence, all the more so as it had recently become very difficult to see him. In any case, subsequent events confirmed the uncertain and diffuse motives I had for considering the visit to the Berghof with the most mixed feelings.

When he sent me to Vienna in August 1940, Hitler had spoken to me about the city's tradition and the need to ensure the cultural independence of the Viennese. For Goebbels, with whom

I had long ceased to be on good terms with him, and this was a severe blow. He had never forgiven me for having called the anti-Jewish "Kristallnacht programs", which I thought he himself had promoted, a disgrace and a crime in the eyes of the H.J. commanders. Our old controversy was replayed when Goebbels complained to Hitler about my cultural policy in Vienna. In his view, it was inappropriate to play "the Russian Tschaikowsky" in the middle of the war and to programme both Chekov and Shakespeare. He even had something to say against the reproduction of Van Gogh's paintings. Serious confrontations had resulted from all this.

Goebbels' control over the press and radio was total, but his influence in the cultural field was not. He had to approve the programmes of most German stages, but the most important theatres and museums did not depend on him. In Berlin it was Goering who held sway over the "Staatstheater"; in Hamburg, the cultural senator; in Munich, the cultural senator,

Adolf Hitler, and in Dresden the *gauleiter* Mutschmann. As if that
were not enough

He was soon excluded from Vienna as well, and on Hitler's orders he had to hand over eleven million marks from his ministry's budget for art and culture in the capital. At first he had shown no special ambitions for Vienna. But then a number of things happened that finally unsettled him. For I showed that I knew how to use the money that Goebbels had been obliged to make available to me.

It was no secret that for years, theatres and opera companies had taken advantage of Austria's poor economic situation to recruit artists from that pool. Only a few, such as Ewald Balsler, Raoul Asían, Paula Wessely and Attila Horbiger, had remained loyal to Vienna. The opera house, the pride of the Viennese, in particular, had suffered greatly as a result of this emigration. With the help of the general rapporteur for culture, Walter Thomas, I tried to restore the previous situation. I arranged contracts with Furtwängler, Knappertbusch, Clemens Krauss, Karl Bohm and a

long series of conductors, performers and singers. Richard Strauss returned to his palace in Vienna with his wife, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren. And at the same time, new art exhibitions were opened.

The work of the modern composer was rehearsed at the Vienna State Opera.

Wagner-Regeny entitled *Johanna Bcdk*. It was a story about a German girl from Transylvania run over by a Hungarian despot for refusing to reveal the hiding place of a freedom fighter. On the day of the premiere, a telegram arrived from the Reich Propaganda Ministry: "Premiere forbidden". Reason: the play was anti-national socialist and hurt the feelings of allied Hungary. I discussed with director Oskar Fritz Schuh what could be done. We decided to change the names of people and places in such a way that no Hungarian would be affected. Within twenty-four hours the singers had to learn the new names. The premiere on 4 April 1941 caused a theatrical scandal. Opponents of modern musical trends whistled and kicked; supporters applauded enthusiastically.

Two days later I presented my Viennese cultural programme in the Burgtheater. Referring to the Opera scandal, I said:

-Why shouldn't there be discussions? We do not want a cultural cemetery peace.

I believe that guaranteeing artistic freedom must be one of the most challenging tasks of the responsible statesman. With our artistic work, we will soon be at the forefront of the cities of the Reich.

The Viennese artists stood by my side. And so did many others in the rest of Germany. But the Propaganda Ministry, and above all its head, Dr Goebbels, saw me as the number one enemy of culture. Goebbels had even sent observers to discuss premiere of *Johanna Batk y* wanted to convince Hitler with a report that I was promoting "Four Quartet Opera-style atonal nonsense" in Vienna.

As Gerhardt Hauptmann's 80th birthday approached, I asked in Berlin what tributes could be paid to Germany's greatest living playwright. The answer: no central tribute and only local honours. In other words, performances in various theatres followed by the usual press commentary. This response irritated me to no end. I contacted the Hauptmann family, who lived in Agnetendorf, and invited them, as official guests of the Reich, to Palavicini Palace, while all the prose theatres were staging the plays of the playwright for a week. Hauptmann accepted, we scheduled a series of performances, and on the eve of his birthday I personally travelled to Breslau to fetch him and his wife. Together with Richard Strauss we celebrated Gerhardt Hauptmann's birthday at our home in Vienna. That "Hauptmann Week" had an extraordinary resonance, not only in Vienna but throughout the Reich. Even Goebbels and Hitler gave it the value of a demonstration. That is how it really was.

In January 1943, we held the exhibition "Young Art in the Third Reich" at the Kunsthalle in Vienna. After seven days it was closed on Hitler's orders. He called me to the Berghof. It was a protocol and a frosty interview. Hitler did not offer me a seat and remained standing himself. One step behind was Bormann. In a slow, icy voice, such as I had not heard in the eighteen years I had known him, he said:

-Mr von Schirach, I do not want such exhibitions. That is sabotage.

Bormann handed him a copy of our H.J. magazine, *Will and power*. Hitler showed the reproduction of one of the paintings from the Viennese exhibition.

-Look at this picture! A green dog! And of this you have made a print run of a quarter of a million. With it you have mobilised all the cultural Bolsheviks, all the reactionaries, against me. This is not education of the youth, but education of the opposition.

He wouldn't let me speak.

-We must put an end to all that. Otherwise I will be forced to block the Vienna subsidies for you.

With those words he ended the interview.

What could this new invitation to the Berghof mean in view of the above, could it mean a beginning of reconciliation, could it mean a return to the way things had been before? Strictly speaking, much had happened since 1925, the year in which I first saw the saviour of Germany. In many respects, my opinion had changed. I doubted, and yet I still believed in him. I still hoped that we would win the war. "We will win because we must win," as the saying went.

The reception at the Berghof was chilly. Eva Braun greeted me with the following remark:

-The Führer is not very happy with you, Herr Schirach, because he has banned standing waves in Vienna.

I told him that the ban had not come from me, but had been issued for the whole of Germany by the Minister of Propaganda, Goebbels.

Hitler was momentarily out of sight. There was no air of reconciliation about it.

Henriette was not just the wife of one of his hierarchs. He had taken her by the hand as a child and was a friend of her father. And so he allowed her liberties that no one else would have allowed himself to take.

On the way to Berchtesgaden he had told me that he intended to explain to Hitler what he had seen in Amsterdam. From the windows of her room in the "Amstel" hotel, she had seen Jewish women being rounded up and deported. And an S.S. chief of her acquaintance had offered to sell her gold and jewellery very cheaply from the stores of valuables owned by the Jews. Henriette's voice trembled with indignation when she spoke of this.

-Try to contain yourself," I advised him. You know that all this is inevitable and that you can't change things.

"You can't change things..." Such was the formula then lavished on us to justify ourselves to ourselves.

The crowd at the Berghof was large, as usual: Hitler's shadow, Martin Bormann, with his wife; Eva Braun's sister and best friend, Hertha Schneider; Hitler's military aides, with their wives, and the doctors Brandt and Morell. Also present was the Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer. He was a man of my generation, Hitler's architect and a first-class organiser.

When Hitler finally appeared, he was cordial in person. When it was time for dinner, he accompanied my wife to the table. My partner was Eva Braun. After dinner we sat around the fireplace in the huge living room. Someone turned the conversation to the war the partisans were waging against us in Russia.

The subject and the lively tone in which the conversation was conducted never ceased to amaze me. Some time before, the commander of the 16th Army, Marshal Busch, had sent my friend, the war auditor Gunther Kaufmann, to Vienna to inform me about the risky policy being pursued behind the fronts. The military was of the opinion, corroborated by HJ. commanders who had fought in Russia, that we had had every chance of making friends with the Ukrainians. But this was prevented by the behaviour of the regiment commanded by the Reich Commissar Koch. This is how the Ukrainians swelled the ranks of the partisans, forced by our forces' treatment of them.

I asked:

-Don't you think, my Führer, that an independent Ukraine under the command of an Ataman would be more useful to us than its subjection to a Reich Commissariat?

The expression on Hitler's face changed completely.

-Don't talk about things that don't concern you, Schirach. These Slavs are in no position to govern themselves.

The tone of his voice implied that the subject was not a pleasant one for him. The conversation around the fireplace died away.

The next day, after lunch, the crowd made its way to the teahouse. This twenty-minute walk was Hitler's most expensive personal ritual. To the left of the Führer walked my wife, Henriette; to his right, Eva Braun.

No one who has not lived through those moments can have any idea of the deadly boredom that reigned during the teatime that followed the walk. Once seated in his armchair, Hitler would occasionally nod his head. Those present then lowered their voices and hardly dared to speak in a whisper.

But this time it was different. We had brought with us from Vienna a package of American magazines and newspapers, procured by a Lufthansa pilot who regularly flew to Switzerland.

The rustling of the paper caught Hitler's attention.

-What is that?

Henriette handed him the American *magazine*. It contained a photographic report on the construction of so-called "Liberty" type merchant ships. The Americans wanted to use their accelerated serial construction to compensate for the losses in tonnage caused by our U-boats.

Hitler looked at the photographs. I had to translate the captions for him. They said that these ships were built using prefabricated parts assembled in the shipyards themselves, by assembly and with hardly any rivets.

-What a thing for those merchants! - exclaimed Hitler contemptuously. At the slightest sea breeze the ships will break in two.

The magazine was passed from hand to hand. But no one gave it more than a cursory glance. Not even the technicians present. Only Martin Bormann made a sullen gesture and looked at me with irritation.

-Perhaps out of ten ships like these, only five or six will reach their targets. But the Americans believe they can win the submarine war with them.

Hitler laughed.

-Nonsense! It takes years to build a ship of this tonnage. Of course, the Schirachs are naturally very sensitive to any American propaganda.

That was meant to be an allusion to my family background.

There was a dense silence in the audience. Eva Braun yawned discreetly and said that we were spoiling the convivial atmosphere with bloody politics. Henriette drew Hitler's attention to a photo showing women during the assembly of the ship's parts. The "total war" that Goebbels had called for in February seemed to be a reality among the Western Allies.

Hitler put the magazine away:

-These are mounted photographs. I don't think you can seriously consider the possibility of those elegant American women breaking their enamelled fingernails in a shipyard.

With those words the teatime was over. Hitler drove the car back to the Berghof, and the rest of us went on foot. Henriette and I alone, isolated, as if we were under a glass bell.

In the evening, around the fireplace, the atmosphere was even more rarefied.

My wife was sitting next to Hitler and I noticed that she was moving her hands very nervously. She spoke to him, at first in a very low voice and then in a louder tone. The Führer seemed to be listening. But suddenly he stood up and began to pace up and down.

-That's all we need! - he exclaimed. What do you pity those Jewish women for," said he, "and what do you pity them for?"

There was no doubt in my mind: despite my warnings, Henriette had told him about the Amsterdam episode.

There was a deep silence. The crackling of wood in the fireplace could be heard. Everyone tried to keep quiet. Only when, around midnight, a new guest, Dr. Josef Goebbels, made his appearance, did the meeting become somewhat livelier. With the fine perception

the Propaganda Minister had for Hitler's moods, began to harass me:

You have become a half-Austrian?

-What does the term "Austrian" mean in this context?

- I asked in my turn. Of all those present, I am the only one who was born in Berlin. And as far as I know, the *gauleiter* of Berlin is a native of the Rhineland.

Goebbels was affected by the response. He only understood jokes when they were at the expense of others. His tone became suddenly serious:

-But in Vienna he practises an Austrian policy.

Hitler decided to seize the opportunity offered by Goebbels' words.

-It was a mistake on my part to send him to Vienna. And it was a mistake to admit these Viennese into the Greater German Reich. I know these people from having lived among them in my youth. They are enemies of Germany.

Hitler's face was full of hatred. I could not help wondering whether this was the same man who five years earlier, on the balcony of the Viennese Hofburg and before a jubilant crowd, had solemnly declared: "I proclaim to history the return of my fatherland to the German Reich.

I tried to play down the seriousness of the conversation:

-But the Viennese are loyal to you, my Führer. Hitler shouted:

-I don't care what these people think. I repudiate them, that's all.

I stood up and said:

-In such circumstances, my Führer, I return the trust you have placed in me and place my office in your hands.

Hitler looked at me coldly as he said:

-It is not for you to decide on that. You will remain in the position you hold.

It was now four o'clock in the morning. Without saying goodbye, we returned to Vienna. One thing was clear: it had fallen

in disgrace. Despite this, I remained at my post until the last moments.

Today, at such a distance from the events, I think I understand them with some clarity: in January 1943 Stalingrad had fallen. After that catastrophe, Marshal von Manstein began to talk openly about the possibility of removing Hitler from the high command of the armies. At first, the Führer thought of getting rid of him, but did not dare to take the necessary steps to do so. Instead of taking overt action against von Manstein, he began to systematically take issue with those who seemed to him likely to succeed him, both militarily and politically: Goering, Rommel and myself.

On 22 April 1943, two days after his birthday, Hitler confided to Speer at the Berghof that he feared I had fallen into "the nets of Viennese reaction" and had ceased to have "a clear conception of the interests of the Reich".

And as I later learned at Nuremberg from Ribbentrop, Hitler even considered in a conversation with Himmler the possibility of my appearing before a people's court.

XXXV

On 29 May 1944, Himmler made a speech to the *gauleiter* and commissars of the Reich, assembled in the Posen Town Hall. We were seated at a large horseshoe-shaped table. The head of the table was occupied by Bormann, with Himmler on his right and Dr. Goebbels on his left. Next to him sat Commissars Buch and Amann. The other national hierarchies occupied the rest of the table. Between the *gauleiter* and the other hierarchs, the number was fifty.

After Bormann had called the meeting to order, he gave Himmler the floor. The S.S. Reichsführer rose and began his speech.

-I beg you to listen to what is to be said here, but never talk about it.

And then he reported for the first time to the Party command corps on what he called the "final solution of the Jewish problem".

-The destruction of the Jews is a hard and difficult task. We are faced with the problem of what to do with the women and children. From the first moment I wanted to find a solution to this point as well. I did not consider it fair to exterminate some men and leave our children to possible avengers in the form of their children.... The difficult decision had to be made to wipe this people off the face of the earth.... It was evident that if we did not reach this decision, our men would suffer both morally and physically....

As Himmler spoke, a dense silence reigned in the hall. He spoke as coolly about the annihilation of men, women and children as a businessman could speak about his balance sheet. There was not a single note of emotion in his speech, nothing to denote any inner feeling. And as I listened to him, it occurred to me that Himmler was making us, with this information, his real accomplices. Those of us who sat in that hall of the Posen Town Hall were all anti-Semites. There were radicals and moderates among us. But even the moderates had

In fact, as they now had to admit, they were complicit in the annihilation by their anti-Semitic actions or by their participation in the deportations of large numbers of Jews. Basically, the extent of our guilt could not be assessed from a legal point of view. But morally, all of us, even those in less responsible positions, such as myself, were involved in hundreds of thousands of acts of cruelty whose exposure goes beyond the bounds of the narratable.

Bormann rose and closed the session with these words:

-And now, comrades, I beg you to accompany me to the meal which is to be served in the next room.

We sat quietly at the table. We avoided looking at our neighbours. Since 1938 there had been no discussions at the meetings.

of the national hierarchies and the *gauleiter*. They were officially suppressed. But, in spite of this, we were accustomed to talk, sometimes quite lively, in a restricted circle. In 1943 he communicated Dr. Ley to all the *gauleiter* whom Hitler would consider to be The gathering of more than three of them together was a crime of high treason. Many *gauleiter* held high ranks in the S.S. Who could one trust? I was convinced that both Hitler and Himmler would be ready to nip any criticism in the bud. I also knew that both Bormann and Hitler wanted a tougher and more fanatical man in Vienna from 1942 onwards, and that they only kept me in my post for "optimistic reasons". But that was precisely why I believed in those days that it was my duty to keep my position in Vienna at all costs. I clung to that idea, perhaps because it gave a little peace of mind to my uneasy conscience.

That same day I returned to Vienna.

After being appointed by Hitler as Commissar in the capital in 1940, he told me:

-I will make the Jews leave Vienna.

Before the Anschluss, some 200,000 Jews had lived in the capital. In the following two years, as a result of pressure and threats, some 200,000 Jews had taken the path of emigration.

140,000 Hebrew citizens. When I took office

50,000 to 60,000 Jewish inhabitants were still registered in the city. I reported this to Hitler at the Reich Chancellery on 2 October 1942. The Führer told me that the Jews of Vienna would be moved to the East, where they would be billeted in specially designated areas.

-But you will have nothing to do with the carrying out of this operation," Hitler told me. Himmler will take care of that.

The Governor General of Poland, Minister Hans Frank, was also present at the Chancellery conversation. I asked him about the way of life of the Jews stationed in Poland. He replied that they were employed in road construction, but above all as artisans and workers in the textile industry. I had no reason to doubt the words of Dr. Frank, who for many years had been Bavarian Minister of Justice and President of the Academy of Jurisprudence.

In December 1940 I was informed by the head of the Chancellery, Dr. Lammers, that the following year, in 1941, the evacuation of the Jews from Vienna would begin.

When the first transfer lists were posted on the premises of the N.S. transport service, many Jews asked to be excluded from deportation. Naturally, only a few managed to approach Hitler's representative directly.

I received applications from artists and scientists in particular, as well as from people with relationships and members of so-called mixed marriages. In a few isolated cases, I made exceptions, but on the whole, there were hardly five thousand people whom I exempted from the transfer lists over the next two years. I had such confidence in Dr. Frank.

In the autumn of 1942 the deportations from Vienna were suspended on Himmler's own orders. This suspension was, in reality, of no decisive importance, for there were barely 7,000 Jews living in Vienna at the time. Almost all of them

They were engaged in the armaments industry and were therefore "irreplaceable" for Hitler's war economy.

Although I personally did not agree with these mass deportations, I facilitated them in my capacity as Reich Commissar. In a speech to the Vienna Labour Front, I reported on 5 June 1942:

In the autumn of this year, 1942, we will celebrate the festival of Jewish-free Vienna....

And at an international youth congress on 14 September 1942, at which I advocated the creation of a European community in which small peoples would have the same rights as the great powers, I added:

-If I were to be reproached for having sent thousands and thousands of Jews from this city, once the metropolis of Jewry in Europe, at *ghetto* oriental, I would reply: I consider that it represents a contribution to European culture. And if I were asked how I could expatriate Mr. Israel Lowenstein ^[47], who had bought a hundred German books and was therefore considered an intellectual, I would answer: it would be no catastrophe for me to be expelled to a foreign country in order to form there, together with other members of my community, a nucleus where I could live according to the purest lines of my German culture....

At the Nuremberg trial I was accused that the weekly and monthly reports of the S.S. command also included my activity in Vienna and that they recorded the mass shootings in the East. I must say that I never read one of these reports and that not a single one of my collaborators in Vienna made me aware of their contents. Nor did the commanders of the divisions and regiments stationed on the Eastern front, who visited me during their permissive stays in Vienna, explain anything about it to me. When I think about it today, I say to myself that it would have been my duty, as a commander, to provide myself with the necessary information. That was my fault.

When I returned to Vienna from Posen at the end of May 1944, there was only one person with whom I felt authorised to discuss what had been discussed at the national command meeting: my friend, the writer Colin Ross.

Having informed him of Himmler's speech, Colin said:

-We have to get hold of the person of the Führer. The man is mad.

It was only a phrase, perhaps uttered by Colin in a moment of excitement. But, in our bewilderment, we clung to the idea and came to discuss in all seriousness how Hitler could be dispossessed by legal action or a "coup d'état from above". Today it may seem absurd, but that night we considered such an action probable. It would be enough to declare Hitler incapacitated after a diagnosis by psychiatrists in Wehrmacht uniform and remove him from the leadership of the state. (After the war, I learned that around the same time, and completely independent of each other, Himmler and Goebbels had considered the same possibility).

But who was in a position to stage such a coup d'état? Was it the Reich Marshal Hermann Goering, who had also fallen out of favour with Hitler but was still officially his successor?

A few days after my conversation with Colin Ross, Goering called me at my office at Ballhausplatz. He told me that he would be passing through Vienna on a special train and that he would be very happy to talk to me for half an hour.

I called my assistant and told him:

-Find me a car. The "strongman" is in Vienna, and we will go to him at once.

Hópken, a lieutenant colonel in the Luftwaffe, had been seriously wounded at Stalingrad. Since his recovery, he had been serving at my side in Vienna. Before he left, I added:

-Don't forget that we are going to see your commanding officer. So make sure you wear a regulation uniform. Although I don't know if the

he wears have something to do with the Luftwaffe, as he is always dressed in a rather comical manner. Be that as it may, do your best to dress in regulation.

He came back after five minutes. The uniform was correct, so we went to see the Reich Marshal.

I had not so far been on Goering's special train, although I had heard quite a lot about it. It was a real "palace on rails", with lavishly arranged saloon cars.

We were ushered into one of the first, laid out like a wonderful library, with spacious bookshelves full of books, comfortable armchairs, rugs and a writing desk.

Goering greeted us in no less surprising attire. He wore a kind of leather coat that looked more like a dressing gown. From his breast pocket protruded a broad gold chain on the end of which hung an emerald.

Hopken stood for a few moments as still as a statue of salt on the threshold of the library. The sight of his commanding officer seemed to have petrified him.

Then I spoke to Goering alone. We talked about the critical situation on the fronts, about Hitler, and finally about what I had learned in Posen. During the long years we had known each other, I had learned to appreciate Goering as a man of action. I thought, therefore, that it would not be difficult for me to awaken that lust for activity which had always characterised him. I informed him of my conversation with Colin the night before and told him:

-Something must be done, Marshal. You are a member of the Reich Defence Council and you can send orders to all the hierarchies. You must do something!

Goering looked at me gravely. There was resignation in his eyes as he replied:

-I can do nothing. I am so closely watched and so distrusted that I cannot even open my mouth at the meetings at the Führer's headquarters.

I wanted to say something, but Goering refused to be interrupted.

-You see, for example, it is said that fifty new fighters are available. And Hitler decides that twenty-five will go to any point on the front, in the East, and another twenty-five will go to the defence of Dresden, for example. If I want to say something, Hitler himself orders me to shut up in the presence of captains and commanders, treating me as if I were stupid. That is the situation, my dear Schirach, and I can do nothing to change it. Perhaps I am too loyal; now I am going to my castle in Veldenstein and there I shall wait to be called up again.

Half an hour had passed and Goering was told that the train was about to leave. I said goodbye to the Reich Marshal, to the man who had been the most powerful man in Germany after Hitler.

On his return to the Pallhausplatz, Hopken seemed to come out of his reverie:

-Leather boat, gold chain, emeralds... And that's my commander-in-chief?

XXXVI

I saw Hitler for the last time one Sunday. I shall never forget that day in my life: it was 24 February 1945 in the Reich Chancellery. The Russian armies were on the Oder, some eighty kilometres from Berlin; the industrial region of Upper Silesia had fallen into their hands intact; Breslau was encircled and East Prussia isolated. In the south-east, Vienna was under threat after the fall of Budapest, and in the west, Anglo-American troops were waiting before the Rhine for the moment to penetrate Reich territory. The days before the final catastrophe were numbered. And while bloody defensive battles were being fought on all fronts, Hitler had summoned the Party and national hierarchies to the Chancellery to celebrate the anniversary of the proclamation of the National Socialist programme. Twenty-five years earlier, in the Munich "Hofbräu", it had been proclaimed: against serfdom and debasement, for freedom and bread....

While Hitler was personally at the Chancellery, the Minister of State Hermann Esser, one of the Party's most senior comrades, read out in Munich on 24 February 1945

- three months before the end of the war - a proclamation of his, the end of which read as follows:

"When the end of this war comes, we shall place victory in the hands of the young generation, which ... is the best of what Germany can claim as her own. This is the work of the National Socialist formation and, with it, a consequence of that fighting proclamation made twenty-five years ago in Munich.... Twenty-five years ago I secured the victory of the movement. Today I prophesy - driven, as always, by the faith of our people - the final victory of the German Reich".

I was standing next *gauleiter* of the Lower Danube, Dr. Jury, which to the had made the journey with me from Vienna in a "Volkswagen" through bombed-out cities and fields of ruins. In the twilight we had passed through destroyed Dresden. Ten days earlier, that elegant, cheerful city, possessed of the finest theatrical spirit, had been converted by the terrible bombardment of the city.

Anglo-Americans in a heap of rubble beneath which lay a hundred thousand corpses. To the right and left of us were towering piles of rubble, between which snaked paths marked by red lamps, along which you could walk. There was not a single street name sign, so we had to constantly report back to the police officers. Silent and sullen, we continued our journey to Berlin.

Berlin's "Wilhemplatz" was a barricaded camp, and the "Kaiserhof" hotel a ruin. Only the Reich Chancellery remained largely intact. The large courtyard of honour behind the monumental entrance on Vosstrasse and the 146-metre-long marble gallery were preserved, as were the dome room, the mosaic room and the reception hall with the gigantic gobelins and golden eagles on the walls.

At the entrance to the Chancellery, S.S. officers armed with pistols took away our belts and belts. Since the attack of 20 July 1944, Hitler had distrusted even his most senior comrades.

In the Mosaic Hall we await the arrival of the Führer. There were about thirty of us. *gauleiter*, in particular belonging to Many the eastern provinces, were missing that ghostly final call. They had failed to reach Berlin.

One of the huge doors opened and Hitler appeared, accompanied by Bormann and Goebbels. He looked like a defeated man. He was dragging one of his legs, visibly paralysed, on the marble floor. His face was ashen grey. With trembling hand he greeted us one by one. When she had finished shaking hands, she held her right hand with her left to conceal, no doubt, her trembling. Before us was not the Führer who had previously radiated so much suggestion; before us was a phantom who was pushing us towards the final catastrophe with the sole aim of prolonging his days a little.

Only his voice sounded firm and strong as before as he stood behind a small table to tell us:

-Comrades, my hand trembles, but not my heart. Just as it did not tremble twenty-five years ago, when, with a small group of the faithful, I raised my voice to restore to Germany the honour and dignity she had lost.... For twelve years we have stood at the summit of power, and if fate wills that we should cease to occupy it, we shall be able to say in spite of everything: "We tried the greatest thing for our people."

Those words sounded like a final dirge, like a testimony to the impending doom. But Hitler seemed reluctant to admit the colophon. Suddenly, he added:

-But if we are, each in our place, courageous to the utmost extreme and fight to the end, perhaps fate can bring about a change.

I was still young. My hand did not tremble. But my heart seemed to throb in my throat at those words, for I had the memory of the night's journey to Dresden in my mind. In my heart I was determined to spare Vienna that terrible fate.

After his speech, Hitler talked to us. He asked me:

-Will the Viennese resist, Schirach?

Behind him stood his shadow, Bormann, and beside me, Dr. Jury, Dr. Goebbels, Party judge Buch, and *Reichsleiter* Max Amman, who had been a sergeant in Hitler's company during the First World War. World War II. Everyone was staring at me, waiting for my answer. They knew that Bormann and Himmler regarded me as an insecure element who could never overpower the war-weary Viennese.

I said:

-The Viennese have done their duty up to now and will continue to do so.

This was all I could say, but it was also the least I could say under the circumstances. And so we said goodbye for the last time: he with the conviction that I would sacrifice two million Viennese to prolong his life; I with the conviction that the Reich had long been lost, and that I would not be able to do so.

that he no longer needed to fight for Hitler, but only for the preservation of a city and the lives of its inhabitants.

Very soon after my return, the events came to a head.

The city had been under daily Allied bombardment for several weeks. On 23 March, the Americans carried out their heaviest attack. I was on top of the

watchman, from thirty metres of height, *gau*, at at
from the headquarters of

Galitzinberg. "Vienna is a pearl, but I will now give it the real setting", Hitler had declared in 1938, in the wake of the Anschluss. At the time, I could see numerous columns of smoke rising over the conurbation. The Opera House had burned, as had the Burgtheater. The Belvedere and part of the Hofburg were also affected by bombs, not to mention thousands of houses.

When I came down from the tower, I was told that the army of the Soviet Marshal Tolbuchin had broken through north of the Plattensee. The Soviet vanguards were thus about two hundred kilometres south-east of Vienna. Sepp Dietrich's 6th Armoured Army, defeated, was falling back on the city. The final fight had begun.

I had known Sepp Dietrich since 1927. I was a student in Munich at the time. He worked as a packer in the Party publishing house and belonged to Hitler's bodyguard as one of the first members of the S.S. He was a true Bavarian: power-shouldered and dark-haired. In the First World War he had been a sergeant. In 1933 he was appointed head of the first armed S.S. unit: the Adolf Hitler "Leibstandarte". Thus began his rise through the ranks to regimental commander and finally to commanding general of an army corps. j

Dietrich retreated, as has been said, to Vienna with the rest of his forces. The first lodging he had, together with his staff, was my house in the Hohen Warte. I asked him how many armoured vehicles he had at his disposal.

Dietrich responded:

-We call ourselves the 6th Armoured Army because we only have six armoured vehicles....

Having said this, he began to vent his irritation at Hitler.

-Adolph decided that we should hold on to the Plattensee, even though the ground was very soft because of the rains. When armoured vehicles have to push forward, you need a solid carpet to slide on. But Adolf did not want to wait two days. And that's how our tanks got stuck in the mud.

-And do you want to defend Vienna with the rest? - I asked.

-Schmarn is where I want to settle," replied Sepp Dietrich. The old man would like me to hold out there, but the truth is that I can only hold out long enough for Schorner not to offer an open flank in Czechoslovakia.

On 28 March Heinrich Himmler arrived in Vienna with his "Heinrich" train. He had chosen this name because, with his tendency towards mysticism, he considered himself the reincarnation of the German king Henry I.

Since the attack of 20 July, the SS Reichsfuhrer had been commander-in-chief of the army garrisoning the national territory. At the command post in Vienna, he gave me and the others *gauleiter* of the oriental mark, full powers to carry out summary trials against civilians.

While these special powers of attorney were being typed in an office, Himmler sent for S.S. Sturmbannfuhrer Ziereis, commandant of the Mauthausen concentration camp in Linz. Himmler told him:

-I order that all Jews who are forced labourers on the Eastern Mark be grouped together.

A year earlier I had heard Himmler in Posen coolly report on the murder of millions of Jews. I thought he wished to share the same fate with the last of those who still lived in Austria. But before I could react, I heard him say to Ziereis:

-I hold you personally responsible for seeing that these Jews are concentrated in a reasonable manner and that they are provided with medical care and adequate food. These people are now my most valuable capital.

Those words made it clear to me what was at stake there: for Himmler those Jews were the bargaining chips in a diabolical deal. With their help he wanted to try at the last minute to erase his own guilt and to offer himself to the Allies as a valid interlocutor and successor to Hitler. After the war I learned that he had already done this by establishing secret contact with the Allied powers through the Swedish Count Bernadotte.

After Zierys had left, Sepp Dietrich entered with some senior officers, and Himmler began to talk with them. They had not spoken long when the telephone rang:

-From the Führer's Headquarters to the Reichsführer of the S.S.," said the switchboard.

Himmler picked up the receiver.

-Yes, I hope so," he said. And covering the microphone with his hand, he said in a low voice: "It's the Führer himself.

I was standing next to Himmler and for the last time I heard Hitler's deep voice through the earpiece:

-The 6th S.S. Armoured Army has caused the greatest disappointment of my life. It has failed at the Plattensee. I order, therefore, that all officers be deprived of decorations....

I saw Heinrich Himmler turn pale. In all the years I had known him, I had always seen him act as a faithful instrument in Hitler's hands. But in those moments he knew how to respond:

-My Führer, if I am to deprive the officers and men of the 6th S.S. Armoured Army of their decorations, I should go to the Plattensee and take away the crosses of the dead. No S.S. can give more than his life, my Führer.

Himmler hung up the apparatus. At the same instant, Sepp Dietrich reached up to the collar of his uniform, tore off his shiny Iron Cross, threw it into a corner and left the room. One of his assistants followed him and followed his chief.

A few days later, Vienna and the surrounding area was declared a defence zone. We were already a front-line town. And the commander-in-chief of the defence, Lieutenant General Von Büнау, took command of the "Volkssturm"^[48] from my hands.

The army had to defend the homeland with a levy of men between the ages of sixteen and seventy.

It was about half a year ago, on 25 September 1944, that Hitler had ordered the organisation of the Volkssturm. Both its launching and its command were reserved for the *gauleiter*, which is why I was assigned to the area of the Grand Vienna. The battalions of that militia were armed and trained in a very summary manner. As I was still the national head of the N.S.D.A.P. for youth training, I forbade members of the HJs to join the Greater Vienna Volkssturm in that capacity. Instead, I authorised the district commander, Hans Lauterbacher, to organise a volunteer battalion of his own out of those who, because of their age, were on the eve of joining the ranks. These boys were thoroughly instructed by officers with frontline fighting experience and selected H.J. commanders. The youth battalion remained stationed in Pressburg without coming into contact with the enemy. When the Soviet forces approached Pressburg at the end of March, I ordered it to return to Vienna. Both Lauterbacher and his subordinate commanders were against this decision: they wanted to fight. But even though I had no authority over the Volkssturm, I continued to command the H.J. battalion until I managed to move it to Gmunden, outside the combat zone.

I know that the most part of the *gauleiter* y commanders commanders
They thought as I did and acted in much the same way. Nevertheless, many J.H. members perished in the final battles. Especially on the Oder, in Silesia and Berlin, they attacked the Russian T 34s with bazookas, and none of these actions were carried out on my orders. None of those actions were carried out on my orders, but was it perhaps the effect of the training given to those young men under my orders that made them want to set an example to their elders on many occasions? I don't think so, but nevertheless I feel responsible for the death of those boys.

On 6 April the Soviet shock vanguards reached the southern outskirts of Vienna. Grenades exploded over my house in the Hohen Warte. With my staff I went down into the cellars of the Hofburg. The following night, the city was also surrounded.

from the West. Contact between the 6th SS Armoured Army and the troops fighting north of Vienna threatened to be broken. Sepp Dietrich therefore decided to evacuate the only fighting division remaining in Vienna, the "Greater Germany" division, from the city.

In Hitler's eyes, the evacuation of the armoured troops from Vienna was tantamount to treason. Over the last radio link, he ordered Bormann to transmit the following order: "Commissar Von Schirach will join the troops with his last rank".

If the Reich's representative was incorporated into the troops in combat, it meant that he had nothing to represent. The Soviets had penetrated deep into the city centre when I left the Hofburg with my staff. Many houses were in ruins and their inhabitants had taken refuge in cellars and underground cellars. Through deserted streets, our column headed east towards the Floridsdorfer Bridge, the only one open over the Danube.

We stopped in the outer district of Flandorf, in the vicinity of Bisamberges, where the IInd Flandorf was fighting. Armoured Corps. My military rank was that of lieutenant in the reserves. I knew the area in detail and Dietrich therefore appointed me as liaison officer for his staff with the corps and divisions placed under his command.

On 13 April the Battle of Vienna was over. Together with the fighting troops, we set out from Flandorf in the direction of Klosterneuburg. Sepp Dietrich's command post was set up in Kilb near St. Pölten. In the park of Mang Castle was his car, guarded by sentries with machine guns. There I introduced myself to him. He made it clear to me:

-I have barricaded myself in here in case Adolf wants to call me to account for not having defended Vienna.

On Dietrich's orders I went to Gmunden on the Traunsee, where the members of the Naval H.J. had a radio station, which at the time was an invaluable broadcasting instrument. In Gmunden I listened on the radio at 22:36 on 1 May.

minutes, the news: Adolf Hitler had fallen in the fighting in Berlin. Four hours earlier - as I later learned - Hitler had said goodbye to his pilot Baur with these words:

-It is too much! My generals have betrayed me and sold me out, my soldiers don't want to fight any more and I can't take it any more. They should put on my grave: "He was a victim of his generals".

The same man had told us on a previous occasion: "Never was the German nation so strong and its future so secure as in the times when the old magic symbol of the Germanic peoples was in Germany the renewed emblem of the Third Reich.

The Third Reich was now living its last moments.

The man I had believed in for many years was dead. But the news did not affect me. I had sensed that end when I left the Chancellery on 24 February. I breathed a sigh of relief: there would be no more senseless orders to resist. I remembered that a few days before the Führer's death I had heard from Sepp Dietrich an order from the Führer coming from *bunker* of the Foreign Ministry. It the said thus: "Immediately reconquer Vienna".

The last order I received from Sepp was this:

-Go to the Tyrol and find out where there are places for the concentration of troops and for the accommodation of wounded and fugitives from the Danube region.

On the night of 1 to 2 May, we set off in our military "Volkswagen", which bore the inscription "G.D.". I was accompanied by my assistant Fritz Wieshofer and my driver Franz Rahm.

In Schwaz, thirty kilometres from Innsbruck, we suffered an engine breakdown. Franz Rahm pushed the "Volkswagen" to a garage. We lay in our sleeping bags in a small inn run by Rahm's sister. The next day we found that the vehicle had been taken away from us, so we were forced to stay there.

In the course of the night, the situation had changed radically. A provisional government had been formed in Vienna. It ordered by radio that all Austrians who were part of the

the armed forces, took off their uniforms. The "Volkssturm" battalions became Resistance groups. White flags were raised; the war was over. Doenitz had taken the decision to request an armistice. In Schwaz, the retreating army had disbanded, and Austrian resistance groups had taken over the government of the Tyrol. The Americans had just occupied Innsbruck.

For my part, I wanted to avoid falling into the hands of the Resistance groups at all costs. In the evening of 3 May, Rahm found me and my assistant a room in the house of master lathe operator Huber. The next day we took off our uniforms and dressed in civilian clothes. From then on I became Richard Falk, the writer, and my companion Franz Wieshofer. What was originally intended only as a guarantee for the person who had provided us with accommodation, later became a permanent disguise.

When the Americans entered Schwaz, I was in the garden gate. S u d d e n l y , he stopped a *jeep*. Three soldiers from They jumped out of the vehicle and prepared to enter the house. I asked them, in the characteristic southern accent, what they wanted.

They smiled and believed me when I assured them in the dialect of their homeland:

-There are no Nazis or weapons in this house.

But would the stratagem always be so perfect? Our ID cards had been destroyed and we had no other identity papers. Fritz Wieshofer had the idea: the people's library in Schwaz had withstood the hurricane of the war without damage. The librarian continued to provide lending services as if nothing had happened. We introduced ourselves and asked for a reader's card. Wieshofer, with his real surname, which is quite common in Tyrol. I gave the name of Richard Falk, a writer. With those cards in our pockets we felt much safer.

A writer has to write. So I started to dictate a detective novel to Wieshofer. It was called *The Secrets of Mira Today*. In the evening, we would read the chapters to our hostess, Mrs.

Huber. I am sure he did not even entertain suspicions that he was harbouring the former Reich Commissar in Vienna.

We listened regularly to the news broadcast by the BBC from London. One day they said that Baldur von Schirach, former head of the Reich Youth and commissar in Vienna, had died. So no one was looking for me. And I also learned from the BBC that Goering, Ley, Ribbentrop, Funk, Sauckel, Kaltenbrunner, Speer, Keitel, Jodl, Doenitz and Raeder had been taken prisoner. Apparently a great trial was being prepared for them.

On 4 June 1945 it was also announced over the radio that all former HJ. leaders were placed under "automatic arrest". The Hitler Youth was also collectively accused as a "criminal organisation".

-Take the original out of the machine," I said to Fritz Wieshofer. Place a blank sheet of paper.

Wieshofer removed the folio corresponding to chapter ten of the *Myra's secrets today* and I dictated to her:

"I, Baldur von Schirach, voluntarily surrender myself to the occupying powers to answer for my actions before an international tribunal".

I signed the letter and asked Wieshofer to take it to the "Post" hotel, the headquarters of the local American command.

Wieshofer had to hurry. It was 7 p.m., and from 8 p.m. onwards the strictest curfew was imposed in the entire American zone of occupation.

At 19.30 he was already at the "Post" hotel. A captain opened the letter, read it and went to look for a commander. He shook his head doubtfully and said:

-But "Scheirak" has died...

-Twenty minutes ago he was alive," said Wieshofer.

Shortly afterwards, I personally entered the same room to introduce myself. The commander looked at me in surprise and asked me:

-*You are really Scheirack?*

-Yes, *I am Schirach,*" I replied.

The two American officers made numerous calls telephonic. Then a *jeep* arrived, and the commander transferred me in person to the concentration camp for prisoners of war in Rum, near Innsbruck.



Illustration 13. The Nuremberg Trial



Illustration 14. Gallery of the Spandau prison, where the German hierarchs served their sentences.

XXXVII

Without saying a word, the reception officer at the Rum camp handed me, on 6 June 1945, a copy of the newspaper of the *Star and Stripes* army. It was four weeks overdue and was partly broken. The American showed me a photograph: it showed Hermann Goering surrounded by senior officers. On the caption it said that the Reich Marshal had told Brigadier General Stack when he was captured:

-War is like a football match; the loser shakes hands with his opponent and it can all be over.

I was a friend of Goering's, but that seemed excessive.

After the horrific bloodbath that had been the Second World War, it was the worst that could be said. We had just capitulated unconditionally, Europe was in ruins and that war had cost the world millions of dead.

Could it be said in such circumstances that it had all been nothing more than a football match?

In the following stations of my captivity, in Ausburg, Wiesbaden and Oberursel, the reception officers kept cynically quoting Goering's words: "War is like a football match...".

In the Allied military prison at Nuremberg, in the Führter Strasse behind the Palace of Justice, where the Third Reich's leaders were still alive and awaiting trial, I saw Goering again. It was another Goering, very different from the one I had tried to convince to oppose Hitler in his special train. The Goering I remembered was thick, studded with decorations and jewellery. Now he wore his light grey uniform jacket, unadorned. The garment appeared dirty and wrinkled. Goering had lost at least forty pounds. But paradoxically, he looked healthier than he had during the war. This Goering looked like a new man.

From the prison doctor, Dr. Pflücker, I learned that the weight loss was the result of a treatment he had undergone in the prison.

(During the march on the Feldherrhalle, Goering had been seriously wounded. Morphine was used to ease his pain and he eventually became addicted).

After the delivery of the charge sheet, I was able to talk to him for the first time in the shower room, where we also met Dr. Frick.

-This trial is aimed at the gallery," I said. The most sensible thing would be for us to challenge the court en bloc and for our lawyers to waive the defence as a whole. If we all refused to defend ourselves, the court could, since this is a court martial and a military tribunal, arrange for a compulsory defence. But if we also refused to speak with this defence, the trial could, of course, continue and the indictments could be read out for a whole year, and the court-appointed defence counsel could intervene. We could also be sentenced to death and hanged. But the sentence would not have the slightest value in the eyes of world opinion.

Frick responded:

-This has nothing to do with the law. Here we are subject to arbitrariness and violence.

Goering shook his head. -No, Schirach, we shall not succeed in that. We shall not succeed with these accusers and defenders.

Goering knew that many things awaited the accused. Some wanted to defend themselves by claiming that as officers they had had nothing to do with National Socialism; others presented themselves as resisters; others as mere recipients of orders.

One had already fallen under the weight of the accusation. The former head of the Labour Front, Dr Robert Ley, who hung himself in his cell. I had seen this man of short stature and self-absorbed appearance many times during his imprisonment. His apathy was evident, to the point of seeming indifferent to what was going on around him. I remembered what he had said to me years ago:

-I have no right to present myself as a champion of the Germans. Nor am I any example in life.

Documentation of his ancestry was kept in one of Hess's files because Ley was of Jewish origin and was actually surnamed Levi.

Goering told me that Ley had given a lecture at the Mondorf concentration camp in Luxembourg, where the Allies had gathered the former members of the National Socialist government before transferring them to Nuremberg. He had said:

-We are wrong, my lords. The Jews are destined for world domination. And we must help them to achieve it.

-I don't know, Schirach, whether it was cowardice or Ley was really convinced of what he was saying.

After his death, vigilance was tightened. The Allies feared that if the number of suicides increased, the process would become impossible. In front of each cell, a sentry stood guard day and night, and was relieved every two hours. The door remained unlocked. Whenever the prisoner went to the corner where the toilet was, the guard would enter to prevent him from taking advantage of the situation to hang himself, as Ley had done, with his handkerchief, from the drainpipe. Floodlights were also installed to illuminate us at night.

One day, as I was being driven to speak to my lawyer, I passed a prisoner who was handcuffed to his guards. I had not seen the man since 1941. He made no gesture to show that he recognised me. He passed me with his long strides. In the evening I asked Professor Kelly, the prison's chief psychiatrist:

-What is Hess doing here? He went to England to make peace.

Kelly's response was this:

-He will appear in court as one of the main defendants. He is our most interesting case. This afternoon, of course

was loquacious and claimed to have lost his memory, I brought his old friend, General Haushofer, whom he has known since his student days. He did not recognise him or did not want to recognise him; in fact, we do not know exactly. Hess is an enigma to us.

When Hess testified in court a few months later that he had a perfect memory and that he had only feigned his loss to defend himself against indiscreet questions, I asked him:

-Did you recognise Haushofer then? Hess replied:

-It was very embarrassing for me to pretend I didn't know him.

Warden of the Nuremberg prison was Colonel Andrus, a man always filled with hatred. He was not really a typical American. He was of Lithuanian origin. He met us once or twice a day in the prison yard for roll call. He always had new instructions for us. Day after day he would come up with new tricks. On one occasion he asked if we had any objections to our treatment. When we complained about the poor food, he shouted at us:

-You have to think about how people were doing in their concentration camps.

Dr. Schacht, former president of the Reich Bank and a minister in Hitler's cabinet, responded with his well-known promptness of reaction:

-They have nothing to tell me. I was in concentration camps for years. I did much better there than with you.

As the trial date approached, we prisoners had more opportunities to come into contact with each other. Both during the half-hour circular walk in the prison courtyard and at the meals we had together in one of the largest cells of the Palace of Justice, where several small tables were set up for four people at a time. I often sat next to Goering, Keitel and Jodl. I watched attentively

Goering. He ate with great appetite and held a medium-sized hunter's pipe between his lips, something I had only rarely seen before in the passionate cigar smoker that he was.

After the evening sessions of the trial we were taken for a walk in the prison yard.

With a limp, we were approached by one whom almost everyone tried to avoid: Julius Streicher. When I asked him how he was doing, he replied:

-Bad, Schirach. They don't let me sleep at night. The guards build little gallows from which they hang a dummy and place them in my window at night. They make noise until I wake up and then I see a hanged man. It has done me no good to complain; every night it's the same thing.

On one of those walks I got into conversation with Gestapo chief Kaltenbrunner.

-Listen to me, Kaltenbrunner; in the last year of the war we learned, as the indictment also testified, that millions of Jews had been sent to the concentration camps and exterminated there. Up to now, each of the defendants has declared that he knew nothing about it. But you, Kaltenbrunner, had to know. That's why you will be hanged anyway. Say in the affirmative. You were ultimately the man who operated the switchboard of that gigantic extermination machine.

Kaltenbrunner responded:

-I know absolutely nothing about the extermination of Jews.

-In that case, Mr. Kaltenbrunner, we have nothing more to say to each other," I replied as I turned to Goering.

-There is only the possibility that you, Marshal, will testify as the main accused, who ordered the extermination of Jews and who was responsible for it all.

But Goering objected:

-You know, Schirach.... We are all in the same boat and we all have the rope around our necks. My task will be to defend the policy of the Führer and the Reich in court. It can be deduced, therefore, that I will take responsibility for what happened. But please leave me alone with the dead Jews; I had nothing to do with that.

XXXVIII

From the beginning of the trial, on 20 November 1945, the days went by according to a rigid, pre-established set of rules. We were woken up at six o'clock; a quarter of an hour later, an American soldier brought me my civilian clothes under the watchful eye of a prison officer: clean shirt, tie, shoes and braces, all of which belonged to him. So that I would not attempt suicide with the tie or braces, the soldier did not leave my side while he dressed me.

Then, as every morning, we were served breakfast: a sweet soup and a slice of bread. Later, we would reread the previous day's proceedings and prepare the notes for the defenders. My guards would then lead me to the building where the trial was taking place, through a corridor made of wood and covered by a roof. This was the so-called *catwalk*, which prevented any attempt by a prisoner to escape, to the point of making it impossible. At the entrance to the building, two military policemen took charge of me and, after getting into the lift, I was practically seated on the defendants' bench.

My seat was in the second row. For weeks, the picture before our eyes had been identical; the order was also the same. In the front row: Goering, Hess, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Kaltenbrunner, Rosenberg, Frank, Frick, Streicher, Funk and Schacht. Behind: Doenitz, Raeder, Schirach, Sauckel, Jodl, Papen, Seyss-Inquart, Speer, Neurath and Fritsche. It was usually from half an hour to three quarters of an hour before all the defendants were led into the courtroom and seated in their respective places. On one occasion I heard Frank say to Goering:

-Don't worry. They will not condemn us, and if they do, it will be purely formulaic. They will send us to an island in the Mediterranean or some other place of exile, perhaps with our families.

From the first day of our confinement, I had not, for my part, had any great illusions. Such a spectacular process did not

could end for us more than on the scaffold. So I mingled in the conversation:

-I don't think, Frank, that's a very serious thing to say.

But the Reich Marshal came to Frank's side.

-In the end, we may not even be sent to an island.

As the trial progressed, most of the defendants clung to the most diverse hopes. I, on the other hand, considered the possibility of execution from day one.

Once all the accused had taken their respective places, the same ceremony was repeated daily. Defendants, accusers, defenders, interpreters and representatives of the press all rose to their feet. The judges entered the courtroom. First, the British judge, *Lord Lawrence*, with his deputy, the red-haired Norman Birkett. Next came the tall American, Biddle, who had been Justice of the Peace under Roosevelt, and John J. Parker, the substitute for the US judges. Then it was the turn of the Russians and French. Before they took their seats, the prosecutors bowed to the judges.

Behind them were the flags of their nations. They were the flags of the victorious nations. There was not a single neutral judge in that international tribunal: not a Swiss, not a Swede, not even a judge of the International Tribunal in The Hague.

At the Nuremberg war crimes trial there were from the outset two dominant figures. One was dominant by virtue of his position, the other by virtue of his personality: Mr Jackson, the chief prosecutor speaking for the United States, and Hermann Goering, the main defendant.

When Jackson suggested to the American president that the Nazi leaders should be put on trial, the presidency of the Supreme Court was to be appointed in the United States. With Truman's acquiescence, Jackson began preparations for the trial. His ultimate hope was to qualify for the highest judicial office in the United States on the basis of his brilliant performance as chief prosecutor in the

Nuremberg. It was the opposite: he left the trial a defeated man. The new Goering, freed from morphine, destroyed the American's career. So intense was Goering's aggressiveness and so frequent his attacks, that even English and American newspapers reported the defeat in their front-page headlines. Thus, the main American accuser had to fold his sails before Goering could bring him to his knees with the most forceful argumentation.

Goering, whom psychiatrists had assessed as the most intelligent of the accused, was seen from the outset as the one called upon to justify an entire policy to history. To Jackson's accusations, he responded on one occasion:

-We made history and for that reason we could not claim to have made it bloodlessly. If we had succeeded, the picture would have been completely different.

However, Goering's consideration of the crimes as mere accidents in any war was at variance with my own convictions, and that divergence represented one of the most considerable between the Marshal and myself.

During the interminable trial sessions, one of the defendants was tirelessly taking notes. It was the former foreign minister, Von Ribbentrop, sitting in front of me. Goering and I were struck by his activity, but also by the phenomenal lack of knowledge he displayed in matters which had belonged to his jurisdiction. Thus, when the accuser alluded to our declaration of war on the United States, he interrupted with visible agitation:

-That I declared war on the United States? I've never heard of such a thing!

Among other things, he was blamed for the death of a French prisoner-of-war general. Ribbentrop stood up and shouted:

-You scoundrels!

This led to him being told with particular precision how he had given the order to kill the prisoner of war and to mask

death as if it had been due to an accident. Ribbentrop adopted the attitude of someone who heard the name for the first time and did not know what he was talking about. In general, this was his attitude throughout the trial. Lacking the necessary intelligence to defend his policy in court, his attitude was that of someone who did not even understand why he was in court.

Shortly afterwards something happened to me with him that caused me no small surprise. I met Ribbentrop in the lift that took us to the trial room. He asked me:

-Why are you so unfriendly towards me? Don't you know that I saved your life?

It was my turn to ask:

-I beg your pardon?

-What he hears. Hitler wanted to send him to a concentration camp. I stopped him.

It was something I was hearing for the first time. I insisted:

-When did that happen? -You wrote a letter to Hitler in 1943 in which you considered the war with America a particular mistake," Ribbentrop added. That was why Hitler wanted to put you in a concentration camp, and Himmler took the necessary steps. I happened to be aware of what was being prepared and told Hitler that it was inadvisable for reasons of foreign policy and that it would cause a scandal which we could easily save ourselves.... That is why I am surprised that you treat me as an enemy.

On 29 November 1945, the American prosecution proceeded with the screening of a film shot by American war audits during the conquest of Germany. The courtroom was darkened and the defendants were illuminated by weak projectors that shone their light from below. On the floor, psychiatrists and psychologists tried not to miss a single one of our gestures and reactions.

We saw the arrival of the Allies in the concentration camps. Before us paraded piles of corpses, men covered in oedema from starvation, women with their hair cropped short and children undernourished. The horror and misery seemed to leap

from the screen in images that I still seem to be seeing. Only one remained unmoved. His gaze was fixed on the ground: Rudolf Hess, Hitler's surrogate. He played the role of apathetic disinterest.

At noon I told Goering:

-That's true. That's the whole truth.

He contradicted me:

-That film is a complete fake!

For many, those words represented a solution. They nodded silently and bent over their bowl of soup. For my part, I was unable to eat that day.

On the 108th day of the trial, Rudolf Hoss, former head of the Auschwitz concentration camp, was called as a witness for the prosecution. From the pre-sorting to the crematoria, Hoss described, with the meticulousness of an accountant, every detail of a fiendishly perfect system by which millions of men, women and children had been exterminated. His report did not impress all the accused equally. Many were still running from the truth. To them, Hoss was no more than a witness for the prosecution. But I knew all this from the

meeting of *gauleiter* in Posen, in 1944, when Himmler made us participants in the knowledge of the crime. For me, the statement of the head of Auschwitz was the whole truth.

In the long nights preceding my interrogation I had had time enough to meditate on my life and my relations with Hitler. I had at first believed in him blindly and had trained the German youth in that faith. Instinctively, I could not help thinking of that Party Congress in Nuremberg, when I said to him before a hundred thousand boys: "There is something greater than you, my Führer, which is the love of this youth for your person". But now I had to destroy this myth of Hitler, I had to prove to the youth that I had created a false idol for him. And that is how I decided to make that statement, which shocked world opinion and which I stand by today. At my interrogation on 24 May 1946, I said to the court:

-This has been the greatest and most satanic genocide in the history of the world. Hoss was only the executioner. It was Adolf Hitler who ordered the killings. He and Himmler were jointly the practical perpetrators of this crime which will forever remain a shameful stain on our history.

"But the German youth is innocent of what Hitler did to the German and Jewish people. They knew nothing about the extermination of the Jews and did not want such a crime.

"It is my fault, which I take upon myself before God and our nation, to have brought up the German youth to believe in Hitler, the man whom I judged blameless and who turned out to be a murderer of millions of human beings. I believed in Hitler; that is all I can say in exculpation. I alone am guilty; the German youth are innocent because they grew up in an anti-Semitic state, where racist policy was law. But the fact that an Auschwitz was possible makes the end of racist politics and anti-Semitism mandatory. Anyone who can continue to support them after Auschwitz is also guilty.

"Hitler is dead. I did not betray him, I did not take part in any conspiracy against him, and I fulfilled my duties as youth leader, officer and civil servant to the last moment. I was a National Socialist out of conviction from my youth and therefore also an anti-Semite. But I declare that Hitler's racist policy was a crime, which led to the destruction of five million Jews and to the shame of the German people.

There was a deep silence on the benches of the accused. When I resumed my seat between Raeder and Sauckel, Sauckel shook my hand and Raeder said:

-You are absolutely right!

Goering, who was not present that day because he was ill with influenza, read my statement into the minutes of the session which all the accused received daily. He commented to the other prisoners:

-I find Schirach's statement unworthy.

For fourteen days we did not exchange a word. But one day, shortly before the session began, he turned to me and said:

-Let's bury all that, Schirach. I know you are a patriot. But on that point we have different opinions. Anyway, let's not get angry in these last moments, before they hang us.

I was pleased with Goering's reaction, in whom I still saw a friend. Only a little later did it dawn on me what he had said: "...before they hang us". Had he, too, been impressed by Hoss's statement, and had he stopped believing in the Mediterranean island?

XXXIX

On 30 September and during the morning of 1 October 1946, the verdicts were read out and it was announced that the sentences would be made public in the afternoon.

For the last time, the twenty-one accused were seated in the cellar of the courthouse for the midday meal. There was great tension. Most of us were dejected and no one was talking about a purely formulaic sentence any more. We all looked at the places of Von Papen, Fritsche and Schacht. On each was a thick orange. Colonel Andrus had imagined another one of his own, in order to give special treatment to the three men who had been found innocent of all the charges against them.

Directly from the table we were taken to the room. From 14'50 to 15*13 o'clock each of us was informed of our sentence.

For the last time I got into the lift. I was accompanied by two M.P. The door closed behind us. For the last time I entered the courtroom. I sat alone on the defendants' bench. I adjusted my headphones in anticipation of the death sentence. I felt no nervousness whatsoever. The very long trial had dulled my feelings. I heard: sentenced to twenty years in prison. I took off my headphones, returned to the lift and was led back to my cell. Behind me, they closed the door.

Twenty years," I thought to myself, "Twenty years. I am now thirty-nine. Twenty years is also a death sentence".

But I didn't have much time to think: A young American officer came into the cell. I was transferred. On the way upstairs he said to me:

-Keitel and Jodl have been sentenced to death. They were officers. They carried out orders. What will become of us from now on? We too have been trained to carry out orders.

Who can rule on the justice of an order? Each one of us has, from now on, the noose around our necks.

I did not answer him. In fact, I could not say anything to him, as I was quite busy with myself.

I was on the first floor. My cell neighbours were Raeder, Doenitz, Hess, Funks, Speer and Neurath. The seven of us were the survivors.

Since we had been sentenced, I heard all the noises outside. I heard names being called out. The names of those condemned to death. Then I heard footsteps. Twice a day, the death row inmates went for a twenty-minute walk. They were handcuffed to a jailer and since the pronouncement of their sentence, they did not go out into the yard.

One night hammer blows sounded in the gymnasium. They lasted all night. The sentry at the door said to me:

-Soon they will hang them. They are already raising the gallows.

The hammering stopped. But the restlessness remained. That night I woke up suddenly. I didn't know what time it was. The whole prison was deathly silent.

The next morning, 16 October 1946, the German prison doctor came to me. I looked at him and said:

-They are all dead. The sentence has been served.

Dr. Pflucker nodded:

-Between 1.45 and 2.45 they hanged everyone except Goering. He committed suicide with cyanide. His jailer saw him break his pipe before he went to bed. Shortly afterwards she was in spasms. The jailer called the doctor, but it was too late.

There is still speculation as to who supplied Goering with the poison. I am sure that he hid the ampoule in his medium-sized pipe, thus evading all controls.

The day after the verdict was pronounced, the seven of us who were later transferred to Spandau began to serve our sentences. Our hair was cut short and we received black prisoner uniforms, cut and tailored by the Americans,

with buttons featuring the "starsand-stripes" emblem.

That morning, Hess, Speer and I were in charge of cleaning the gymnasium. A few hours earlier, our thirteen fellow defendants had been executed there.



Illustration 15. Spandau Prison Gate



Illustration 16. Von Schirach in the Spandau Courtyard

XL

-You pick up your things.

Major Teich, the American commandant of the prison, came into my cell.

-Tomorrow I have to take him to Berlin.

It was a day in June 1947, although I cannot pinpoint the exact date. It must have been in the second half of the month. I had for

in front of nineteen years and three months of imprisonment.

Each handcuffed to an I.G., we seven prisoners were driven at dawn to Nuremberg airport. When the aircraft took off, our handcuffs were removed. We were also allowed to talk to each other. After an hour and a half's flight, we landed in Berlin-Gatow. Again we were handcuffed to our respective G.I. We climbed into a cellular car which had been driven across the field to the foot of the very steps of the plane. We could not see where we were being taken. But when the car stopped after a few minutes, we sensed that we had reached our last station: the Allied prison in Berlin-Spandau.

As I was the closest to the exit, I had to jump the first one!

-Name? - a man in uniform asked me.

-Schirach.

-*Number one*, number one.

From that moment on we were just a number. There were no more names. I was followed by Grand Admiral Doenitz, Hitler's successor as Reich President. The G.I. had to help Von Neurath, the former Foreign Minister, who, at seventy-four, was the oldest among us, down. He was number three. He was followed by Raeder, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Navy ... number four; Speer, the Minister of Armaments and Production was number five, and the former Minister of Economics and President of the Bank of Germany, Funk, number six. Last to descend was the Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess, who received number seven. We were then taken in isolation to a reception cell. As I had the number one, I was called the first. I had to undress completely and was recognised in the sanitary department by four doctors, a Frenchman, a Russian, an Englishman and an American, who examined me from head to toe.

In the meantime, they changed the clothes I was wearing into an outfit consisting of a T-shirt, pants, woollen socks and a pair of straw slippers. This was the prisoner's uniform. The jacket and each trouser leg had a huge number on it.

in Arabic numerals, painted with white paint. Shortly afterwards I entered the cell block where I would live for almost twenty years.

-Number one," said the jailer, "Here is your cell: number thirteen.

It was small. Four and a half paces long by two and a half wide. A bed, a table and a W.C. with a water fall: that was all.

I had hardly had time to see him when the door opened again. Three guards came in and said almost in unison and in German: "Inspection.

They checked my jacket pockets and my trousers. Then they removed the bed. Each of them carried a small stick; one of them climbed onto the table and tapped on the bars that closed the window to check that they were not sawn off. When they left the cell, it was upside down. I started to tidy up a bit, but I had hardly got started when the door opened again. The English warden came in, preceded by a prison officer.

-Inspection," he said.

The Englishman looked around, looked at me and left the cell. There was some quiet, but it lasted only a few minutes. Then the American director came in. After him, the French director. I stood by the door. I told myself that only one could enter now: the Russian. In the corridor, someone said:

-Number four (was Reader) still has a golden wedding ring.

Finally the Russian director arrived. He didn't utter a single word either. He didn't even look at me, but pretended not to see me. I had hardly laid down on the bed when I heard someone shouting outside:

-Paseo!

The seven of us prisoners had to line up at the door of our cells, we were again subjected to a thorough search and after being led through endless corridors, we ended up in our cells.

in a small courtyard. For two hours our straw slippers went round and round in a circle. In front of me, the old man Von Neurath walked, bent over. It was difficult for him to hold on for so long.

We were taken back to our cells. Another search followed. The handkerchief had to be shown and the pockets of the trousers and jacket had to be turned. Again the cell was thoroughly searched and again the bars of the window were knocked on. Until lunchtime we had peace and quiet. Then we were given a ration of food, not badly prepared, but insufficient even for a child.

We went hungry for the first three years of our imprisonment. Since we knew that there was not much to eat on the other side of the prison walls either, we tried to accommodate ourselves to that. But by the end of 1949 we had reached such a point that Neurath had lost forty pounds. He was so weak that it was not possible for him to move a wheelbarrow in the garden.

One day the English director came down and asked one of the guards:

-What's wrong with the inmates sitting so apathetically?

-*Sir*," replied the guardian, "if they are not fed better, they will have to be buried here.

A medical commission then ruled that we were malnourished. After that investigation, the order came from Washington to feed us well. Suddenly there was fat at our disposal, for until then we had not seen a stick of butter. For the first time there was decent meat and real coffee. The Russian director soon protested against the food the Americans were feeding us, and ordered the rations to be reduced. But the American director, Major Miller, decided to personally supervise the food. For three weeks, at 6.45 in the morning, at 12 o'clock lunchtime and at five o'clock dinnertime, he was accompanied by a long, stick-thin American sergeant.

During the early years, prisoners were strictly forbidden to talk to each other. The only possibility of talking to someone was to fetch a book from the cell that served as a

library. Grand Admiral Raeder was a librarian. We were close friends. When he came to the cell in the evening, there was always a sentry at the door. I would ask Raeder about any book. And before he would answer me, I would quickly inquire:

-Have you heard from your wife? How is your son doing?

It was the French who considered the ban on speaking inhumane and allowed us, before the others, to speak to each other. I am sure none of the prisoners will forget that. It meant a lot to us to be able to speak to each other, even briefly. Especially when we had so many months of silence behind us: to know what the other prisoners' wives and children were doing, to know what they were thinking, what was tormenting their spirits at that time was a relief.

I remember very well how the French prison officer, Gerthofer, when he was leading us to work in the orchard, said to the other jailers in German (German was the language of service in Spandau among the Allies) the following:

-During the three days I am on duty, I will be allowed to speak.

The Russian guardian protested:

-Njet... that's against the rules.

Gerthofer replied:

-I take responsibility.

When we arrived in the orchard, the Russian forbade us to talk to each other. Suddenly, Gerthofer appeared and asked him:

-Your boss or mine?

-You," replied the Russian.

-If I'm the boss, you obey.

That settled the matter and we were able to talk to each other. Unfortunately, it was only for as long as the French command lasted.

Officially, the ban on speaking was not lifted until authorised by the ambassadors of the four powers in 1954. Later we also received newspapers, four in all, one for each zone. We were also very much involved in the work

and in the garden beds that we ourselves had laid out in the courtyard.

Only one remained the whole day leaning against the wall, without speaking or seeking contact with anyone. It was Rudolf Hess.

We worked eight hours a day. Until then I had never been interested in horticultural work. Over there it became a must. But at least the work brought us all together and we enjoyed the fresh air. We grew tomatoes, potatoes and strawberries. The first year I prepared a bed and sowed seeds of different flower varieties. When they blossomed, the Russian director protested:

-Flowers forbidden! Flowers out! We rake the land and grow potatoes.

The following year it was the turn of tomatoes. I came to have a hundred bushes. I was often assisted in watering by the great Admiral Doenitz. When we opened the hose, he would exclaim:

-Full steam ahead!

He was still speaking navy jargon.

My tomatoes were getting bigger and redder. There was a huge harvest. Baskets full, which every afternoon I put in a wheelbarrow to take them to the dunghill. It was forbidden for the inmates to eat them. The guards were not allowed to take them home either, even though they would willingly have done so. So the tomatoes were doomed to destruction. The same happened to Raeder with his strawberries, to Doenitz with his cucumbers and to the others with their potatoes.

During the first years we were occupied during the winter with other, no less useless jobs. Day after day we had to glue the 5,000 to 6,000 bags were burnt in the central heating at night. In the same way, up to the moment of liberation, the diaries and notebooks we kept were destroyed every fourteen days by order of the directors.

The two benches, which we had built ourselves, were situated at different ends of the garden, quite far from each other. One we called "the bench of the big one".

The other "U-boat command bridge". These names had their origin in the old rivalry between the two great admirals, Raeder and Doenitz. This rivalry had been born out during the war. Raeder then proposed that instead of strengthening a powerful submarine weapon, large naval units, especially combat ships and cruisers, should be built. But in the most decisive phase of the war, the big armatostars proved to be immovable, while the submarine weapon suffered from the lack of sufficient units. Raeder had to leave and Doenitz took his place. While all of us, including Hess himself, met to talk sometimes in the "big gun" and sometimes on the "U-boat bridge", Admirals Raeder and Doenitz continued to keep their distance.

For my part, I had a pleasant conversation with Raeder. The man always impressed me with his intelligence, his knowledge of the world and his convinced Christian spirit. Not a single day began for him without a corresponding prayer.

After one of our useless jobs, Raeder, Funk and I were sitting on the "gunboat bench". Raeder was explaining details of the navy's performance during the Second World War and the German attack on Norway. He said:

-It was a strategic necessity. I myself suggested the attack and the landing. The British fleet was ready and willing to do the same as us. But we got there first.

Funk then asked him:

-Tell me, Admiral, why didn't you attack England?

Raeder's response was then incomprehensible to me.

-At the end of the French campaign, the Navy received no attack orders.

Today I know that Hitler always encouraged the hope of an understanding with London and therefore did not hinder the withdrawal of the expeditionary force from Dunkirk to the islands.

Raeder continued:

-I, too, would have advised against such an order. We would have crashed into the inaccessible coastline.

English.

We were discussing the Russian campaign, when I ventured that we had broken the pact with the Russians by our attack, that the Russians were not ready for an attack, and that Hitler had undoubtedly been falsely informed by the "Abwehr" [\[49\]](#) [\[50\]](#) about the Russian offensive preparations. Raeder interrupted me:

-Please don't keep talking to me about Canaris. I never liked him. We in the Navy never had anything to do with him. There was something Balkan about him. He did a lot of unpleasant things to achieve his ends as a careerist...

It was in the following sentences that he made the sensational revelation:

-The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg must be charged to the Canaris account.

-I beg your pardon? - I interrupted him, "I thought it was some second-rate underling...."

-No," said Raeder. Canaris prepared that murder and managed to get himself appointed judge in the trial. In this way he was able to influence the investigation and to get the perpetrator, who had acted according to his orders, off scot-free. I give my word on all this.

I learned a great deal in the Spandau banks. On one occasion Funk explained how, as head of the "Reischbank", he settled the debts of the hierarchs by means of a special fund.

-Goebbels came every year. He took 150,000 to 200,000 marks. I also paid debts to Helldorf, President of the Berlin police, who belonged to the people of 20 July.

-But Hitler explained to me personally that he had also settled his debts," I said.

Funk did not seem surprised.

-I found out later. So you got paid twice. Imagine: I also paid debts to Gisevius.

I was shocked:

-The one who testified against us at Nuremberg?

-Yes, Schacht endorsed it to me. When I took over the Reich Bank, he told me: "I have an agent who is very valuable to the Bank. He transmits to me from Switzerland information about economic and financial problems". He also gave me a list of agents and I had to take charge of all of them. On the defendants' bench at Nuremberg, Schacht laughed after Gisevius' statement and said: "That was my man abroad.

One day Raeder took me aside, just as I was watering my splendid tomato field.

-What do you have with Doenitz? That guy is crazy.

I tried not to listen to the observation. Anyone who has been in a cell will no doubt be familiar with the psychosis of imprisonment and know how unexpected some reactions can be. So it was equally possible for me to understand Doenitz, who said to me during the walk:

-Now there is one president for West Germany and one for East Germany. And yet I am the only legitimate president of all Germans.

Or to understand Speer, who, after having quoted from an American book, said to me:

-There are three geniuses called Albert: Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer and Albert Speer.

It was only after a five-year imprisonment that Speer again insisted on the illusion he had already begun to foster at Nuremberg:

-You'll see: the Americans will get me out of here. They need me.

But the truth was that he too had to serve his sentence of twenty years' imprisonment to the last day.

XLI

The first to be released was the elderly former foreign minister, Von Neurath. He was suffering from angina pectoris and his days were numbered. The next was Grand Admiral Raeder. He appeared one morning in the toilets without being able to articulate his words clearly. I only understood him:

-I don't know what's wrong with me. It's hard for me to talk.

I therefore assumed that he had suffered an attack. It was, however, half a year before the orchard gate opened and a guard shouted:

-Number four!

The old man left without saying goodbye. He did not even suspect that he was going to be released. Grand Admiral Doenitz served his ten-year sentence. He was the third to leave.

My friend Funk had been suffering from cystitis for years. For months he had to stay in his cell. The French doctor, Professor Gerchard, treated him in a self-sacrificing manner. Even after he had been involved in a car accident that affected both his legs, the Frenchman had himself transferred to our cell block to help his patient Funk.

One day he was already better and was watching Hess, Speer and I working in the orchard. The door opened again and they said:

-Let number six come forward! Hess,
Speer and I were left behind.

In 1949, my wife separated from me. Since then I have been left with only my children, Angelika, Klaus, Robert and Richard. I have them to thank for the fact that I held out in Spandau until 1966. Through my letters I tried to help them wherever I could: my daughter in her training as a painter, my eldest son in his law studies, my second son, Robert, when he was a pupil and was determined to continue his studies, and my youngest son, to whom I suggested studying sinology.

Since 1955, we were allowed to write and receive one letter a week. About twelve hundred words per letter. In those three hundred for each son, they informed me of their progress and introduced me to their future wives and my daughter to her husband. I only saw them after the wedding. They did not accompany my children during the monthly visit, but had to do it on their own. The first personal contact between us was therefore a thirty-minute conversation in prison, in the presence of the prison guards.

The last years in Spandau were the most difficult for me. At the beginning of 1964 I suffered my first thrombosis. For the first time I was afraid that I would not be able to hold out to the end.

A few months later I lost the sight in my right eye. The first ophthalmologist of the British Army of the Rhine, Lieutenant Colonel Milne, was immediately flown to Berlin. The diagnosis was retinal detachment. Although a skilful operation was performed, it was not possible to preserve my vision. In the autumn of 1966 I experienced the first discomfort in my left eye. It was a year before I was due to serve my sentence and I feared that I would go blind at my children's side. I sat in my cell waiting for the doctors' decision.

In those days, Albert Speer took great care of me. He cleaned my cell and read me the newspapers, trying to fulfil my slightest wishes as far as prison regulations allowed.

One night Hess, too, came to my cell, carrying the *Berliner Zeitung* at an area in the eastern part of the country. I read that the Professor Meyer-Schwickerath from Essen had discovered a new operating system for retinal detachment. Klaus, my eldest son, contacted the professor at my request and immediately received an affirmative answer to his request. But the situation was unusual, because until then no German doctor had ever treated the prisoners in Spandau. The Allied ambassadors gave their approval, at the suggestion of the British. An examination was carried out at the "Westend" hospital in Berlin, after which Professor Meyer-Schwickerath decided:

-The operation has to be carried out within 14 days.

In the operating theatre awaited all the directors of Spandau, the chief medical officers of the Allies in Berlin, the interpreters, the nurses, and Professors Kleeberger and Meyer-Schwickerath. Military police sentries were stationed in the immediate room. After an injection under the eyeball, the operation began, which was explained by Professor Meyer-Schwickerath in fluent English to those present.

For my part, I listened to the professor's explanations as interested as they were. I knew that if he failed the operation, I would also lose the sight in my left eye.

In ten minutes everything was ready.

Six months later, the professor recognised me in Spandau. I was the first German to be allowed into the prison. The four directors watched our meeting. Their conclusion: everything was fine and the operation could be considered a success. Grateful, I shook hands with the man who had saved my life.

view.

Three days later, the directors' meeting was held: the inmate Von Schirach had shaken the hand of a visitor, thus contravening the regulations. As a result, I was forbidden to write the next letter to my people. When one of the directors informed me of this, I objected:

-Can there be any man in the world who would fail to shake the hand of the one who had restored the light to his eyes?

But in spite of everything, he kept on going and my children found out a week late that he was cured.

My release was still eight months away. On one of the following walks, Hess, with whom I had become quite friendly again in recent years, said to me:

-You see, Schirach, here is your answer. In view of the illnesses you have suffered, your two eye operations and the thrombosis, I always thought that the allies would put you on the spot.

freedom. But it was not yes. They are keeping him here until the last day. That's why I regret that they thwarted my suicide attempt then. I know they will keep me locked up until death.

It must indeed have been in 1960, when Hess tried to cut the veins in his wrists with a glass from his spectacles. He was discovered when he had already lost a lot of blood. As a result of this attempt, the lenses were replaced with plastic ones, but they were still removed every night.

For ten years, Hess had lived in complete isolation in Spandau. He avoided the other inmates, and after the ban on talking was lifted, he would not engage in conversation with anyone. When we received newspapers, he kept them away from him because they stunned him, he told me. While working in the garden, he would lean against the wall, deep in thought, or walk up and down with that stilted gait I had noticed in Nuremberg. Then he would groan as he clung to a tree or leaned against a wall. Apparently, he was suffering from painful spasms of the stomach. Sometimes he would moan for hours, and at night a nurse or doctor had to be called to give him an injection to help him sleep.

When there were still three of us prisoners in Spandau, I began to worry intensively about him. I told him about my children, what they had written to me, what I had just read in the newspapers. He became so interested in me that he started reading newspapers again. The next day, he was carrying some notes. On toilet paper he had written a few questions: Who is Dean Rusk, what role does De Gaulle play in European politics, what has the outcome of the Cuban crisis been?

He was once again beginning to take an interest in things and details he had long been distanced from. He asked the library for books on economics. He read all of Röpke and wanted to know as many details as possible about Erhard's economic miracle. But when it came to reliving with him the things of the past, he fell back into the void. He confused everything. There were many things in Rudolf Hess's life that he did not want to remember. When I told him

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- [1] Court Theatre (*N. of the T.*)
- [2] Literally "birds of passage". This name was taken by students who travelled the country on foot as hikers. (*N.*)
- [3] People's Army (*N.*)
- [4] Army of 100,000 men imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles (*N. of the T.*)
- [5] The first Munich attempt referred to above.
- [6] Head of a province or "Gau". (*N. ,del T.*)
- [7] "In good German. (*N. of the T.*)
- [8] Typical statue of the University of Munich: "Lance Bearer".
- [9] Ritual student duels (*N. of the T.*)
- [10] German Workers' Party (*N.*)
- [11] "Dolchstoss" term very used those years by the propaganda and German nationalist propaganda in general. (*N. of the T.*)
- [12] "Cult of warlordism" in its literal translation. (*N. of the T.*)
- [13] German national anthem (*N. of the T.*)
- [14] Editorial in the "Stürmer". (*N. of the T.*)
- [15] "Bund Deutsche Mädchen": women's organisation of the Hitler Youth ()
- [16] "National Socialist Letters".
Red flag (*N. of the T.*)
- [18] "German Peace Society.
- [19] Supreme Commander of the National Socialist Assault Sections.
- [20] Volunteers in military units who were involved in anti-communist action in the immediate post-war period.
- [21] Senate Chamber.
- [22] Head of the Eastern Region S.A. (*N. of the T.*)
- [23] First words of the "Horst Wessel Lied" or National Socialist hymn.
- [24] "Principle of warlordism. (*N. of the T.*)

- [25] National Socialist ritual cry. Something like: "Victory salute".
- [26] Popular abbreviation for "Schutz polizei", i.e. guards.
- [27] National Socialist Party Anthem (*N.S.*)
- [28] "German Studentate". (*N. of the T.*)
- [29] Youth hiking groups (*N. of the T.*)
- [30] Main newspaper organ of the National Socialist Party.
- [31] There is an untranslatable play on words here. Journey, in German, is "Reise". In saying "Reissmarschall", the pronunciation is similar to "Reichmarschall", meaning "Reich Marshal". (*N. of the T.*)
- [32] "The Movement". (*N. of the T.*)
- [33] The 100,000-strong army from the Treaty of Versailles.
- [34] Bavarian People's Party (*N.*)
- [35] Party Transport (*N. of the T.*)
- [36] Official abbreviation for Hitler Youth.
- [37] Intranslatable couplet: "In Lippe, in Lippe steht alies auf der Kip-pe". (*N.*)
- 8
- [38] German Girls League (*N. of T.*)
- [39] Greater Germany League. Right-wing extremist, but not National Socialist, organisation.
- [40] Sozialistische Partei Deutschland: social democratic party, restored in 1945.
- [41] "Quiet guests". (*N. of the T.*)
- [42] Schutztaffel: i.e. SS, according to the common abbreviation.
Crystal Night (*N. of the T.*)
- [43] Eastward march (*N. of the T.*)
- [44] Abbreviation for "Gross Deutschland", "Greater Germany". (*N. of T.*)
- [45] Secret Court (*N. of T.*)
- [46] Symbolic personification of the Jew. Something like the American "Uncle Sam" or the English "John Bull".
- [47] A kind of people's militia that never became effective.
- [48] Espionage service, headed by Admiral Canaris.
- [49] Communist leaders murdered during the Weimar era.
- [50]