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The Complete HITLER

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

Max Domarus



Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc.
Wauconda, Illinois USA

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

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HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations

VOLUME IV

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations

1932-1945

Volume I 1932-1934

Volume II 1935-1938

Volume III 1939-1940

Volume IV 1941-1945

MAX DOMARUS

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations

1932–1945

and

Commentary by a Contemporary

THE CHRONICLE OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME FOUR
The Years 1941 to 1945



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1932-1945
AND COMMENTARY BY A CONTEMPORARY
VOLUME IV: THE YEARS 1941-1945

GENERAL EDITOR
LADISLAUS J. BOLCHAZY

in collaboration with
WOLFGANG DOMARUS
JAMES T. McDONOUGH, JR.
ZAIDA MIKELADZE
ALBERT M. DEVINE
PATRICK ROMANE
GABBY HUEBNER

TYPOGRAPHY BY
DOMINIC ROBERTI

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Abbreviations

A	= Archiv
AFR	= American Foreign Relations (Documents 1939-1945)
BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BDM	= Bund Deutscher Mädel
BVP	= Bayerische Volkspartei (Bavarian People's Party)
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DBrFP	= Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1918-1939
DGFP	= Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945
DLV	= Deutscher Luftsportverband (German Air Sports Association)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
DNVP	= Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party)
DVP	= Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party) Emergency Relief Organization)
FHQu	= Führer Hauptquartier (Führer Headquarters)
G.Kdos.	= Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
H	= Heft (issue, of serial publication)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HKL	= Hauptkampflinie (Main Front Line)
Hqu	= Hauptquartier (headquarters)
HStA	= Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich (Head State Archive, Munich)
HVBL	= Heeresverordnungsblatt (Army Decree Gazette)
IMT	= International Military Tribunal, 1945-1949
KdF	= Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through joy")
KPD	= Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
NRK	= Neue Reichskanzlei (New Reich Chancellery)

Abbreviations

NS	= Nationalsozialistisch (National Socialist)
NSBO	= Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization)
NSD	= Nationalsozialistische(r) Deutsche(r) (German National Socialist)
NSDAP	= Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Worker's Party)
NSDFB	= Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund, Stahlhelm (National Socialist German Front-Line Soldiers' Association)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSV	= Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization)
OKH	= Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKL	= Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (High Command of the Luftwaffe)
OKM	= Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine (High Command of the War Navy)
OKW	= Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
PL	= Politischer Leiter (Political leader)
PO	= Politische Organisation (Political organization)
RAD	= Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service)
RGBl	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RK	= Reichskanzlei (Reich Chancellery)
RM	= Reichsmark
RSHA	= Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Central Security Office)
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SPD	= Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
STA	= Staatsarchiv (State Archive)
TN	= Technische Nothilfe (Technical
TU	= Telegraphenunion (Telegraph Union)
VB	= <i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> (Nationalist Observer)
WHW	= Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organization)
WTB	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolff's Telegraph Bureau)

THE YEAR 1941

Major Events in Summary

“The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history,” declared Hitler in his New Year’s order to the Wehrmacht.¹ Twelve months ago, on the occasion of the New Year, he had said: “May 1940 be decisive!”² What were the German Wehrmacht and the German people supposed to understand as the completion “of the greatest victory”? Earlier, “the greatest victory” was the defeat of France. At any rate, on June 24, 1940, Hitler announced “the most glorious victory of all times.”³

If the greatest victory was still to be completed, it should have implied the defeat of England. But Hitler implied something different; in particular, the defeat of Russia! In this way, England would have automatically become ready for peace and friendship. Hitler remained almost alone with this theory. There was not a single more or less sensible person to be found in the whole country that would, in that situation in Germany and in the middle of the war against England, have wished to have any military disagreements with the Soviet Union, and would have supported it or at least considered it a necessary evil. Even the members of the party, who had been fed for years with anti-Bolshevik and anti-Russian slogans, knew that a war against Russia would by no means improve Germany’s prospects for victory, but would most probably make them worse as a result of opening a new front. They considered Hitler’s German-Russian settlement of 1939 as a deed of genius, and they based their new plans for victory on it. On September 9, 1939, Göring had confirmed them in these convictions.⁴ It is known that military men had been dreaming of German-Russian cooperation since World War I. There were close and friendly relationships between the Army of the Reich and the Red Army. Many German high-ranking officers had acquired their knowledge of modern weapons in Russian military schools and training grounds.

If Hitler’s generals fulfilled Hitler’s orders and without any special objections prepared the plans of the Russian campaign, they weren’t doing it sincerely; on the contrary, they hoped that it would be another

of Hitler's tricks, like the operations Sealion and Felix, with the aim of undertaking a distracting maneuver to disguise other plans. Of all the reasons that Hitler set forth in favor of war against Russia, the generals accepted only one argument: something must be done to engage the German army, because an army that has nothing to do is subject to demoralization, as happened to the "Blue Jackets" in 1918.⁵

As has already been mentioned, on December 27, 1940, Raeder expressed "quite great doubts" concerning the campaign against Russia before the defeat of England.⁶ On another occasion, Göring had tried in vain to talk Hitler out of that undertaking, basing himself on Hitler's own words "the second front."⁷ Ribbentrop, who had been imbued with sympathy toward the Russians after his visit to Moscow, met them like "old party comrades" and might have wished anything but war against Russia. Hess, who had known Hitler for decades and was able better than anyone else to trace the tendency of his decline, was determined to disappear from Germany before the campaign against Russia started.

Halder, Chief of Hitler's General Headquarters, who was to work out the plan of hostilities against Russia, said after World War II that he had considered that project insanity.

Wherever one glanced in Germany, Hitler's idea of the campaign against Russia was faced disconcertedly and coldly by everyone, except one, and only one, man: Herr von Papen! Hitler's statements about Bolshevik dangers impressed him as much as they had in 1933.

Von Papen, for his part, tried to support Hitler in his attitude against Russia, presenting as dangerous every concession in the Bulgaria-Turkey case, and told him in the middle of November 1940:

"After all, didn't we determine on January 30, 1933, to protect Germany and thus the whole of Europe from Bolshevism?"⁸

These words certainly served Hitler's purpose. They confirmed the effectiveness of his old trick about the Bolshevik danger. If it was still possible to impress that idea upon von Papen, a representative of the rigid, conservative, aristocratic stratum of Germany, then it should certainly impress similarly rigid Englishmen. They too would start worshipping him if he attacked Bolshevik Russia, as once did von Papen, Hindenburg, Hugenberg, and others, when he exterminated the German Communists. The savior and master of Germany will rise to become the Savior and Master of the whole of Europe and the whole world!

Von Papen fully shared Hitler's idea that war against Russia was the best means of achieving peace and friendship with England. When on June

22, 1941, the German army launched hostilities against Russia, von Papen made an attempt, through intermediaries, to influence the British ambassador in Ankara, proposing “to bury the European discords and to confront jointly the power whose program is the extermination of the West.”⁹

Von Papen, just like Hitler, could hardly realize that the English were absolutely immune to the horrors of Bolshevism, and that on June 22, 1941, Churchill would declare: “We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing.”

Such was the situation in which Hitler found himself after September 3, 1939, at 11 o'clock, and which wouldn't change a bit up to his death on April 30, 1945, even if he had used every possible evasion.

It is therefore out of place to ask whether Hitler's fate might have taken a different turn if he hadn't attacked Russia, if he had defeated her, or if he had induced Russia to join in Germany's campaign against England.

In each of these three cases, Hitler's fate would have been exactly the same, though—at any rate, the war would certainly have lasted longer. But Hitler would never have managed to resist for long the joint pressure of the Anglo-American world, even if he had been able to rely not only on Russia's friendly assistance, but also on her active military support. His end had been predestined since September 3, 1939, and he could but slow it down or speed it up. And he obviously speeded it up when he decided to attack Russia.

His decision can be considered as incomprehensible, taking into account all the historically well-known defeats suffered by Charles XII and Napoleon I, taking into account the war that had become fateful for Germany on its two fronts in World War I, a policy which was willfully renewed by Hitler. That decision of his is explained by Germany's centuries-old urge to push east for conquest and expansion. One may point out that Hitler, like Napoleon, also failed to deal with the British Navy, that, throughout the whole war-history of Germany, the Germans had hardly ever prepared for and even more rarely risked an attempt at any naval operations, and, finally, that the campaign, against Russia seemed both to Napoleon and to Hitler, with their purely Continental, one-sided military thinking, to be an easy undertaking, a

convenient plundering raid that would free them from the obligation to admit their weakness in respect to England.

All those factors doubtlessly played a certain role in generating Hitler's Russian adventures. But one shouldn't forget one absolutely decisive circumstance: Hitler had become a prisoner of his own thesis of 1919, which declared: Conquest of new territories in the east—that means war against Russia, and, with that purpose, friendship with England and Italy, Germany's alleged allies in her push to the east.

Hitler managed to arrange and maintain friendship with Italy, in spite of some difficulties. However, he failed to become friendly with England. What else could he do, except to implement his third thesis, war against Russia, in order to realize miraculously, as a sort of reward, the second thesis, friendship with England?

Indeed, Hitler felt rather uneasy about his Russian campaign. All the doubts expressed by his subordinates—two fronts, the unsolved problem of England, the United States, Napoleon's fate, a vast territory that would be hard to keep under control even in case of success—all these questions worried him as well, and after the war against Russia had begun, he said: "Every such step opens a door behind which a mystery lies hidden, and only posterity knows exactly how it came about and what happened."¹⁰

During a long and hard winter, Hitler was almost constantly engaged in preparation for Operation Barbarossa, in measures that couldn't remain hidden from the German public. There were not only the great transfer of the troops to East Prussia, to the provinces of Poland and Slovakia, the constant training of reservists, and so on, but also the formation of numerous motorized columns that moved all over Germany and turned even small towns and villages into garrisons and sources of supply. What was the destination of these columns that were being equipped with the help of all the automobile repair-shops of Germany? Clearly not England! The action was conducted under the abbreviations STI (probably, the letters stood for SOWJETUNION, Soviet Union). This action, STI, worried the population more than any other rumors, and the party functionaries themselves did not know what they were to say. Was it possible that Hitler was planning such a mad undertaking as an invasion of Russia? Finally an explanation was found which, later on, nevertheless turned out to be false. The letters STI must have stood for "Syria, Turkey, Iraq," so it meant a relatively

harmless, bloodless action of eliminating English influence in the Near East!

The party leaders took ever further steps to calm down not only the people, but also themselves. They would declare quite seriously that Russia was going soon, of her own good will, to cede the Ukraine to Germany. Realizing that Russia had too much land and Germany had too little, Russia, as a token of German-Russian friendship, proclaimed herself ready for that step, which might be compensated later and elsewhere from British colonial properties. These ideas may seem funny or unbelievable today, but at that time they were expressed with a confident tone and showed the confusion reigning in party circles. Little Switzerland might just as well have demanded from the great Reich to cede, for instance, Allgäu.

Before Hitler could start his Operation Barbarossa,¹¹ he had to clean up the Balkans and liquidate his friend Mussolini's Greek adventures. At the end of February he made King Boris give his consent to German entry into Bulgaria, and on March 1 Boris managed to join the Tripartite Pact.

On March 25, in Vienna, the Pact was signed by representatives of the Yugoslav government. But Hitler wasn't destined to rejoice for long over it. On March 27, the Zvetkovitch government was overthrown. Prince Regent Paul was replaced by the young King Peter.

Hitler understood at once what that revolt meant and decided instantly to crush Yugoslavia. On April 6, German troops attacked Yugoslavia and Greece without warning; German aircraft bombarded Belgrade.

This campaign in the Balkans lasted only a few weeks. On May 4, Hitler could once more declare victory in front of the Reichstag. On May 10, Hess secretly fled to England and Hitler made a controversial announcement about that embarrassing incident.

On May 20, Hitler launched an exceedingly pointless attack on the island of Crete with the help of airborne divisions. The operation lasted until June 1 and resulted in disproportionately heavy losses.

On May 27, the English sank the German battleship *Bismarck*, which had ventured to attack British naval forces in the Atlantic Ocean.

Early in June, a revolt in Iraq supported by Germany collapsed, and once again the English became masters of the situation more than ever. In the meantime, American troops occupied Greenland.

Everything began on June 22: a powerful attack extending from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea began. It was the same date on which Napoleon had attacked Russia, but Hitler had not the slightest idea of that. He chose the day because it was Sunday, and the attack could advance with particular suddenness.

A few weeks later, it already became clear that Hitler's prognoses about the nature and duration of the war had been wrong. In spite of the brutality of the combat operations, the armies failed to deal with the "primitive" Russians. Even though hundreds of thousands of prisoners were taken and vast territories were captured, it didn't help achieve the cherished goal—to conquer Leningrad or Moscow. In the Ukraine and the Crimea, they also advanced more slowly than had been envisaged. August came, then September, yet no capitulation of Russia presented itself. Gradually, Hitler found himself in the situation he had had with England, and, in the end, he had to insist that the war against Russia was won, although the facts clearly proclaimed the opposite.

On October 3, in a speech in Berlin, he said: "I am saying this today because I can say today that the enemy is already broken and shall never rise again."¹² A day before, in spite of the onset of a cold spell, Hitler had given orders to start a new offensive toward Moscow, "the last, great blow" which was to destroy the enemy before winter set in.¹³

But November came, then December, and the German troops hadn't yet conquered Moscow. On the contrary, the Russians started an offensive from Moscow and threw the exhausted and frozen Germans back to the west. On the Black Sea, too, the Russian troops started an offensive towards Taganrog.

On the night of December 8, Hitler sat worried in his armchair when he received the news of the Japanese air raid upon Pearl Harbor. He jumped up as if electrified and decided that it was a turning point of destiny. He urgently convened a meeting of the Reichstag, and, on December 11, passports were handed to the American envoy "in accordance with the terms of the Tripartite Pact." It was the only formal declaration of war by Hitler, and it was meant particularly for the United States of America.

So ended the year 1941—which, according to Hitler's words, was to bring "the completion of the greatest victory in German history"—with a catastrophic situation in the political and military spheres. Germany found herself in a state of war against nearly everyone, at least against

The March East

the most powerful states of the world. Her military forces were dispersed and scattered over a vast territory.

Of course, now it was necessary to find a scapegoat on whom to blame all Hitler's failures, and it was the commander in chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. Hitler dismissed him on December 19 on the ground of a "heart condition," and took up the duties of commander in chief of the army himself. As during every other crisis of the past—the Pfeffer-“Osaf” crisis of 1930, the Strasser crisis of 1932, the Blomberg crisis of 1938—Hitler used this opportunity to strengthen his full power. At last, he could be in command of his troops alone. He had been angry with von Brauchitsch when the latter, in the course of the western campaigns, gave orders to some divisions that differed from what the Supreme Commander in Chief had wished.¹⁴ He didn't want any advisers or critics: nobody who would understand things better than he! It wasn't by chance that he had said:

“I have no experts! My own head is always quite enough for me! I don't need any brain trust to support me!”¹⁵

January 1, 1941

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler issued the following order of the day (*Tagesbefehl*) to the Wehrmacht at the beginning of 1941:¹⁶

Berlin, January 1, 1941

Soldiers!

In the war year 1940, the National Socialist Wehrmacht of the Greater German Reich has secured glorious victories of unique greatness. With unprecedented daring, it has defeated the enemy on land, at sea, and in the air. All tasks which I was forced to place before you, you fulfilled with your heroism and your soldierly expertise. The power of your arms secured the victory over the fighting forces of our enemy. Your proud attitude and exemplary discipline demoralized the occupied territories excellently.

And so, thanks to your soldiership, after a few months of struggle with an impact of world-historic importance, success was bestowed retrospectively on the futile heroic struggle of the German Wehrmacht in the World War, and, finally, the shame of defeat back then in the forest of Compiègne has been eliminated.

As your supreme commander, I thank you, soldiers of the army, navy, and Luftwaffe, for your unrivaled accomplishments.

I also thank you in the name of the entire German Volk.

We honor our comrades who had to give their lives in this struggle for the future of our Volk. We likewise honor the valiant soldiers of our ally, Fascist Italy.

It is the will of the democratic warmongers and their Jewish-capitalist masterminds that this war should go on. The representatives of a crumbling world believe they can achieve in the year 1941 what they failed to obtain in the past. We are ready. Armed as never before, we stand on the threshold of the new year. I know every single one of you will do his duty.

The Lord God will not abandon those who, with a valiant heart, are determined to help themselves in view of the threats of the whole world. Soldiers of the National Socialist Wehrmacht of the Greater German Reich!

The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history.

Adolf Hitler

January 1, 1941

The New Year's Proclamation began with the following words:¹⁷

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

A momentous year in German history has come to an end. The enormous uniqueness of the events and their revolutionary significance for the future development of mankind will be fully acknowledged only by later generations. We who live the history of this time cannot but help feel that the workings of Providence are stronger than the intentions and the will of individuals. The gods not only strike him with blindness whom they wish to destroy, but they also help him whom Providence calls upon to strive for goals far from his original desire.

This New Year's Proclamation was extraordinarily lengthy. Hitler reiterated the history of the period leading up to the war, then spoke of the conquest of Poland, once more underlining that it had taken only "eighteen days." Finally, he turned to the events of 1940: the victories in Norway, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and France. He emphasized: "The year 1940 has brought about decisions on a scale and at a pace unknown to the history of nations."

Subsequently, he scoffed at the British troops, declaring the following:

When British propagandists try to make the situation look as though France needlessly stopped fighting, then all one can say to this claim is that the first units which stopped fighting were British divisions. From the moment we attacked in the west, the British army had just one thought: to evacuate the continent speedily and to assure the necessary cover by the Dutch, the Belgians, and the French. Just as they regarded the Norwegian army as a colonial force for their retreat a few weeks before, so now with their allies in France and Belgium. When the French government asked for peace, there were no more French troops, and, above all, there had not been English ones for a long time.

Once Hitler had described how, after the campaign in the west, he had again approached England with the request to end this "senseless war," he threatened the English rulers with ultimate destruction. He would destroy them just as he had destroyed "certain circles" at home. He would take them severely to task—this was his "relentless decision."

Thus, the war will be continued until the destruction of the responsible elements! The German Wehrmacht has proved that it is good enough. That it will be better yet in the coming months is our resolve. This resolve will be realized with zealous thoroughness and untiring diligence.

The year 1941 will see the German army, the German navy and Luftwaffe step up enormously reinforced and with improved equipment. The last of the

January 1, 1941

war criminals will collapse under its blows, and thus the prerequisites for a true understanding among nations will be created.

National Socialists! You know the history of our struggle at home. Here, too, certain circles had to be destroyed first, before true cooperation among the people in our country could begin. Regrettably, it is no different abroad. The war profiteers must be eliminated, they who for decades have introduced restlessness into this world and have plunged nations into crisis after crisis.

It is our relentless decision (*unerbittlicher Entschluss*) to sit in judgment upon them, so that Europe can find its peace of mind again. Whatever may happen, Germany will take the necessary steps to reach this goal with bold determination. Any power which dines with these democrats will die of doing so. If Mr. Churchill and his international democratic comrades today declare that they are defending their world, and that their world cannot coexist with ours, then this is their own bad luck. The German world, as well as the Italian world, has overcome the age of the privileges of a few plutocratic capitalists and has replaced it with the age of the people. If Mr. Churchill and his appendage now declare that they cannot live in such a world, then they will not destroy the German world as a result, but instead, sooner or later, their own leaders will fall and thus give the people their freedom.

In the struggle of plutocratic privilege against the National Socialist people's rights (*Volksrechte*), the latter will succeed! With this belief, we enter the year 1941.

Since early June of this [*sic*] year, Fascist Italy stands at our side. It is now as determined as we are to take up the struggle and to see it through, the struggle which an obtuse democratic upper class has taken care to explain, especially to the Italian people. Their struggle is our struggle, their hopes are ours. The belief of the warmongers that they can change the outcome of this struggle through individual action is childish. Mr. Churchill has already secured a great number of so-called victories which proved to be failures in the end. After all, Mr. Churchill was the man who invented unrestricted air warfare as the great secret weapon of British victory.

For three-and-a-half months, this criminal had German cities bombed in nightly raids, had firebombs dropped on country villages, and—as the inhabitants of the capital of the Reich know—had singled out hospitals as targets. That the German Wehrmacht did not reply to this provocation reinforced the belief in the brain of this man that he had finally discovered a method in which Germany was inferior, and to which the Wehrmacht had nothing to give by way of answer. I watched this human cruelty, which militarily made no sense, for three months. However, I warned time and time again that one day there would be retribution.

While the preceding months had made clear that the Luftwaffe was incapable of defeating the Royal Air Force or realizing the threat of “retribution,” Hitler still maintained that for every British bomb “ten or, if necessary, a hundred” German bombs would be dropped in return.

January 1, 1941

The democratic arsonists had only their familiar laughter left for these warnings. They spoke of a "lovely war," which made one "cheerful," and on which one "could only be congratulated." In detail, they described the effect of their bombs on the German population, on the German economy, and so forth. Now, the only effect of these attacks was the increasing embitterment of the German Volk; the hope that one day there would be retribution; the decision of the leadership to break with this unilateral conduct of the war. In the month of May, England started its attacks on the city of Freiburg.¹⁸ In the months since, British warmongers have scoffed at Germany's inability to do something similar. Since mid-September, [however,] they have probably realized that it was on humanitarian grounds that we refrained for so long from replying to this crime à la Churchill (*Churchillschen Verbrechen*). Now, however, this war will be pursued to the bitter end: that is, until the criminals responsible for it have been eliminated.

And this is not just empty talk—we are deadly serious when we say that for every bomb ten or, if necessary, a hundred will be dropped in return. Today, temporarily, they may still talk of "a reversal in the fortunes of war" for reasons of propaganda, as they have done so many times before. However, they should not forget one thing: fortune will not win the battle in this war; ultimately, justice will win.

And justice is on the side of those nations that fight for their threatened existence. And this struggle for existence will spur these nations on to the most tremendous accomplishments in world history. If profit is the driving force for production in the democracies—a profit that industrialists, bankers, and corrupt politicians pocket—then the driving force in National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy is the realization by millions of laborers that, in this war, it is *they* who are being fought against. They realize that the democracies, if they should ever win, would rage with the full capitalist cruelty, that cruelty of which only those are capable whose only god is gold, who know no human sentiments other than their obsession with profit, and who are ready to sacrifice all noble thought to this profit instinct without hesitation.

National Socialist Germany, Fascist Italy, and allied Japan know that what is at stake in this war is not a form of government. It is not a question of some type of international structure for the future, but it is a question of whether this world belongs only to certain people and not also to others.

An American politician coined the clever saying that, basically, this struggle is nothing other than an attempt by the have-nots to obtain something. That's all right with us. While the outside world is setting about to steal from the have-nots the little that they possess, we confront the world of ownership with the decision to fight for the human rights of the have-nots and to secure for them that share in life to which these rights entitle them.

This struggle is not an attack on the rights of other nations, but on the arrogance and avarice of a narrow capitalist upper class, one which refuses to acknowledge that the days are over when gold ruled the world, and that, by contrast, a future is dawning when the people will be the determining force in the life of a nation.

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It was this realization that lent wings to the National Socialist armies last year. And it will also help them triumph in the coming year. By fighting for the happiness of all people, we believe we most deserve the blessings of Providence. Until now, the Lord God has approved our struggle. If we perform our duties loyally and bravely, then He will not forsake us in the future either!

Adolf Hitler

This last sentence was not without qualification: should the Lord God no longer accord His blessings to the struggle, then this would be because the Germans had not “loyally and bravely” performed their duties!

Due to the war, the New Year’s reception of the diplomatic corps was canceled. Hitler sent the following telegram to his friend Mussolini:¹⁹

As we begin this new year, I think of you, Duce, in heartfelt solidarity. The coming year will see National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy fight to the final defeat of the enemy with unshakable faith and iron determination. In this spirit, I send you my greetings, Duce.

Adolf Hitler

It was further made public that a “heartfelt” exchange of telegrams between Hitler and King Victor Emmanuel III had taken place.²⁰

At the beginning of the new year, Hitler also wrote a long letter to the Duce, giving a general overview of the situation.²¹ Ciano summarized the letter in the following words:

The Führer is confident about the future prospects of the war, but he thinks that many decisions are still necessary and he enumerates them with his usual precision.

On January 7, Hitler sent Gauleiter Wächtler a telegram from the Obersalzberg, congratulating him on his fiftieth birthday.²² Wächtler also received the Führer’s picture in a silver frame.

On January 8 and 9, there were conferences at the Berghof, which Raeder, Keitel, Jodl, and other officers attended.²³ Once again, Hitler tried to whet their appetite for the campaign in Russia. Among other things, he declared the following:

Russia’s position in the event of Germany’s forthcoming entry into Bulgaria is not yet clear. Russia needs Bulgaria as access to the Bosphorus. England is supported by hope in the United States and Russia.

If the United States and Russia enter the war, [it will create] a very great burden for our military. So, any possibility of such a threat must be precluded from the start. Having eliminated the threat from Russia, we will be able to

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continue the war against England under quite acceptable conditions. The break-up of Russia would be a great relief for the United States.

Hitler appeared extraordinarily optimistic, as Raeder noted the following:

The Führer is absolutely convinced that the situation in Europe can no longer take an unfavorable turn for Germany, even if we should lose the whole of North Africa.

The English can win the war only if they strike us on the Continent. The Führer considers that absolutely impossible.

This was also the tenor of the talks on January 9. In the course of an afternoon meeting, Hitler gave the following assessment of the situation:

[He says that] a landing in England would be possible only if we have achieved full supremacy in the air, and in England a certain paralysis would set in. The purpose of the English war is, in the long run, to crush Germany on the Continent. But their own forces are insufficient. The British Navy is weaker than ever as a result of engaging in battles in two theaters of war operations located at a great distance from each other; its strengthening to the extent needed is impossible. For the British Air Force, the existing shortage of its supply of raw materials, especially aluminum, owing to canceled imports, and the effect of the German air and naval war on English industry have become painfully obvious; the aircraft industry itself has been so damaged that the number of airplanes produced has not been increased, but reduced. This damage must be continued by the German Air Force even more regularly than up to now. As far as the British troops are concerned, it is absolutely out of the question to consider them as an invading army. The only thing that supports England is her hope in the United States and Soviet Russia,²⁴ because in time the extermination of the English motherland is inevitable. However, England hopes to hang on until a great Continental bloc is brought down upon Germany. The diplomatic preparations for this are clearly recognizable.

[He says that] Stalin, the master of Russia, has a shrewd head. He doesn't take an open stand against Germany; however, one should expect that he would increasingly create troubles in a difficult situation for Germany. He is willing to inherit an impoverished Europe; he has all the necessary prerequisites for that, and he is full of enthusiasm to push to the west. He is well aware of the fact that after Germany's absolute victory, the Soviet Union's position will become extremely difficult.

[He says that] the possibility of Russian intervention in the war bolsters the English. They will give up this contest only when their Continental hope dies out.

He doesn't believe that the English will be "recklessly brave"; if they see that there is no possibility of victory, they will stop. So, if they lose the war,

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they will have no power left to keep their empire together. Should they persist and succeed in deploying forty to fifty divisions, and if the United States and Russia help them, then a very serious situation would arise for Germany. It must not happen.

So far, he would always act on the principle of smashing the most important positions of the enemy in order to take the next step. Therefore, Russia must be crushed. Then either the English would surrender, or Germany would continue the struggle in favorable conditions for Germany. Besides, the smashing of Russia would enable Japan to turn itself with all its strength against the United States. This would prevent the latter from joining in the war.

On January 10, a further German-Russian economic agreement was signed. The Russians did their utmost to satisfy the German demands for the delivery of goods.

On the Obersalzberg the next day, Hitler signed Directive No. 22:²⁵

The situation in the Mediterranean area, where England is engaging her superior forces in battle against our allies, requires strategic, political, and psychological support from Germany.

Tripolitania must be secured; the danger of a collapse of the Albanian front will be eliminated. In addition, Army Group Cavallero²⁶ must be enabled to go on the offensive from Albania in connection with further operations of the Twelfth Army.

Hence, I order the following: [technical details follow]

On January 20, the two operations received the code names "Sunflower" (*Sonnenblume*), on account of the hot climate in North Africa, and "Alpine Violet" (*Alpenveilchen*), since a division of mountain troops was involved in the taking of mountainous Albania.²⁷

On January 12, Hitler, who remained at the Führer headquarters, which was now located at the Berghof, sent an honorific diploma to the Bavarian general, Theodor von Bomhard, on his hundredth birthday. Colonel General Halder personally presented the document to the general in Prien. It read as follows:²⁸

Führer Headquarters, January 12, 1941

In the name of the German Volk: I award the right to wear the uniform of Artillery Regiment 7 with the insignia of the rank of general to the designated Artillery General von Bomhard, who last served as commander of the Fourth Bavarian Infantry Division.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

January 20, 1941

On the same day, Göring received a congratulatory telegram from Hitler on his forty-eighth birthday, the contents of which were not made public.²⁹

In Tokyo, the German ambassador, Ott, presented the Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka with the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.³⁰

On January 13, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria at the Berghof.³¹

On January 16, Hitler ordered a wreath to be placed on the coffin of an old party comrade, Emil Gansser, in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.³²

On January 19, a two-day meeting between Hitler and Mussolini began in Salzburg at the Berghof. Several diplomatic maneuvers had been necessary to induce Mussolini to appear before Hitler, as he feared Hitler's reaction to the Italian defeats in Albania and North Africa.³³

As the Italian's train reached the small station Puch near Salzburg on January 19, Hitler appeared most congenial and extended a warm welcome to the Duce. He neither reproached his "friend" for the miserable situation in which he found himself, nor did he express any sympathy for him. The first consultations began immediately after Mussolini's arrival. As the Duce told Ciano that day:³⁴

. . . he [Mussolini] found a very anti-Russian Hitler, loyal to us, and not too definite on what he intends to do in the future against Great Britain. In any case, it is no longer a question of landing in England. Hitler said that the undertaking would be extremely difficult and that if it failed the first time it could not be attempted again. Added to this there is the fact that while England now fears the loaded pistol of invasion, after a failure she would know that Germany holds only an empty pistol.

At the talks, Mussolini confessed to having encountered certain political difficulties at home. He spoke of the opposition stance whose leading advocate was Marshal Badoglio.³⁵ Hitler consoled him by saying that this was comparable to the Fritsch case in Germany.³⁶

Mussolini was content with the results of the various consultations, Ciano less so. However, Ciano also was very impressed by Hitler, as evident in his report on a conference with military experts on the afternoon of January 20:³⁷

Hitler talked for about two hours on his coming intervention in Greece; he dealt with the question primarily from a technical point of view, placing it in the general political context. I must admit that he does this with unusual mastery. Our military men are impressed.

January 28, 1941

In this “impressive” speech, Hitler ventured the following insights:³⁸

Russian response to our buildup in Romania has taken shape and will be dealt with as required. Russians always get impudent in times when nothing can be done to stop them (winter). I see no great danger coming from America, even if she enters the war. The greater [danger] is the massive giant Russia. While we have very favorable political and economic agreements with Russia, I place more reliance on my military force. As long as Stalin lives, there will presumably be no danger; he is intelligent and cautious. But once he dies, the Jews, who are now in the second and third tiers, will move back up to the first. Previously Russia would have been no danger at all, since on land they cannot threaten us. Now that we are in the age of air power, operations based in Russia and in the Mediterranean can transform the oil region of Romania into a field of smoking rubble. What is necessary is a mighty and very well supplied antiaircraft force, for a time may come in which the war can be pursued only with air force and navy.

The following communiqué was published on the German-Italian talks:³⁹

The Führer and the Duce engaged in an exhaustive exchange of views on the situation during a meeting in the presence of the foreign ministers of the Axis. The meeting took place in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between the two heads of government and the close solidarity in battle of the German and Italian people. It resulted in complete agreement of both parties on all questions.

On January 22, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Schacht on his sixty-fourth birthday.⁴⁰

On January 27, the Hungarian foreign minister, Count Csáky, died in a hospital in Budapest. Hitler sent the following telegrams to his widow and to Horthy:⁴¹

On the death of your husband, whom I held in great esteem, I ask you, dear Countess, to accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Adolf Hitler

I ask Your Highness to accept my sincere sympathy on the death of His Excellency the royal Hungarian foreign minister Count Csáky.

Adolf Hitler

On January 28, Hitler decreed the partition of the Gau Silesia. The official explanation read that Gauleiter Joseph Wagner (Gau Southern Westphalia) was allegedly “overworked,” since he also had administered the Silesia region after the dismissal of its Gauleiter Brückner.⁴²

January 29, 1941

Hitler's decree read the following:⁴³

I

I decree the partition of the present Gau Silesia of the NSDAP into the Gau Upper Silesia (*Oberschlesien*) and the Gau Lower Silesia (*Unterschlesien*).

II

The Gau Upper Silesia spans the administrative districts Oppeln and Kattowitz (Katowice). The Gau Lower Silesia spans the administrative districts Breslau and Liegnitz (Legnica).

III

I appoint party comrade Karl Hanke Gauleiter for the Gau Lower Silesia and party comrade Fritz Bracht Gauleiter of Upper Silesia.

IV

The administration of the Gau Upper Silesia has its seat in Kattowitz. The administration of the Gau Lower Silesia has its seat in Breslau.

V

This decree comes into force immediately. The Reichsorganisationsleiter will decree implementing organizational regulations subject to the approval of my deputy.

Adolf Hitler

On the night of January 29, the Reich minister of justice, Dr. Franz Gürtner, died of a heart attack, following a short illness. Hitler sent his condolences to the widow in a handwritten note and ordered a state funeral.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, Gürtner's death meant a great loss for Hitler. This bourgeois jurist had shown particular aptitude at covering for Hitler's most outrageous violations of law and the constitution, declaring them lawful.⁴⁵ As a result, it took Hitler over a year and a half to appoint a successor,⁴⁶ although many National Socialist lawyers were eager to assume this office. However, Hitler could stand the lawyers in the party even less than the moderate bourgeois legal experts, because they always insisted on upholding the laws of the Third Reich, a course of action which he did not feel obliged to do. He felt that Reich minister and Reichsleiter of the so-called National Socialist-Rechtswahrerbund, Frank, was not a good choice for the job either. While Frank had few qualms about carrying out Hitler's extermination orders as governor general of Poland, he had angered Hitler by stating, at a jurists' conference in Munich, that mercy was a legal remedy. The servile, though pedantic, Roland Freisler⁴⁷ was likewise not considered. Instead,

January 30, 1941

Hitler accepted the bourgeois state secretary Schlegelberger⁴⁸ as interim administrator in the Reich ministry of justice.

On January 29, in the presence of Keitel, Hitler received the royal Hungarian minister Karl von Bartha.⁴⁹

On January 30, Hitler congratulated King Boris of Bulgaria on his forty-seventh birthday in a telegram.

He also wired his congratulations to Colonel von Stockhausen, who served as commander of the Infantry Regiment *Grossdeutschland*, on his fiftieth birthday.

In the customary telegram of the same day, Hitler awarded the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross⁵⁰ to the lieutenant colonel of the general staff of the Luftwaffe Harlinghausen.

On the anniversary of his taking power, Hitler received congratulatory telegrams from King Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini, Franco, Antonescu, and Tiso. He sent the following telegrams in reply:⁵¹

With all my heart, I thank Your Majesty for the friendly congratulations on the eighth anniversary of the seizure of power. I join with these thanks my sincere best wishes for the future of Italy and for the well-being of Your Majesty.

Adolf Hitler

I thank you, Duce, for the friendly telegram which you sent me on the anniversary of the German uprising. Shoulder to shoulder with the friendly and allied Italian people, National Socialist Germany fights for a new Europe with firm determination and in the secure knowledge of ultimate victory.

In comradely solidarity,

Adolf Hitler

With all my heart, I thank Your Excellency for the congratulations you sent on the eighth anniversary of the seizure of power. I sincerely reciprocate with my best wishes for the prosperity of Spain.

Adolf Hitler

With all my heart, I thank Your Excellency for the telegram which I have just received and for the expressed willingness of the new Romania to cooperate in the establishment of a new order in Europe. I am convinced that the victory of the Axis powers will also bring peace and a new future to your country.

Adolf Hitler

I thank Your Excellency for the friendly telegram which you sent me on the anniversary of the seizure of power. I reciprocate your congratulations with my sincere best wishes for a happy future of the Slovak people.

Adolf Hitler

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The main attraction of the celebrations on the eighth anniversary of the seizure of power was Hitler's speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin. It began early, at 4:30 p.m., because of the already present danger of British air raids.

Hitler opened his speech with the following words:⁵²

My German Volksgenossen!

Changes of government occur frequently in history. There have been many such changes in the history of our own Volk. Surely, however, there has never been a change of government with such profound consequences as the one eight years ago. The situation of the Reich was desperate back then.

This was followed by a long "party narrative."⁵³ In describing his struggle against domestic opposition and against the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler strongly attacked England. He once again repeated his theory, known by now ad nauseam, on the identity of the British with the antisocial, narrow-minded capitalists and reactionaries whom he had been forced to fight in Germany. Actually, the British were responsible for the political methods he used: they had invented breach of contract and concentration camps. Hitler declared the following:

Concentration camps were not invented in Germany. The English invented them. They use these institutions to break the backbone of other peoples slowly, to wear their national resistance down and to dissolve it, in order to make them accept the British yoke (*britisches Joch*) of democracy.⁵⁴

The World War, which shook Europe from 1914 to 1918, was the willful product of British statesmanship. And, although the whole world was then mobilized against Germany, Germany was never actually vanquished. We can calmly state this today. I should not wish to criticize the past unless I have myself done a better job. Today, however, as a man who has done a better job, I can critically appraise the past and judge it. And I can only say: the success [*sic*] of the year 1918 is the exclusive result of a rare accumulation of personal incompetence in the leadership of our Volk, a unique accumulation which never before happened in history, nor will it repeat itself in the future—believe me!

And if the English today come and think that it is enough to insert the old propaganda player rolls of the year 1917–1918 in the phonograph, then all I can say is: they have forgotten nothing and, to their misfortune, they have not learned anything either! And that is how they differ from the German Volk. The German Volk has learned something since then and it has not forgotten anything either! We do not wish to be petty here. Promises have been broken before in history, but what happened in the years 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921 was no longer a broken promise, it was one broken promise after another!

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It [the struggle for power] was the greatest inner struggle ever in our history!

We had the same opponents, those who always confronted us abroad: a mixture of all internationalistically feeling, thinking, and acting persons from all countries. My Volksgenossen, you know the coalitions which faced us then, and I can say today: in this mental struggle, we have emerged as masters everywhere; since, after I was finally called to power, I came to power legally, under the Reich presidency of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, because of the strength of the movement which stood behind me.

That means the so-called National Socialist revolution vanquished democracy in a democracy with democracy!

As everywhere, I followed the path of instruction, education, and slow adaptation. For it was my pride to have brought about this revolution in Germany without a single glass pane shattering, a revolution which led to the greatest upheaval ever seen on earth. It did not destroy even the least of values, but, instead, slowly set things straight, set the course, until finally the great community has found its new form. That was our goal.

And it was the same in foreign policy. I stated my platform: elimination of Versailles. One should not be silly in the outside world today, should not pretend that I had only discovered this platform in the years 1933, 1935, or 1937. Instead of listening to the foolish talk of the emigrants (*Emigrantengeschwafel*), the gentlemen would have done well to read what I wrote; what I wrote over a thousand times. No man ever declared and wrote down more often what he wanted than I did. And, time and time again, I wrote: elimination of Versailles.

And when I came to power, I did not then say to myself as democratic politicians do: Never expect gratitude once you've served your purpose. Instead, I made the solemn resolve: I thank you, Lord God, for bringing me to where I can finally realize my platform.

And here, too, I did not want to realize this platform by force. Instead, I spoke, I spoke as much as a man can. My speeches before the Reichstag are evidence of this. No democratic statesman can swindle history from them. The offers which I made them [the English]! How often did I ask them to be reasonable and not to take from a great Volk the foundations of its life and existence! How often did I prove to them that this was not to their advantage, that it was senseless, and, yes, that it was to their detriment! The things I did over the years to ease the way to an understanding for them! Never would it have been necessary to enter into this arms race had the others not wanted it! I placed many proposals before them. However, every proposal which came from me sufficed to agitate a certain Jewish-internationalist, capitalist clique immediately, just as had been the case in Germany, my Volksgenossen, where any reasoned proposal from us National Socialists was rejected primarily because we had made it.

However, we had no reason to bow to this outside world; or do these English truly believe that I have some sort of inferiority complex about England . . . [the following words were drowned in applause]. They betrayed us

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with their swindle and a lie back then! But the British soldiers did not defeat us! And it does not look today as though things have changed.

It was clear to me that, if nothing could be achieved by means of voluntary discussion and negotiation in Geneva, we had to leave Geneva. Never in my life have I imposed on anyone. Whoever does not want to speak to me does not have to. I don't care!

We are eighty-five million Germans, and these Germans do not need that; they have a mighty historic past. They already had an empire when England was only a small island. And that for more than three hundred years.

After Hitler had vented his anger about his supposed feelings of inferiority to England, he went on to rail against "these small, plutocratic profiteers" and "old usurers" who refused to return the German colonies. He declared as follows:

For England these colonies are useless. It has forty million square kilometers [this forty-million figure consists mostly of the colonies]. What is it doing with them? Nothing at all. It is the avarice of old usurers, who do not want to give away what they possess. They are sick creatures. If they see that their neighbor has nothing to eat, they would still rather throw what they possess into the sea than give it away, even if they cannot use it themselves. They get ill at the thought that they could lose something. And I did not even ask for anything that belonged to the English. I asked only for what they robbed us of and stole from us in the years 1918 and 1919! Robbery and theft contrary to the solemn assurances of the American president Wilson! We did not ask anything of them, we did not make any demands. Again and again, I stretched my hand out to them, and, still, everything was in vain. The reasons are clear to us: for one, it is German unification as such. They hate this, our state, irrespective of what it looks like, whether it is imperial or National Socialist, democratic or authoritarian. That makes no difference to them. And second: above all, they hate the rise of this Reich.

And here lust for power abroad and base egoism at home join forces. When they say, "We can never come to an understanding with this world," then this world is the world of the awakening social conscience, with which they cannot come to an understanding. I can make only one response to these gentlemen on both sides of the ocean: the socialist world will be the victorious one in the end! The social conscience of all people will be roused. They can wage wars for their capitalist interests, but these wars themselves will ultimately pave the way for social upheaval among their people.

Now Hitler had reached a point at which he could try to make his audience, and himself, believe that a social revolt would take place in England, and thus that the war would come to an end by itself. He continued as follows:

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It is not possible in the long run to gear hundreds of millions of people to the interests of a few individuals. The common interest of mankind will gain the victory over the interests of these small, plutocratic profiteers!

Just a short while ago, they conclusively proved to us that our officers and generals are worthless because they are young and infected with National Socialist thinking, that is, they have some contact with the broad masses. Now events have shown where the better generals are, over there or here!

If this war lasts any longer, then this will be a great misfortune for England. They will get to see real action. And, one day, perhaps the English will send a commission over here in order to adopt our platform!

Well, if the English intended to “send a commission” anyway, why prepare a landing in England, or take Gibraltar, Malta, and Egypt? It was not really worth it, as the English would collapse on their own. They would come to beg Hitler to take power, as von Papen and von Hindenburg had done.

These rosy prospects spurred Hitler on. Mocking the English, he offered, in the event of an offensive, to evacuate the territory in question beforehand, so as to spare them the difficulties of a landing:

National Socialism will determine the coming millennia in German history, which would be unthinkable without it. It will fade away only when its political planks have become self-evident.

In looking back, I may say one thing: already the year that now lies behind us and the latter part of the previous year have practically decided the war.

I have read several times now that the English intend to launch a big offensive somewhere. I would like to ask that they tell me beforehand. I then would like to have the area evacuated. I would like to spare them the difficulties of a landing. And then we could introduce ourselves once again and discuss matters—and this in the only language they understand!

Now, they have their hopes and they must have their hopes. But what do they expect? We stand here on this continent, and no one can make us move away from where we stand!

We have established certain bases for ourselves and, when the hour comes, we are getting ready for the finishing blow. These gentlemen will note that we have made the best use of our time in the history of this year.

Hitler meant the attack on Russia when he spoke of “the finishing blow.” And he was not afraid of America either, boasting as follows:

What is it they are hoping for? Somebody else’s help? America’s?⁵⁵ I can only say one thing: we have provided for every eventuality from the start.

That the German Volk holds nothing against the American people is clear to everyone who is not purposefully engaged in distorting the truth. With the possible exception of Germans fighting for the freedom of the continent, Germany has never pursued any interests on the American continent!

January 30, 1941

If the states of this continent now attempt to interfere in the European conflict, this will change the objective ever the more rapidly. Then Europe will defend itself!

One should not delude oneself on this topic. Whoever believes that he can help England should know one thing in any event: any ship, with or without escort, that comes in front of our torpedo tubes will be torpedoed!

We are in a war that we did not want. On the contrary! It is impossible to stretch out your hand more often than I did! If, however, they want this fight and aim to wipe out the German nation, they will get the surprise of their lives! They will not meet with the spent Germany of the World War; instead, they will find a Germany mobilized to the highest degree, fit for action, and determined to fight.

If others entertain different hopes, then I can only say that I do not understand them. They say Italy will defect. The gentlemen should not go about inventing revolts in Milan; instead, they should take care that none break out in their own countries! These states see the relationship between Germany and Italy in the light of their own relations with their friends. If one of those democracies helps another, it always asks for something in return: a base or something of the sort, and so forth, and then it occupies it. As an Italian squadron was moved to the Atlantic coast, English papers spoke of the Italians now meddling in our conduct of the war and claimed that, in the future, they would ask for a base on the Atlantic coast. Now that there are German squadrons on the coast of Sicily, they say that Germany will probably confiscate Sicily. May the gentlemen rest assured: these antics impress nobody in Germany and Italy. They merely show the pathological lack of wit of those people who dish up this stuff in England. And, above all, it shows that they have not understood the meaning of this war. It is this: where we can beat England, we will beat England!⁵⁶ And if they already regard the several failures of our partners as proof of their victory, then I just do not understand the English. Until now, they have always regarded their own failures as proof of their victory.

And the gentlemen may rest assured of this: the bill we will present will be for the total, and it will have to be paid at the end of the war; point for point, square kilometer for square kilometer.

And may these gentlemen also rest assured of one fact: the Duce and I, the two of us, are neither Jews, nor are we profiteers. When we shake hands, this is the handshake of two men of honor! And, I hope, this will dawn on these gentlemen and become clear to them in the course of this year.⁵⁷

Perhaps their hopes rest on the Balkans. I would not attach great importance to this either, because one thing is sure: where England makes an appearance, we will attack it, and we are strong enough for it! Perhaps they trust in other states whom they still hope to draw in. I do not know, but I can assure you of one thing, my party comrades, who know me as a caring man who always looks ahead: we have carefully and soberly considered every conceivable possibility and taken it into account. In the end, however, the victory will be ours!

January 30, 1941

Perhaps they have still another hope—not a very strong one any more—namely, hunger. We have organized our life. We knew beforehand that you cannot live in luxury during war. But never will the German Volk starve!—Never! Rather the English! The gentlemen may rest assured of that. Lack of raw materials? We also made provisions for this. That’s why we have the Four-Year Plan! Perhaps some of the English have realized this by now.

Subsequently, Hitler mocked the English lords, these “blockheads,” who suffered from a “softening of the brain.” Their propaganda was “just as stupid as it was here then.”

That means only one thing; namely, that they truly believe they can once more begot the German Volk with their lies and their empty talk. I can only say to this: they should not have slept so long. They should have paid more attention to the inner development of the German Volk. With the same stupidity, they undertook to estrange the Italian people from the Duce: a British lord stood up to appeal to the Italian people to follow his lordship instead of the Duce! What a blockhead! And then another lord stood up and urged the German Volk to follow his lordship and to turn away from me. I can only tell these men that “better men than you have tried that.” That’s the idea these people have of the German Volk, of the National Socialist state, of our community, of the army, of our marching masses! That’s the idea they have of propaganda!

And because they themselves did not seem to be too convinced of the effectiveness of their ideas, they borrowed a few men from Germany. But those were the men who were the losers here: the emigrants. They are their advisers! We can see that, just from looking at their pamphlets! We know exactly: he wrote this, the other one wrote that—it is just as stupid now as it was here at the time. Only the masthead back then read *Vossische Zeitung*. Now it reads *Times* or something of the sort. And these people really think such an old, ancient trick, which did not work anymore at the *Vossische Zeitung*, would suddenly work again if only they used the company name *Times* or *Daily Telegraph*. Truly, softening of the brain seems to have broken out among these democrats! They may calm themselves: the German Volk will do everything necessary in its own interest. It will follow its leadership, because it knows that this leadership has only one goal. It knows that at the head of this Reich today there is a man who does not carry a portfolio of stocks in his pocket and who does not pursue any other private interests.

This German Volk is sworn to me—I know this, and I am so proud of it—and it will go through thick and thin with me.

A spirit has come to life again in this Volk, a spirit which accompanied it during long periods of the past: this fanatic willingness to take everything upon ourselves! For every blow we receive, we will return with interest and compound interest! Whatever they may mobilize against us . . . and if the world were full of devils, we would still succeed!⁵⁸ And when they say, as one last thing, “but the mistakes they are making.” God, who does not make mistakes!

January 30, 1941

I read this morning that an English minister—I do not know who he was—calculated by some process that I have made seven mistakes in the past year, that is, in the year 1940. Seven mistakes! The man is wrong. I did not make seven mistakes, I made seven hundred twenty-four. And I continued counting: my opponents made four million three hundred eighty-five thousand mistakes! He can trust me on this one! I went over the figures carefully. We will move on, even with our mistakes. And if we make as many mistakes this year as we did last year, then I will thank my Lord God on my knees at the end of the year. And if our opponents do as many clever things as they did last year, then I can likewise be content.

And so we enter the new year with a Wehrmacht armed as never before in German history. On land, the number of our divisions has enormously increased. Their pay has been improved, the immense, unique battle experience of leaders and men has been utilized and analyzed. Work has been done and continues to be done without letup. The equipment has been improved, and our opponents will see how much it has been improved.

At sea, submarine warfare will begin in the spring. And there, too, they will notice that we have not been sleeping! And the Luftwaffe will also properly introduce itself to them! Our whole Wehrmacht will force a decision, one way or another! In addition, there has been an enormous increase in all aspects of our production. What others plan, we have already realized. The German Volk stands composed behind its leadership, trusting in its Wehrmacht, and prepared to bear what Providence asks of it, since that is the way it is.

I am convinced that the year 1941 will be a historic year in the great reorganization of Europe! The platform can be none other than that of making the world accessible to all, breaking the privileges of individuals, breaking the tyranny of certain people and their financial rulers.

And, finally, this year will help to secure the foundations for true international understanding and thus for a reconciliation of nations.

When Hitler spoke of “a reconciliation of nations,” he meant a reconciliation of Germany and England. He believed that he could bring this reconciliation about by destroying Russia. Still, he was not quite sure whether this maneuver would work. In case it did not, he wished to indicate in no uncertain terms that there was a last resort in trying to force peace on the English: the massacre of the Jews.

Did he not move the western powers to take a moderate stand toward Germany by ordering the first boycott of the Jews on April 1, 1933? And did he not make the swastika respected abroad by issuing the Nuremberg Laws in the year 1935? Did he not exert pressure on the secret Jewish world government with the pogrom of November 1938?

If he now threatened the Jews with extermination, would not the secret Jewish world government put the same pressure on the English

February 3, 1941

government, which was dependent on it, to make peace with Germany in order to save the European Jews he held as hostages? In this conviction, Hitler declared in his speech of January 30, 1941, the following:

I would not like to forget to repeat the advice that I gave before the German Reichstag on September 1, 1939:⁵⁹ namely, the advice that should the outside world allow itself to be plunged into a general war by Jewry, then all of Jewry will be finished in Europe!

They may still laugh about this today, just as they earlier laughed about my prophesies. The coming months and years will show that I have foreseen things correctly this time also. Now already, our racial idea takes hold of one people after another. And I hope that those who are at enmity with us today will one day recognize their internal enemies and form one front with us: a front against international Jewish exploitation and corruption of people!

The year that lies behind us as of January 30 was a year of great successes, but also of great sacrifices. Even if the total number of dead and wounded is small in comparison with those of former wars, the sacrifice is difficult for all those who are individually concerned. Our affection, our love, and our solicitude belong to those who had to make these sacrifices. They suffered what generations before us suffered in terms of sacrifice, but every German made his sacrifice. The nation worked in all spheres, and, above all, the German woman worked to replace the man!

It is the wonderful idea of the community that rules our Volk! That this idea may be preserved in its full force will be our wish today! That we may work for this community will be our pledge! That we may gain the victory in the service of this community will be our faith and our confidence! And that the Lord God may not abandon us in this struggle in the coming year will be our prayer! *Deutschland—Sieg Heil!*

On January 31, Hitler received Robert Ley at the Reich Chancellery and presented him with the War Service Cross.⁶⁰ On this day, a delegation of Japanese officers, headed by General Yamashita, called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.⁶¹

On February 1, Hitler attended a state ceremony in honor of Dr. Görtner, which took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery at noon. After speeches by Frick and Schlegelberger, he placed a large wreath at the coffin.⁶²

On February 3, Hitler received the recalled Japanese ambassador Kurusu to say goodbye to him.⁶³

On the same day, there was another major military conference regarding Operations Barbarossa and Sunflower, which lasted from

February 4, 1941

noon until 6:00 p.m. Hitler imparted several “flashes of inspiration” to the generals, the record of which read as follows:⁶⁴

The Führer mentioned in this regard that Turkey would not move when the die is cast.

The Führer explains at this point that he assumes that Sweden will participate for the price of the cession of the Åland Islands. A Swedish-Finnish union will not be considered, because it does not fit into the new order of Europe.

Norway has to be protected against English attacks; no setbacks can be permitted there.

“When Barbarossa gets underway, the world will hold its breath and keep still.”⁶⁵

The Führer discusses the situation of Italy in the Mediterranean. He states that the loss of North Africa would be bearable militarily, but psychological repercussions would be severe. It must therefore be our ambition to prevent this. Italy must be supported.

We are already doing so through Marita.⁶⁶ However, we also must try to help effectively in North Africa.

If we go to North Africa, then we must go immediately—before the Italians do.

Summary. Operation Barbarossa:

a) The Führer agrees in principle with the plan for operations. When working out details, keep in mind that the main objective is to get hold of the Baltic area and Leningrad.

b) The Führer requires a map of operations and a map of the distribution of forces along march routes as soon as possible.

c) Agreements with participating states should be initiated only after camouflage proves impossible. An exception is Romania, that is, reinforcement of the Moldau.

d) Attila⁶⁷ must remain possible at all time (expedient).

e) Concentration Barbarossa will be disguised as Sea Lion⁶⁸ and incidental measure Marita.

2) Sunflower:

a) The Luftwaffe must intervene as soon as possible with forces like Stukas [dive-bombers] and destroyers. [Items b and c deal with technical details.]

d) The army is to be reinforced by tanks immediately. Deployment of one panzer division (Marita Second Stage) is to be prepared.

On February 4, Hitler awarded the Eagle’s Shield of the German Reich to the retired governor general Dr. Heinrich Schnee on his seventieth birthday. The medal bore the inscription: “To the German Colonial Pioneer.”⁶⁹

On February 4, Hitler also apparently remembered the citizens of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet. By decree, he accorded them

February 6, 1941

representation in the Greater German Reichstag. To determine the number of deputies from this area, he resorted to the old formula of dividing the population over twenty years of age by sixty thousand. He then went on to name the corresponding number of deputies.⁷⁰

On February 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday.⁷¹

On the same day, Hitler issued Directive No. 23 from Berlin. It concerned "guiding principles for the conduct of the war against the English war economy."⁷²

Hitler began by giving a rather confused account of the air war against Britain, its successes and failures. Primarily, however, he was concerned with maintaining a certain amount of action by the Luftwaffe, although he would soon have to withdraw substantial forces from the Channel coast for Operation Barbarossa. He thought it was possible to make the English believe that a German attack on the British Isles was pending by keeping up pretenses. The directive read as follows:

1. The effect of our warfare against England to date:

a. In contrast to our earlier conceptions, the greatest success in the struggle against the English war economy was the heavy loss of merchant ships through naval and aerial warfare. This has been further reinforced by the destruction of port installations and of large stocks, as well as by the lessened utilization of the ships when required to sail in convoy.

A further significant increase, through the wider employment of submarines in the course of this year, is expected and can thereby lead to the collapse of English resistance within a reasonable time.

b. The effect of air attacks carried out directly against the English armament industry is more difficult to estimate. As a result of the destruction of numerous factories and the ensuing disorganization of the armament industry a sharp drop in production may certainly be expected.

c. The effect upon the morale and the capacity of the English people to resist is so far least discernible from the outside.

2. Inferences for our conduct of battle:

In the course of the coming months, the effect of naval warfare against enemy merchant shipping by greater employment of submarines and surface craft will probably increase still further. On the other hand, the extent of our air attacks cannot be maintained because the missions in other theaters of war compel the withdrawal of increasingly large units of the Luftwaffe from operational use against the British Isles.

It will therefore be necessary in the future to concentrate air attacks even more precisely and to launch them primarily against targets which coincide with those of naval warfare. Only in this manner is a decisive result with respect to the war to be expected within a reasonable time.

February 3, 1941

3. The object of further military operations against the English homeland must therefore be the concentration of all naval and aerial means of warfare in combating the enemy imports, and also in holding down the English production of airplane matériel and, wherever possible, inflicting further damage upon this industry.

This will require the following:

a. Destroying the principal British ports of entry, especially their port installations and any ships in port or in the process of construction.

b. Harassing with all means the movement of ships, especially inbound ships.

c. Systematically destroying the key centers of military-aircraft production, including the anti-aircraft industry, as well as key centers of the production of power and of explosives.

These tasks must be carried on with those forces remaining for operations against England if during the course of the year large parts of the Luftwaffe and lesser naval elements should be redeployed to other theaters of war.

4. For the execution of these tasks the following apply:

a. The sinking of merchant tonnage is more important than combating enemy warships.

This applies also to the use of aerial torpedoes.

The reduction of enemy tonnage not only intensifies the blockade which is decisive for the war, but at the same time renders more difficult any enemy operation in Europe or Africa.

b. Even where attacks on port cities or aircraft factories yield manifestly good results, such attacks must be constantly repeated.

c. The insecurity and losses of the enemy are to be increased by constant mining operations.

d. After striking the great ports of entry, the conduct of battle must follow any English shift to unloading at the smaller ports, so far as the range of our aircraft permits.

e. Only when weather or other operational conditions prevent operating against the targets mentioned in paragraph 3 above will attacks be justified against other factories of the armament industry and against cities of particular importance for the war economy, and also against stockpiles in the interior of the country and transport installations.

On the other hand, no strategically decisive success is to be expected from systematic terror attacks on residential areas or attacks on fortifications along the coasts.

5. Until the beginning of deployment for Barbarossa, we should strive to step up aerial and naval operations progressively, not only to inflict the greatest possible damage on England, but also to simulate the appearance of an attack on the British Isles impending this year.

February 14, 1941

6. Regulations for overwater reconnaissance necessary for the coordination of naval and aerial warfare will be issued separately.

7. Directive No. 9 of November 29, 1939, the Supplement to Directive No. 9 of May 26, 1940, and Directive No. 17 of August 1, 1940, are rescinded.

Adolf Hitler

On February 6, Hitler attempted one last time to “recruit” Franco against England. In view of a meeting between Mussolini and Franco, scheduled for February 11 at Bordighera, Hitler wrote to the Caudillo as follows:⁷³

Spain will never have friends other than those represented by present-day Germany and Italy, unless, of course, a different Spain should come into existence. Such a different Spain, however, would be a Spain of decay and ultimate collapse. For this reason alone, I believe, Caudillo, that we three men, the Duce, you, and I, are linked to one another by the most implacable force of history, and that we should, therefore, in this historic conflict, obey the supreme commandment to realize that—in grave times such as these—nations can be saved by stout hearts rather than by seemingly prudent caution.

His imploring words once more failed to persuade Franco. The meeting at Bordighera ended no differently from that at Hendaye. While Franco assured Hitler of his loyalty there and stressed his solidarity with him in a letter, he stopped short of any active engagement. A distressed Hitler wrote to Mussolini: “I am afraid that Franco is about to make the biggest mistake of his life.”

However, as events proved, the restraint demonstrated by the Spanish dictator was not his biggest mistake, but his cleverest maneuver. He was the only dictator in Europe who was not ruined by Hitler’s fall.

On February 7, Hitler ordered the Gau Koblenz-Trier renamed “Gau Moselland.”⁷⁴

On February 12, Hitler had his picture, inscribed with a heartfelt dedication, presented to the oldest member of the SA in Germany, the ninety-five-year-old Obersturmführer, Andreas Hofmann, in Presseck near Bayreuth.⁷⁵

On February 14, Hitler received the Yugoslav prime minister Cvetkovich, along with his foreign minister, Cincar-Markovich, at the Berghof. As mentioned previously, he had resolved to make Yugoslavia completely dependent on Germany by means of the Tripartite Pact. He was confident that talking persuasively for several hours would make an impression on them, just as it had on the former Yugoslav prime minister Stojadinovic. And he was right, as the incontestable success of

February 24, 1941

his rhetoric with politicians from the Balkans had proved through the years.

The following communiqué was published on the talks:⁷⁶

Salzburg, February 14, 1941

The Führer today received at the Berghof the royal Yugoslav prime minister, Dr. Cvetkovich, and the royal Yugoslav foreign minister, Cincar-Markovich, in the presence of the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop.

The consultations on questions of common interest took place in the spirit of the traditionally friendly relations between the two nations.

By February 17, Hitler's thoughts had turned back once again to Barbarossa. He was already contemplating how to proceed in Afghanistan and India after the defeat of Russia. Given his insatiable lust for conquest, there could be no end to the military actions and campaigns! This is shown by an entry into the war diary of the operations staff of the Wehrmacht, dated February 17, 1941:⁷⁷

The Führer requires work on a study regarding a concentration in Afghanistan against India, subsequent to Operation Barbarossa.

On February 17, Hermann Kriebel, ambassador in the foreign ministry, died in Munich.⁷⁸ In his honor, Hitler ordered a state funeral for February 20. It took place in front of the Feldherrnhalle in Munich. Hitler himself attended the ceremony, dressed in a gray leather coat.⁷⁹ Rudolf Hess delivered the eulogy. Then Hitler stepped up to the catafalque, where he placed a wreath, and saluted with an outstretched arm. Afterwards, he disappeared into the Residenz.

On February 24, Hitler gave the customary speech on the foundation of the party in the festival hall of the Munich Hofbräuhaus.⁸⁰ Naturally, he dished up a "party narrative" for his old party comrades, in which he went to bat for the Fascist Party and his friendship with Mussolini.

And this, too, our opponents do not understand: if I regard a man as my friend, then I stand by this man and I make no commercial transactions with this attitude.⁸¹

Because I am not a democrat, and, therefore, not a black-marketeer. I am also no war profiteer, but I am a man who wishes that, after I too am dead, I will be done justice in the recognition that my whole struggle for existence served only one great ideal. Because of this, I should not like to show weakness in this sphere either. Therefore, there is no doubt that the union between the two revolutions and, particularly, the bond that ties us two men together is

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indissoluble, and that if one day the one should be better off and the other worse, or the other way around, then the one will always stand by the other.

Then Hitler announced a new submarine offensive in grandiose terms. While submarine warfare had already proved ineffective against the British in the First World War, he was going to give it another try. He declared the following:

I already said recently: our struggle at sea can begin only now. The reason for this is first of all that we wanted to train the new crews for the new U-boats, which will now arrive. That they will start coming should not be doubted. Just two hours ago, I received word from the commander in chief of the navy that reports have been received from the surface naval forces and the U-boats that they have sunk two hundred fifteen thousand GRT (gross registered tons), of which the U-boats alone sank a hundred ninety thousand GRT, a hundred twenty-five thousand GRT being destroyed yesterday in a single convoy.

The gentlemen should prepare for a difference from March or April on.⁸² They will see whether we slept through the winter or whether we made use of the time. In the long months when we had to fight with only a few boats, Italy tied down substantial enemy forces. It does not matter to us whether our Stukas hit English ships in the North Sea or in the Mediterranean. It is the same in either case.

One thing is clear: wherever Britain touches the continent, we will immediately oppose it, and wherever British ships appear, our U-boats and airplanes will be deployed against them until the hour of decision comes.

Hitler now turned his attention to the “false prophets” who had once foretold his fall at home and who were now saying the same of the war effort. He described his struggle against the gold standard, and so forth, and finally declared himself to be “an expert and a specialist in questions of armament.” That the English were also arming was “a tall tale.” Hitler announced the following:

The moment I realized that, in England, a certain clique was inciting war and agitating for it—led by Jewry, which stands like a pair of bellows behind everything—I made preparations to arm our nation. And, my old party comrades, you also know that it is not empty talk when I say something like this, but that I also act accordingly. We worked like giants! The armament we forged in these years is truly the proudest the world has ever seen! And if the outside world now says, “We are doing this now, too,” then all I can say is: Do it, I have already done it! Don’t tell me any fairy tales! I am an expert and a specialist in questions of armament. I know quite well what can be made of steel and what of aluminum. I know how much work you can get out of people and how much you cannot. Your tall tales do not impress me!

For our armament, I employed the force of the German nation in timely fashion and I am determined, if necessary, to employ half of Europe for this,

February 24, 1941

and I will do it. I am prepared for any confrontation that might come, and I await it calmly. May the others await it with equal calm!

In this, I rely on the best armed forces in the world, the best which the German nation has ever possessed. It is numerically strong, armed to the highest degree, and its leadership is in better shape than ever before. We have a young corps of leaders, many of whom are not only experienced in battle, but, and I may say this, have also covered themselves with glory. Wherever we look, we see a generation of chosen men in whose hands the German soldier is placed. And these men in turn lead soldiers who are the best trained in the world, who have the best weapons on earth at this time. And behind these soldiers and their leaders stands the German nation, the whole German Volk. And in the midst of this Volk, at its core, is the National Socialist movement, which started from this hall twenty-one years ago. This movement is by itself one of the best organizations, of a type the democratic states do not possess, and has its only counterpart in Fascism.

Once he felt his boasts had made the English sufficiently afraid of the Wehrmacht, he claimed that the German Volk was immune to revolution, to "General Winter," and to hunger. He declared as follows:

Volk and Wehrmacht, party and state—today they form an indissoluble union. No power in the world can wear out this structure. And only fools can imagine that the year 1918, for example, can repeat itself. We once experienced this with our democracies at home. They also always had hope; they hoped for our fragmentation.

Today, it is the same again. They say, "In six weeks, there will be a revolution in Germany." They do not know who will see to this revolution. There are no revolutionaries here; "revolutionaries" like Thomas Mann and other such people are in England. Some have already left England for America, because England is too close to the coming theater of operations of their "revolution." And so, they move their headquarters far away from the battlefield. But still, they maintain that the revolution will come. I do not know who will see to this revolution, nor do I know how it will be carried out. I know only one thing: that there may be a few fools in Germany who contemplate a revolution, but they are all behind bars.

Then, they say, "General Winter will come and defeat Germany." Oh, the German Volk is pretty winterproof.⁸³ In German history we survived, I do not know how many, perhaps a hundred thousand winters. We will survive this winter as well! Then, they declare, "There will be hunger," but we made preparations. We know the humanitarian feelings of our English opponents. We took care. I believe that there will be hunger there before there will be hunger here.

And then again, they say, "Time as such is effective." Time only helps the man who works. And nobody works harder than we do. I can assure these folk of this. And all these vague hopes that they are assembling are ridiculous and childish.

February 24, 1941

On principle, I would like to say one thing: the German Volk has developed over thousands of years. There has been a German Reich for over a thousand years, and it has been an empire which truly consists only of Germans. During this time, our Volk survived unheard-of reverses of fortune. And it will survive whatever the present or the future will bring. Yes, perhaps it will be easier to do so, because, I think, while there has always been a German Volk, never before has there been German unity, never before have we possessed what we possess today: a unified organization of our Volk. Not always has there been a leadership like the one which the German Volk possesses today.

Afterwards, Hitler again pointed out that he would defeat his opponents abroad, as he had his “democratic opponents” at home. As spring was coming, he felt he was in a mood to do whatever he had to do. Feeling “refreshed,” he announced the following:

In all modesty, I can tell my old party comrades one more thing: I have taken on many democratic opponents and, until now, I have always emerged victorious from such struggle. I believe that this struggle, too, is not being fought under different circumstances: that is, the circumstances and the dimensions are the same as before. In any event, I am grateful to Providence that, since this struggle was inevitable, it is taking place in my lifetime, at a time when I still feel young and fit. And, just now, I feel so refreshed again! Now, spring is coming, a spring which we all welcome. A time is coming when we can try our strength again, and I know that, despite the hardships of battle, millions of German soldiers think the same.

A year of unimaginable success lies behind us, one of difficult sacrifices, even if not seen as a whole, nonetheless so in every individual instance. We also know that these successes were not given to us as a gift, but that, with great bravery, countless German men first had to risk their lives at the front and they continue constantly to risk their lives. What so many men do in our regiments, in our tanks, in our airplanes, on our surface ships and U-boats, on all our ships everywhere, in our units, is something unique.

Never have there been better and more valiant soldiers!

In concluding, Hitler again spoke of the “Lord God,” who wished to test the Germans, and declared the following:

At that time, we were already convinced that the hour would come when the Lord God would declare our trials over, if only our Volk found itself again, became industrious and honorable, if every German once again regarded first his Volk and only then himself, if he placed the interests of the community above his own, and if this whole Volk once more pursued a great ideal and was willing to persevere.

If Providence has once more called us to the battlefield, then its blessings will be with those who—in decade-long, hard work—made themselves

February 28, 1941

deserving of these blessings. And this I can say: if, before history, I look at myself and my opponents, then I do not fear a comparison of our characters. After all, who are they—these egoists! Every single one of them stands up only for the interests of his class. Behind all of them stands either a Jew or their own moneybag. They are nothing other than profiteers; they live from the profits of this war; no good will follow it. I confront these folk as nothing other than the simple fighter for my German Volk that I am. And I am convinced that, just as this struggle has been blessed by Providence up to now, so it will also be blessed in the future. When I stepped before you in this hall for the first time, twenty-one years ago, I was unknown, nameless, and I had nothing other than my own faith.

In these twenty-one years, a new world was created! The way from the present to the future will be easier than the one from February 24, 1920, leading to this day and to this place. With zealous confidence I look to the future. The whole nation has stepped up, and I know that the moment there is the command to “fall into step,” Germany will march!

On February 26, Hitler sent the former King Ferdinand of Bulgaria a congratulatory telegram on his eightieth birthday, which was celebrated in Coburg.⁸⁴

On February 28, Hitler received the Japanese ambassador, General Hiroshi Oshima, who had just been reappointed to his post in Berlin, to accept his credentials. Military attaché Banzai and naval attaché Yokoi accompanied Oshima.⁸⁵

On March 1, the usual festivities followed Bulgaria’s accession to the Tripartite Pact. Having greeted wounded soldiers at the entrance to the Belvedere Palace, Hitler gave a state reception in the palace after the signing of the treaty. The Bulgarian prime minister Filov⁸⁶, the state secretary in the Bulgarian foreign ministry, Shishmanov, Count Ciano, and Ambassador Oshima attended.

At the Hotel Imperial in the afternoon, Hitler received the Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano, for a “long and heartfelt exchange of views.”⁸⁷

Another exchange of telegrams appeared to Hitler to be called for. This time, he honored King Boris with the following telegram:⁸⁸

I ask Your Majesty in this hour, in which Bulgaria has once more lent expression to its solidarity with Germany, Italy, and Japan by its accession to the Tripartite Pact, to accept my heartfelt best wishes for Your Majesty’s welfare and for the prosperous future of Bulgaria.

Adolf Hitler

March 4, 1941

On March 2, Hitler sent the following telegram on the opening of the Leipzig Fair:

I want the Leipzig Spring Fair of 1941, which opens its gates today, to bear testimony to our economic power, just as the Leipzig Reich Fair of last year did, and to facilitate the exchange of goods among the participating nations in order to promote our foreign trade during the war as well.

Adolf Hitler

More important than all these telegrams was the following official announcement which was made public on the evening of March 2:⁸⁹

For protection against British measures in southeastern Europe that have become known, and with the consent of the royal Bulgarian government, units of the German Wehrmacht began marching into Bulgaria on March 2. The entering troops were welcomed by the Bulgarian people in a lively manner.

Finally, Hitler had made it: his troops occupied Bulgaria. And again, he had pulled off his coup on a weekend.⁹⁰ The question now was how the Soviet Union would react to this blatant affront. After all, Molotov had told Hitler in Berlin at the time, that, in view of the German occupation of Romania, the Soviet Union was contemplating moving into Bulgaria. Hitler's latest move, which, like the action in Romania, had taken place without prior consultation of Russia and in defiance of its plans, had to appear an outright challenge to the Russians.

The Soviet Union, however, decided to swallow this bitter pill for the sake of peace. It merely published an official denial of the claim that it had consented to the action.

The occupation of Bulgaria was the cause of great disquiet in Turkey. Not without reason, it feared it could be the next country to be accorded Hitler's "protection."

In this delicate situation, Hitler again successfully turned to von Papen, who transmitted a reassuring note to the Turkish president Ismet İnönü on March 4. The following communiqué was published:⁹¹

According to Radio Ankara, the president of the Turkish republic received the German ambassador von Papen at his palace in Tschankay (Çankiri). Von Papen delivered a personal message from the Führer, Adolf Hitler. The president of the Turkish republic listened to the message very attentively and asked Ambassador von Papen to communicate his thanks for this act of courtesy. The Turkish foreign minister, Sükrü Saracoglu, was also present at the conference.

March 5, 1941

The “act of courtesy” for which Ismet Inönü was grateful was the assurance that German troops in Bulgaria “would keep at least thirty kilometers from the Turkish border.”⁹² While the last years had shown that such assurances by Hitler were not worth much, this one did enable Turkey to remain neutral for the time being.

On March 4 and 5, Hitler entertained the Yugoslav prince regent Paul at the Berghof.⁹³ He hoped to encourage him to follow the Bulgarians’ example and to accede to the Tripartite Pact. In addition to his usual persuasiveness, Hitler made all sorts of solemn pledges. If Yugoslavia was “reasonable,” then it might not even be necessary to occupy it militarily.⁹⁴ He promised Yugoslavia an outlet to the Aegean Sea, along with the Greek port of Salonika. As mentioned before, Hitler was most generous in distributing foreign territory. He not only used those countries that were already in his sphere of influence, but also states that he had not yet occupied, as in this instance. He thought this so much a matter of course that he was not in the least embarrassed to speak of it publicly.⁹⁵

Once Hitler had inclined Turkey and Yugoslavia in his favor, he concerned himself with the Japanese. He would have greatly preferred them to play a more “active” role as quickly as possible and to attack British possessions in the Far East. Then, he could conceivably offer his assistance to England against Japan⁹⁶ and thereby finally win England’s friendship, not only as the savior from “the Communist menace,” but also from “the yellow peril.”

Since Hitler himself could do little about the Japanese, he turned to the Wehrmacht for the time being. On March 5, he issued Directive No. 24 on cooperation with Japan. It read as follows:⁹⁷

1) The aim of cooperation initiated by the Tripartite Pact must be to bring Japan into active operations in the Far East as soon as possible. This will tie down strong English forces, and the focus of the interests of the United States of America will be diverted to the Pacific.

In view of the still undeveloped military preparedness of her foes, Japan’s prospects of success will be better the sooner the intervention occurs. Operation Barbarossa creates especially favorable political and military conditions for this.

2) For the preparation of the cooperation, it is necessary to strengthen Japanese military power by every means.

To that end, the commanders in chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht will extensively and liberally comply with Japanese requests for the communication of German war and battle experience, and for aid in the fields

March 12, 1941

of war economy and of technology. Reciprocity is desirable, but must not impede the negotiations. This naturally concerns mainly such Japanese requests as could have an effect on military operations within a short time.

With respect to special cases, the Führer reserves his decision.

3) The coordination of plans of operations on both sides pertains to the high command of the navy.

The following principles apply:

a) The quick defeat of England is to be designated the common aim in the conduct of the war, thereby keeping the United States of America out of the war. Otherwise, Germany has neither political, nor military, nor economic interests in the Far East which give occasion to reservations respecting Japanese intentions.

b) The great successes which Germany has achieved in the war against merchant shipping make it appear particularly appropriate that strong Japanese forces be directed to the same purpose. In addition, every possibility of assistance in Germany's war against merchant shipping is to be exploited.

c) The situation of the [Tripartite] Pact powers with respect to raw materials requires that Japan take over those territories which it needs to continue the war, especially if the United States intervenes. Rubber deliveries must take place even after Japan's entry into the war, since they are vital to Germany.

d) The seizure of Singapore, England's key position in the Far East, would signify a decisive success for the combined warfare of the three powers.

Moreover, attacks directed against other bases of the English sea-power system—against those of American sea power, only if America's entry into the war cannot be prevented—are likely to weaken the power system of the enemy and, just as in the case of attack on his sea communications, to tie down essential forces of all kinds (Australia).

A date for the beginning of operational discussions cannot yet be fixed.

4) In the military commissions to be set up under the Tripartite Pact, only those subjects should be discussed which concern the three powers in the same fashion. This will primarily include problems of economic warfare.

Dealing with them in detail is the task of the main commission in concert with the high command of the Wehrmacht.

5) No hint of Operation Barbarossa must be given to the Japanese.

Of course, nothing about Operation Barbarossa should be breathed to allies Japan and Italy, in accordance with the maxim: "I have an old principle, to say only what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it."⁹⁸

On March 8, Hitler received Lieutenant Colonel Harlinghausen at the Obersalzberg and awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.⁹⁹

March 16, 1941

The next day, Hitler visited Keitel in Berchtesgaden to congratulate him on his fortieth service anniversary and to present him with Hitler's picture, which bore a "heartfelt dedication."¹⁰⁰

On March 12, Hitler appeared in Linz to speak on the third anniversary of the Anschluss. The speech was scheduled for 9:00 p.m. in the festival hall of the Südbahnhof.¹⁰¹ After an extensive discussion of the events of three years earlier, he declared that the new Greater German Reich now had to prove itself.

Today we face the crucial test of what we began back then because, just like the first unification in 1870–1871, it has aroused the ill will of the outside world. Today, also the second great unification of the German Volk, the formation of the Greater German Reich, must prevail not only over the hatred, the envy, the jealousy, the avarice, but also over the lethargy of other people and other states. I see this as a historic reference which makes us not only proud but also confident. At that time, the struggle ended in a mighty, historic success. Today's struggle will end not a bit differently; it will lead to the same success!

On March 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the shah of Iran on his birthday.¹⁰² On the same day, he congratulated Tiso in a telegram on the Slovak national holiday.¹⁰³

On March 15, on the anniversary of the establishment of the Reich protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Reich Protector Neurath and State President Hácha.¹⁰⁴

On March 16, customary celebrations marked Heroes' Memorial Day in Berlin.¹⁰⁵ Hitler arrived at the Zeughaus at noon. At the entrance, he was greeted by von Böhm-Ermolli, an Austrian field marshal of the First World War.¹⁰⁶

In his speech, Hitler first gave a general overview of the history leading up to the war, the campaign of "eighteen days" in Poland, the struggle in the west, and he once more granted his listeners a general absolution:

The German Volk has atoned for all it once abandoned and lost in crazed blindness.

In spite of all the hyperbole, the tone of this speech was subdued. Hitler admitted the following:

The homeland must also make more difficult sacrifices in this war than ever before. Its heroism also contributes to making this most decisive struggle in German history a success. And here it is not only the man who is proving his powers of resistance, but also and above all the woman.

March 16, 1941

This was an obvious admission that the available forces were beginning to dwindle, and that German women would be deployed more frequently. It was a prelude to Hitler's appeal on May 4, in which he gave even greater emphasis to his call for women to be brought into action.¹⁰⁷

In concluding his speech, Hitler maintained that the air war would "not destroy Germany, but would destroy Britain itself," while also alluding to imminent active support of Italy by German troops.

The nation today has become a fighting unit, not because it was looking for this fight, but because this fight was forced on it. The minute England and France declared war, England began war against civilian life. To the blockade of the World War, the war against women and children, this time, it added air war and fire war (*Brandkrieg*) against peaceful villages and cities. Alas, England will be defeated on both accounts. The crime committed by Churchill—the air war—it will not destroy Germany, but Britain itself. And the blockade also will not hit Germany, but its authors.

If the onset of winter limited fighting on land, then the battles in the air and at sea have continued in its stead. To the heroism of the crews of our submarines and surface craft is added the heroism of our pilots.

We could not conclude Heroes' Memorial Day in a more worthy manner than by renewing our pledge to transform the battle for our destruction, instigated by our international opponents, into the ultimate German victory. Behind us lies a winter of hard work. What could be improved in our training was improved. The German Wehrmacht now has risen to become the strongest military implement of our history. During the winter months, though our ally has had to bear the full force of the British attacks, the German Wehrmacht will assume its share of the burden from now on. No power and no support in the world will change the outcome of this battle. England will fall.

Eternal Providence does not allow those to be victorious who are willing to spill the blood of man simply for the rule of their gold. Germany has asked nothing of England and France. All its renunciations, its proposals for disarmament and peace, were in vain. International plutocracy wants to wage this war to the end. Thus, the end of this war must and will be its destruction. May Providence let us find the correct path to lead those people to a better order, those people who have rid themselves of their shackles.

Cool and determined, we set out in the year 1941 to finish what was begun last year. Irrespective of where German soldiers are fighting, on what soil, on what sea, and in whose airspace, they will know that this struggle will decide the fate, the freedom, and the future of our Volk for all time. It is by ending this fight victoriously that we thank the heroes of our past in the most worthy manner, because we will rescue what they once died for: Deutschland, our Volk, and its Greater German Reich.

March 20, 1941

After the address, Hitler viewed a special exhibition in the Zeughaus displaying trophies from the campaign in the west. This was followed by the laying of wreaths at the war memorial, greeting the wounded, and a parade of the honor battalion.

On March 16, Hitler also took advantage of Heroes' Memorial Day to sign a decree on the appointment of a senior government building officer who would be responsible for the design of veterans cemeteries. It read as follows:¹⁰⁸

Berlin, March 16, 1941

The construction of cemeteries worthy of veterans for the interment of the fallen will be prepared. I commission the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht to see to its execution. I appoint a senior government building officer for work on the artistic tasks connected with the design of the German memorial cemeteries. The chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht shall decree implementing regulations.

Adolf Hitler

On March 19, Hitler received General of the Mountain Troops Dietl at the Reich Chancellery and presented him with the "Shield of Narvik."¹⁰⁹

On March 20, the new Romanian envoy, Raoul Bossy, presented his credentials at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹⁰

In addition, the Turkish ambassador Gerede brought a reply from the Turkish state president to Hitler's message of March 4. The following official statement was published on this topic:¹¹¹

Berlin, March 20, 1941

The Turkish ambassador Gerede presented to the Führer a handwritten letter from the Turkish state president Ismet İnönü. The Führer asked the Turkish ambassador to convey to the Turkish state president his thanks for the message.

March 20 saw the first official mention of the formation of an Africa Corps. On this day, Hitler received the commanding general of the Africa Corps, Lieutenant General Rommel, at the Reich Chancellery and awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.¹¹²

During the next days, German newspapers published photographs of the Africa Corps troops who were already in Libya.¹¹³

Also on March 20, Hitler sent another telegram to the Iranian shah, this time to congratulate him on the Nauruz festival.¹¹⁴

March 22, 1941

On the following day, the new Hungarian foreign minister, von Bardossy, joined Hitler for a conference in the Führerbau at the Königlicher Platz in Munich. The official communiqué noted the following:¹¹⁵

The conference took place in the spirit of the traditional and heartfelt bonds of friendship which unite Germany and Hungary.

On March 22, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to Field Marshals von Witzleben and von Kluge on their fortieth service anniversary. Both were presented with his picture, which bore the customary “heartfelt dedication.”¹¹⁶

March 26, 1941

2

On March 25, Hitler arrived in Vienna, where another theater performance was scheduled to take place in the Belvedere Palace that day, Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact.¹¹⁷ The necessary actors had already assembled: Prime Minister Cvetkovich, Foreign Minister Cincar-Markovich, Count Ciano, Ambassador Oshima, and, of course, von Ribbentrop.

The signing went according to program and, afterwards, Hitler gave another reception in the halls of the palace.

In the afternoon, Hitler received the Yugoslav ministers for a talk. The communiqué read as usual:¹¹⁸

The conference took place in the spirit of the traditional friendly relations between Germany and Yugoslavia.

Hitler also received Ciano for an "extensive talk in the spirit of the old friendship between Germany and Italy."¹¹⁹

This Viennese play "Tripartite Pact" was to be the last of its kind, and its epilogue was far less to Hitler's liking. Nothing was published on the exchange of telegrams customary on such occasions. Only Cvetkovich sent telegrams to Hitler and von Ribbentrop before arriving in Belgrade at 9:00 a.m. on March 26.¹²⁰ Hitler had, in the meantime, returned to Berlin, where, standing on the balcony of the Reich Chancellery, he showed himself to the public at noon on March 26.¹²¹

At 6:00 p.m. on the same day, the Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka arrived in Berlin. He was escorted from the Anhalt station to Bellevue Palace, the government's guesthouse.

The visit of this Japanese politician was the last diplomatic event of significance to take place in the Third Reich. Aside from a journey to Rome, Matsuoka stayed for nearly two weeks.

March 26, 1941

On the night of March 26, there was a military putsch in Belgrade. Within a few hours of his return from Vienna, Cvetkovich was overthrown and replaced by General Simovitch. Prince Regent Paul left the country "at his own request," while the young King Peter assumed royal power by proclamation. Anti-German demonstrations in Belgrade had followed the signing of the Tripartite Pact. Despite the strong emphasis he had placed on the "traditional friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia," Hitler had suffered a grave diplomatic defeat. More than once, he had boasted of his influence in Yugoslavia in talks with Mussolini and Ciano.¹²² Now it became clear that his rhetoric had been to no avail.

Yugoslavia was the only country in the Balkans which Hitler had never managed to bring completely under his control, despite several partial successes. And it would remain so in the military sphere until 1945.

News of the putsch in Belgrade hit Berlin like a bomb. Of all times, it was during the visit of the Japanese foreign minister that the nervousness of the members of the German government was most apparent. Hitler immediately realized that he would have to use force to regain control over this Balkan state. He quickly scheduled a conference in the Reich Chancellery for the same day. Besides Göring, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Jodl, and von Ribbentrop, several other high-ranking officers attended the meeting. In a forceful address, Hitler sought to balance the embarrassing impression that once more he had been greatly mistaken.

He no longer spoke of the "traditional friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia," which had proven itself in the Anschluss, the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the war against Poland, and the occupation of Romania and Bulgaria. Instead, he portrayed the Yugoslavs as his greatest enemies. They had dared not to bow completely to his will. He would punish them for it with "inexorable severity." After all, he was a well-known master in raping smaller countries.

The protocol of Hitler's address read as follows:¹²³

The Führer describes Yugoslavia's situation after the coup d'état. He states that Yugoslavia was an uncertain factor with respect to the coming Marita action and even more so in regard to the Barbarossa operation later on. Serbs and Slovenes have never been pro-German. The governments never sit securely in the saddle because of the nationality problem and the officers' camarilla,

March 27, 1941

which is always inclined toward a coup d'état. In recent times, the country had only one strong man, namely Stojadinovic, whom Prince Regent Paul, to his own disadvantage, had overthrown.

The moment for realizing the real situation in the country and its attitude toward us is favorable to us both for political as well as military reasons. If the overthrow of the government had taken place during the Barbarossa action, the consequences for us would have been much more serious.

The Führer is determined, without waiting for possible loyalty declarations by the new government, to make all preparations in order to destroy Yugoslavia militarily and as a state. No inquiries regarding foreign policy will be made or ultimatums presented. Assurances of the Yugoslav government, which cannot be trusted anyhow, will not be taken note of in the future. The attack will begin as soon as the means and troops suitable for it are ready.

It is important that action be taken as soon as possible. We will try to get the neighboring states to participate in a suitable way. Actual military support against Yugoslavia is to be asked of Italy, Hungary, and in certain respects of Bulgaria, too. Romania's main task is to provide cover against Russia. The Hungarian and Bulgarian ministers have already been notified. Within the course of the day, a message will be addressed to the Duce.

Politically, it is especially important that the blow against Yugoslavia be delivered with inexorable severity and that the military destruction be carried out in a lightning operation. In this way, Turkey will presumably be sufficiently deterred and the subsequent campaign against Greece will be influenced favorably. It is to be expected that the Croats will take our side when we attack. They will be assured of political treatment (autonomy later on) in accordance with this. The war against Yugoslavia will probably be very popular in Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as these states are to be promised territorial acquisitions; the Adriatic coast for Italy, the Banat for Hungary, and Macedonia for Bulgaria.

This plan presupposes that we speed up the schedule of all preparations and employ such strong forces that the Yugoslav collapse will take place within the shortest time.

Because of this, the beginning of Operation Barbarossa will have to be postponed for up to four weeks.¹²⁴ [Technical details follow.]

Also on March 27, Hitler issued Directive No. 25:¹²⁵

1. The military putsch in Yugoslavia has changed the political situation in the Balkans. Even if Yugoslavia should at first give declarations of loyalty, she must be considered as a foe and therefore must be destroyed as quickly as possible.

2. It is my intention to break into Yugoslavia in the general direction of Belgrade and southward by a concentric operation from the area of Rijeka-Graz on the one side and from the area around Sofia on the other, and to give the Yugoslav armed forces an annihilating blow. Furthermore, I intend to cut off

March 27, 1941

the extreme southern part of Yugoslavia from the rest of the country and seize it as a base to continue the German-Italian offensive against Greece.

The early opening up of the Danube traffic and occupation of the copper mines of Bor are important for reasons of the war economy.

The attempt will be made to win over Hungary and Bulgaria for participation in the operations through the prospect of winning back the Banat and Macedonia.

The domestic political tension in Yugoslavia will be intensified by political assurances to the Croats.

3. In detail, I order the following:

a) As soon as sufficient forces stand ready and the weather permits, the ground organization of the Yugoslav Air Force and Belgrade are to be destroyed by continuous day and night attacks of the Luftwaffe.

b) Operation Marita is to begin as close to the scheduled time as possible but in no case earlier. For the time being, it should have the limited aim of occupying the basin of Salonika in order to get a foothold on the high ground of Edessa. For this purpose the 18th Army Corps can deploy from Yugoslav territory.

Favorable opportunities are to be exploited for preventing the systematic formation of a front between Olympus and the high ground of Edessa.

c) All the forces still available in Bulgaria and Romania may be enlisted in the attacks which are to be conducted from the area around Sofia in a northwesterly direction and from the area Kyustendi-Gora-Dzumaja in a westerly direction, with the stipulation that forces of about one division in strength, along with air-defense forces, must remain in the Romanian oil region for the protection of the latter.

The defense along the Turkish frontier is provisionally to be left to the Bulgarians. A German formation, an armored division if possible, is to be assembled behind them for support.

d) The thrust from the general direction of Graz aimed toward the southeast is to be made as soon as the forces necessary for it are assembled. It is left to the army whether or not they should lunge across Hungarian territory in order to open up the frontier.

The defense along the Yugoslav frontier is to be reinforced immediately.

Just as on the Bulgarian border, important objects can be occupied simultaneously with the aerial attack on Belgrade, even before the general attack.

e) The Luftwaffe is to support the operations of the Twelfth Army with two attack groups and those of the new assault group which is to be formed in the area around Graz. It will make the main effort in this connection, depending on the time needed for the progress of the operations of the army. The Hungarian ground formations can be used for the deployment and engagement.

It is to be examined whether the 10th Air Corps is to be committed from Italian territory. Nevertheless, the convoy protection of the transport to Africa must remain assured.

March 27, 1941

The preparations for the seizure of the island of Lemnos are to be continued, but I reserve to myself the decision as to the execution.

Provision is to be made for sufficient anti-aircraft protection of Graz, Klagenfurt, Villach, and Loeben, and for Vienna as well.

4. The basic agreements with Italy will first of all be made by the OKW.

Staff liaison with the Italian Second Army and with the Hungarians is to be provided by the army.

As regards the delimitation of aerial operational areas respecting the Italian and Hungarian flying personnel, the Luftwaffe is authorized to reach agreements at this time with the high commands of the states concerned. The supply of the Hungarian ground formations can begin immediately.

5. The commanders in chief are to report to me through the OKW regarding the intended conduct of the operations and related questions.

Adolf Hitler

The speeches and directives necessitated by the putsch in Belgrade preoccupied Hitler so much that he was forced at the last minute to postpone a talk with the Japanese foreign minister. That he even called von Ribbentrop out of a meeting with Matsuoka amply demonstrated to the Japanese politician the extent of the confusion caused by the events in Belgrade.

At four in the afternoon, Hitler finally felt able to receive Matsuoka at the Reich Chancellery.¹²⁶ He struck a pose in order to impress his caller, as Schmidt aptly put it, with "brilliant rhetorical fireworks." He went far back, describing his struggle and his life. He spoke of the successes of German U-boats and the superiority of the Luftwaffe. He juggled figures, appearing to be familiar with even the most minute detail of armament and strategy. According to the record of the conversation, Hitler told Matsuoka:

In the air, Germany had absolute supremacy, despite all the claims of the English to success. Matsuoka could test this assertion if he looked about in Berlin and compared present-day Berlin with present-day London.

The Führer then spoke of his conviction that England had already lost the war. It was only a matter of having the intelligence to admit it. Then the individuals and the government which had been responsible for the insane policy of England would collapse.

In its present critical situation, England was looking for any straw to grasp. It was relying principally on two hopes:

First, on American help. Germany, however, had taken such help into its calculations in advance. It could appear in tangible form only in the year 1942 at the earliest, but even then the extent of such help would bear no relation to the increased productive capacity of Germany.

The second hope of England was Russia.

March 27, 1941

Obviously, Hitler endeavored to convince Matsuoka that relations between Germany and the Soviet Union were strained in order to keep him from continuing work on an improvement of relations between Japan and Russia.¹²⁷ Further, Hitler remarked that he thought it advantageous to keep America out of the war. Evidently, this was a concern near to his heart since he repeated this point several times in the conversation. One of the means best suited to this purpose was a determined assault on English possessions, that is, a surprise attack on Singapore by Japan. Such an opportunity would not come about again soon. Japan should strike swiftly.

Seldom in history, however, had a risk been smaller than at present: While war was being fought in Europe and England was occupied there, and while America was only in the initial stages of her own rearmament, Japan was the strongest power in the East Asian area and Russia could not intervene, since a hundred fifty German divisions stood on its western border. Such a moment would never return. It was unique in history.

In other words, Hitler was attempting to “recruit” Japan for his struggle against England, now that he had failed to procure the active assistance of Spain, France, and Russia. However, his rhetorical efforts in front of this messenger from the Far East were no more successful. The Japanese were not about to go to war against England just because Hitler felt that they should. And they knew quite well that England and America formed one entity, and that Hitler’s idea of preventing America’s entry into the war by attacking English possessions was more than ridiculous.¹²⁸

With an immobile face, Matsuoka sat and listened to Hitler’s flood of words. He then calmly and cautiously replied that, while he himself was persuaded by the German arguments, “at the present moment he could in these circumstances make no pledge on behalf of the Japanese Empire that it would take action.”

This was like pouring cold water on Hitler’s enthusiasm, and he had trouble hiding his disappointment at the Japanese reaction to his rhetorical efforts. Things got worse, however!

Matsuoka then took up the subject of a Japanese attack on Singapore. He explained that the Japanese military had carefully considered this possibility with the result that it had determined that it would take three months to carry out such an operation. As a cautious man, the foreign minister himself estimated about six months. And so

March 28, 1941

Matsuoka paid Hitler back for his juggling with figures. Hitler was deeply disappointed at this Asiatic conception of time.

The Japanese foreign minister dealt Hitler a third blow: just as Hitler had done, he began a lengthy review of the difficulty of his political struggle and of the resistance to him by his political opponents in Japan. He was a representative of forceful, aggressive politics, but the Japanese intellectuals made his life difficult. They had been educated in England and America, and their pure tradition had been corrupted by contact with the Western world. The leaders of the economy and court circles had conspired against him to cause him trouble. For once, Hitler was confronted with an opponent who paid him back in his own coin for his long-winded, tiring expositions.

After two-and-a-half hours of fruitless discussion, this first and decisive meeting between Hitler and Matsuoka ended without any concrete results. Despite this, and in order to save face, Hitler again joined Matsuoka at 6:00 p.m. to step out on the balcony of the Reich Chancellery and to show themselves to the Volk together. A Japanese battle song was broadcast over loudspeakers.¹²⁹

On March 28, Matsuoka was Hitler's guest at an official lunch.¹³⁰

In the course of his stay in Berlin, Matsuoka had several conferences with Göring, von Ribbentrop, Funk, and others. From them he heard only summaries of Hitler's arguments that the Führer had impressed on his Unterführers.

While Matsuoka was polite and reserved, at times he allowed his conviction that he was confronted by madmen to surface. Even if he actually told Schmidt that feeling only in reference to Göring,¹³¹ it was obvious that he also meant Hitler. At the end of his visit, he informed von Weizsäcker that the most important man he had met in Europe had been Pope Pius XII (!)¹³²

On March 28, Hitler summoned envoys from Hungary and Bulgaria to the Reich Chancellery and demanded that they urge their governments to participate in the planned war against Yugoslavia.

Afterwards, Hitler claimed in a letter addressed to Mussolini that, contrary to previous assertions, "from the beginning I have regarded Yugoslavia as the most dangerous factor." Sent by telegram, the letter read as follows:¹³³

March 28, 1941

Duce!

Events compel me, Duce, to communicate to you via telegram, the most direct way, my views on the situation and the decisions resulting therefrom.

1. From the beginning, I have regarded Yugoslavia as the most dangerous factor in the conflict with Greece. From the purely military standpoint, German intervention against Thrace could indeed hardly have been justified at all as long as Yugoslavia's attitude was equivocal and she thus could menace the left flank of the advancing columns on our enormous front.

2. For this reason, I did everything and honestly tried to include Yugoslavia in our community of interests. These efforts were unfortunately to no avail, and they were also begun too late to assure success. Today's reports leave no more doubt about the impending reversal of Yugoslavia's foreign policy.

3. Now I do not regard this situation as disastrous, to be sure, but nevertheless as one which is so difficult that we, for our part, must avoid making any mistakes if we do not want ultimately to imperil our entire position.

4. I have therefore already taken all the necessary measures in order to be able to meet any developing crisis with the necessary military means. Instructions to change our marching orders in Bulgaria, too, have already gone out.

I now urgently request you, Duce, not to carry out any further operations in Albania for the next few days. I consider it necessary that you undertake to cover and protect the most important passes from Yugoslavia to Albania with all available forces. It is not a question of measures which need to remain in effect for a long time, but of emergency measures meant to prevent the development of a crisis in the next two to three weeks.

I also consider it necessary, Duce, that you strengthen your forces on the Italo-Yugoslav front with all the means at your command and as speedily as possible.

5. I further consider it necessary, Duce, that absolute secrecy be maintained regarding everything that we do now and order to be done, and that only those persons should be informed who absolutely have to know something about it. Divulging our preventive measures would necessarily render them completely worthless.

6. Today I summoned the Bulgarian and the Hungarian ministers and acquainted them in broad outline with my misgivings about the situation, endeavoring to arouse their interest through a description of the negative and positive results that might arise for them in the event of military complications. For, Duce, without the assistance of Hungary and Bulgaria, it would surely be impossible to conduct operations with the swiftness which the events might make necessary in some circumstances.

I shall inform you about this, Duce, in greater detail some time tomorrow, if possible.

7. General von Rintelen, provided he can take the plane, will accordingly report to you tomorrow, Duce, and communicate to you the detailed military measures taken by us, which are being completed during the night.

March 30, 1941

If secrecy is maintained regarding these measures of ours, Duce, I do not doubt that, in the event that we have to act, the two of us will go forward to a success that will not be less than that in Norway a year ago.

This is my unshakable conviction.

Please accept my warmest comradely greetings.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

Despite these solemn assurances, Hitler did not intend “the two of us,” that is, the Führer and the Duce, to share the success. Because of this, he wanted Italian troops, at this point engaged in a successful offensive against Greece, to stop in their tracks, on his orders, and to turn around to defend the border between Yugoslavia and Albania. Supposedly, this was an urgent task.

On March 29, Hitler ordered Colonel General Hoth to place a wreath at the grave of Lieutenant General Cranz.¹³⁴

By March 30, the pending campaign in the Balkans had ceased to be foremost in Hitler’s mind. He dedicated himself completely to Operation Barbarossa. At 11:00 a.m., he assembled his generals and commanders in chief at the Reich Chancellery to give a two-and-a-half hour talk on the development of the situation from June 1940 on. He first spoke of England’s mistake in rejecting the German peace proposals. In this context, he spoke of Russia and once again played the man who knew everything, whose awareness of the military potential of Russia was complete, and who knew every single Russian tank!

At this time, he hinted that the rules of engagement in Russia would be different: severity would “be mildness,” and everything was a question of annihilating the Bolshevik commissars and the Communist intelligentsia.

The record of Hitler’s speech in Halder’s diary read as follows:¹³⁵

11:00 a.m. meeting at the Führer’s; almost a two-and-a-half hour address:

Situation after June 30 (1940). English mistake to reject possibility of peace. Description of further events. Sharp criticism of Italian conduct of the war and policy. England’s situation benefits because of Italy’s failures.

England places its hopes on America and Russia. Maximum effectiveness only in four years; Russian problems with transportation. Role and possibilities. Reasons for the necessity of clearing up Russian situation. We will only be able to master, within two years, our missions in the air and on the ocean in terms of matériel and personnel if we resolve the questions on land for good and thoroughly. Our mission against Russia: smash the armed forces, dissolve state. Comments on Russian tanks (respectable): 4.7 cm—good, heavy model, mass old. In terms of the number of tanks, the Russians are the strongest

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in the world. But they have only a small number of the new giant models (*Riesentypen*) with long 10 cm K (giant colossus, *Riesenkolosse*, 42-14 t).

Air force has large numbers, but very many old models, only a small number of modern models.

Problem of Russian terrain: the infinite vastness of the terrain makes concentration on decisive points necessary. Massive deployment of Luftwaffe and tanks at decisive location. Luftwaffe cannot cover this gigantic terrain at one time. At the start of the war, it can control only parts of this gigantic front. Its deployment must therefore be closely linked to land operations. The Russians will break down when confronted with the massive deployment of tanks and planes.

No illusions about allies: Finns will fight bravely, but they are weak in number and have not recovered. Romanians are completely hopeless. Perhaps, they will do all right in providing security behind a strong barrier (river), as long as they are not attacked. Antonescu expanded his army, instead of making it smaller and improving it. The fate of large German units should not depend on the steadfastness of the Romanian units.

The Pripet Marshes: security, defense, mines.

Question of Russian evasive movements: Not likely, because tied to Baltic Sea and Ukraine. If the Russians want to avoid contact with the enemy, they would have to do this very early on; otherwise they will not escape unscathed. After solving the problems in the east, fifty to sixty (tank) divisions will suffice. It will be possible to release a part of the infantry forces in order to produce armaments for the Luftwaffe or the navy; another part will be needed for other tasks, for example, in Spain. (Halder's marginal note: colonial tasks).

Struggle of two ideologies. Scathing condemnation of Bolshevism: equals social criminality; Communism immense danger to the future. We must distance ourselves from the idea of soldierly good fellowship. A communist is not a comrade, neither before nor afterwards. It is a matter of a struggle of annihilation. If we do not see it this way, then we will still defeat the enemy, but the Communist enemy will confront us again in thirty years. We are not waging war in order to preserve the enemy.

Future states: northern Russia will belong to Finland. Protectorates: Baltic countries, Ukraine, and Belorussia.

Fighting against Russia: annihilation of Bolshevik commissars and Communist intelligentsia. The new states must be socialist states, but without their own intelligentsia. The formation of a new intelligentsia must be prevented. A primitive socialist intelligentsia will suffice here. The poison of demoralization must be fought. This is not a case for court-martial. The commanders of the troops must know what it is all about. They must exercise leadership in combat. The troops must defend themselves by all means if they are attacked. Commissars and GPU people are criminals and must be treated accordingly. Still, the reins of leadership must not slip out of the commander's hands. The commander must issue his orders in consideration of the troops' sentiments. Fighting will be very different from fighting in the west. In the east,

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severity will be mildness in the future. The commanders must demand of themselves the sacrifice of overcoming their scruples.

In order to rationalize the brutality of his actions against the Russians, Hitler argued that the Soviet Union was not a “party” to the Hague Convention.¹³⁶ This was an obvious lie, since Russia acknowledged as binding the regulations of the Geneva Convention and the stipulations of the Hague Convention on war on land and at sea.¹³⁷

And even if Russia had not signed the Geneva Convention and the international agreement at The Hague, this would still not have justified the Germans in declaring the Russians outlaws on the outbreak of war or shooting them at random while taking them prisoner or at a later time. After all, the signatories to these agreements, Germany included, had pledged themselves to respect the rules that were agreed upon in any circumstance, even if they were waging war against a power not party to the conventions. On questions of international law, the German generals were not well informed in any event, as the Geneva Convention and treatment of the wounded were not subjects taught at military academies.

Even if they had been better informed, the situation on March 30, 1941, would have been no different. Ever since 1934, whatever Adolf Hitler said, did, or ordered, served as the norm in Germany, even if it violated constitutional, penal, or international law. As president of the Reichstag, Göring had once solemnly proclaimed: “We will always approve of everything our Führer does.”¹³⁸ And even the Reich minister of justice, the bourgeois jurist Gürtner, had declared on July 3, 1934, in connection with the Röhm purge, that all measures taken by Hitler, including the shooting of defenseless prisoners without prior trial, were not only “justified,” but a “statesmanlike duty.”¹³⁹

These statements were made in the year 1934, in the midst of peace, at a time when there could be no talk of a total dictatorship. Given this set of mind, it is not surprising that, in the war year 1941, the generals had no qualms about executing Hitler’s orders to liquidate defenseless Russian prisoners of war without prior trial and thought such measures justified.¹⁴⁰ Still, they were glad that this macabre task was left to the SS and not to the Wehrmacht.

The Commissar Order (*Kommissarbefehl*) was put into writing on March 31. Twice amended, it finally read on May 12 as follows:¹⁴¹

March 31, 1941

Memorandum Subject:

Treatment of captured Russian political and military functionaries

I. OKW presented draft "guidelines" concerning the treatment of political officials, etc., for the concerted accomplishment of the assignment, which had already been given on March 31, 1941, and which is enclosed as enclosure no.

1. This draft provides for:

1. The elimination of political officials and leaders (commissars).

2. If they are captured by the troops, an officer with disciplinary powers must decide whether the person in question is to be eliminated. In this context, the establishment of this person's identity as a political official suffices.

3. Political leaders captured among the enemy troops will not be recognized as prisoners of war and will be dealt with at the *Dulags*¹⁴² at the latest. No sending them off to the rear.

4. Expert leaders of economic and technical enterprises are to be arrested only if they rebel against the German Wehrmacht.

5. The carrying out of operations may not be disturbed by these measures. Planned search and mopping-up operations will not take place.

6. In rear operational areas of the army, officials and commissars, with the exception of political leaders captured among the enemy troops, will be handed over to the special squad of the security police.

II. By contrast, memorandum no. 3 by Reichsleiter Rosenberg¹⁴³ provides that only with officials of the highest ranks be eliminated, since functionaries in the governments, communes, and the economy are irreplaceable in the administration of the occupied territories.

III. Therefore, a decision by the Führer is necessary concerning what principles should apply here. Proposal L for case II:

1. Functionaries who operate outside their units, as is to be expected from the radical element, fall under the "decree on the exercise of trial by court-martial in the Barbarossa area." They will be dealt with as volunteer irregulars. The same treatment is provided for by the "guidelines on the conduct of the troops in Russia" (appendix no. 2).

2. Functionaries who are innocent of hostile actions will at first not be molested. However, the troops cannot be expected to be able to differentiate between the various functionaries of the individual sectors. Only further penetration into the country will enable us to decide whether the remaining functionaries can be left in these locations or whether they are to be handed over to special commandos, if they are in a position to carry out the investigation.

3. Functionaries captured with their troops will be treated in accordance with the proposal by the OKW. They will not be recognized as prisoners of war; they will be dealt with at the transit camps at the latest, and under no circumstance will they be sent to the rear.

Everything Hitler did in the spring of 1941 was in some way connected to the assault on Russia. The war in Africa played a role of lesser importance. That was only natural, as Hitler was convinced that

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he could obtain the desired friendship with England by attacking the Soviet Union. Why should he engage in major operations in North Africa? Under no circumstances was he willing to attack Egypt at this point. This would only needlessly provoke the English and lessen their readiness for peace.¹⁴⁴

While the German and Italian troops under Rommel's command were allowed to repel the British invasion of Cyrenaica in early April, they were forced to halt at Sollum, the first fortress on Egyptian soil. The port of Tobruk in Cyrenaica remained a British fortress throughout the year, as Rommel was unable to conquer it.

In East Africa the war ended at this time. Ever since January, British, South African, Belgian, and French troops (de Gaulle) had converged on the Italian possessions. In late February, Italian Somaliland was lost; in late March, British Somaliland was reconquered by the English. By early April, Eritrea and nearly all of Abyssinia¹⁴⁵ were in the hands of the Allies.

Less than one year after Mussolini had entered the war on Hitler's side, the Italian "empire," so laboriously erected in 1936, had ceased to exist.

On April 1, an intensive campaign against the "anti-German" Serbs was launched in the German press, similar to the previous ones directed against the Czechs and the Poles.

On April 3, Hitler received the head of a Japanese naval delegation, Vice Admiral Nomura, at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁴⁶

On the same day, the Hungarian prime minister Count Teleki committed suicide. Hitler sent telegrams of condolence to his widow and to Horthy.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, he dispatched Grand Admiral Raeder to Budapest. At the funeral ceremony on April 7, Raeder laid a "wreath from the Führer."¹⁴⁸

In the meantime, Hitler had procured a positive answer from Hungary regarding its participation in the projected war against Yugoslavia. As a result, he proceeded to issue Directive No. 26 on April 3, entitled "Cooperation with our allies in the Balkans." It determined the following:¹⁴⁹

1. The military tasks for the southeastern European states in the campaign against Yugoslavia result from the political objectives:

Hungary, to which the Banat will fall, will be mainly concerned with occupying that area, but in addition has declared itself ready to cooperate in the destruction of the enemy.

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Bulgaria will recover Macedonia and is therefore principally to be involved in an attack in this direction, but without particular pressure being exerted from the German side. Furthermore, the Bulgarians, supported by a German armored unit, will provide the rear guard against Turkey. For that purpose, Bulgaria will also employ the three divisions stationed on the Greek border.

Romania, in its own as well as in the German interest, will have to limit its mission to protecting its frontiers against Yugoslavia and against Russia. Through the chief of the Wehrmacht mission, we should seek to achieve an increase in Romania's defensive preparedness against Russia.

At the very least, two-way communications across the Romanian-Hungarian frontier must proceed without hindrance between Hungarian and German liaison headquarters.

2) The following guiding principles will apply for the military cooperation and the organization of command in the coming operations:

I reserve to myself the unified command of this campaign insofar as the operational objectives of the Italian and Hungarian forces within the framework of the whole operation are concerned. It must be carried out in a way that takes into account the sensibilities of our allies and leaves to the chiefs of state of Italy and Hungary the possibility of appearing to their people and armed forces as sovereign military leaders.

I shall therefore pass on the military requirements for the coordination of operations which are to be transmitted to me by the commander in chief of the army and the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe as proposals and wishes in the form of personal letters to the Duce and to Regent Horthy.

The same procedure is to be followed by the commander in chief of the Twelfth Army toward the Bulgarian governmental and military authorities.

If individual Bulgarian divisions participate in the operations against Yugoslavia, they must be subordinate to the German commanding officers of the given areas.

3) In Hungary, a headquarters named "The German General with the High Command of the Hungarian Armed Forces" will be set up, to the staff of which a liaison staff of the Luftwaffe will also be attached.

This headquarters will serve both as my liaison with the regent and as the liaison of the Wehrmacht branches with the Hungarian high command.

All details of the cooperation with the Italian and Hungarian forces are to be settled by the Wehrmacht branches and by the liaison staffs to be exchanged between adjoining armies and air fleets.

4) The air-defense forces of Romania and Bulgaria remain integrated in the German air defense of these countries insofar as they are not employed in the operational areas of their own armies. Hungary will defend its territory itself, provided that German units operating there and the buildings essential to them are protected by the German Wehrmacht.

5) Apart from the new arrangement regarding the unified command, the agreements with Hungary remain in effect. The Second Italian Army will gain freedom of movement only after the attack of the German Second Army and the motorized group of the 46th Army Corps begins to take place.

April 5, 1941

To this end, it may become necessary that the Italian effort first be made in a southern rather than a southeastern direction. Limitation of the Italian Air Force to the protection of the flank and rear of the front in Albania, to attacks on the Mostar airfield and coastal airports, and to cooperation along the front of the Second Italian Army, as soon as it advances to the attack, will be arranged by the OKW.

6) I shall later regulate the tasks in the occupation devolving upon the various countries after the campaign. In the manner of the cooperation with the allies, even during the operations, the brotherhood in arms for the achievement of a common political goal must be stressed in every possible way.

Adolf Hitler

On the morning of April 4, Hitler received Private First Class Hubert Brinkforth at the Reich Chancellery. He was the first enlisted man to be awarded the Knight's Cross.¹⁵⁰

In the afternoon, Hitler again met with the Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka, who had returned from Rome.¹⁵¹

He again tried to stimulate Matsuoka's appetite for an attack on Singapore. During their meeting on March 27,¹⁵² Hitler had implied that, because of the strength of the Germans, Japan did not have to fear Russia. Now, he took things a step further and claimed there was no reason to fear America because, in the event of conflict, Germany would "intervene immediately." Finally, he declared the following:

When you return to Japan, you cannot report to the emperor that a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union is out of the question.

Matsuoka was not moved by Hitler's assertion. However, he took precautions of a nature which the German Chancellor certainly did not expect. He interrupted his return journey to stop over in Moscow for as long as was necessary to sign a Japanese-Russian Treaty of Nonaggression. To him, this appeared the best way to keep Japan out of the risky game Hitler was playing—at least for the time being.¹⁵³

On April 5, 1941, the Russian government and the new Yugoslav government under Simovitch entered into a Treaty of Friendship and Nonaggression. This was the only "unfriendly" act the Soviet Union might have been accused of in its relations with Germany.

In view of the persistent provocations by German troops moving into Finland, Romania, and Bulgaria, and the German measures against Russia, Molotov felt that the time had come to teach Hitler a lesson. It was meant as a warning to Hitler to abstain from the use of force in the future. However, before he undertook anything, Molotov informed the

April 6, 1941

German ambassador in Moscow of his intentions,¹⁵⁴ in contrast to Hitler, who usually proceeded without informing anyone. Molotov's move did not sway Hitler in his intentions for war; instead, it enabled him to point his finger at the "bad" Russians, who were supposedly responsible for the turn of events in Belgrade.¹⁵⁵ Once Stalin had made himself chairman of the council of people's commissars, that is, of the Soviet government, in early May, he tried to reverse Molotov's step on May 12 by expelling the Yugoslav envoy from the Soviet Union and ordering the envoys of Norway, Belgium, and Greece, who had remained in Moscow, to leave.

Stalin was ready to do anything to please Hitler. When Matsuoka left Moscow, Stalin had demonstratively thrown his arms first around the German ambassador, Count von der Schulenburg, and then around the German deputy military attaché, Colonel Krebs, while declaring: "We will remain friends with you—in any event (*auf jeden Fall*)!"¹⁵⁶ All this was to no avail: Hitler would start the war against the Soviet Union as planned.

Before he could do so, however, he had to deal with Yugoslavia. He would do this with the same "inexorable severity" which he had used against Poland.¹⁵⁷

Initially, Hitler had intended to conquer Greece from Bulgaria in a venture called "Operation Marita."¹⁵⁸ Now, Yugoslavia also had to be destroyed. This could be done all in one. Hitler later boasted that the deployment of the Wehrmacht had taken place "literally with a flick of the wrist."¹⁵⁹

On April 6, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia and Greece without prior declaration of war and, naturally, on a Sunday. The unsuspecting citizens of Belgrade were still asleep in the early morning hours when squadrons of the German Luftwaffe began to bomb the city until it was no more than a smoking heap of rubble. In his proclamation to the German Volk on the same day, Hitler called this "getting even with the Serb clique of criminals in Belgrade." Again, he rehashed the events of 1914 and claimed that the assassination in Sarajevo had been staged by the same "creatures," financed by the British Secret Service, who were now responsible for the change in government in Belgrade.

Hitler's proclamation read as follows:¹⁶⁰

April 6, 1941

Berlin, April 6, 1941

To the German Volk!

Ever since British imperialism set out to conquer the world, it strove to involve Europe and its people in ever new internal wars in order to weaken them. Only too often did England find statesmen and leaders of the people, in part blinded, in part corrupt, who offered their countries to the service of British world rule. For centuries, Jewish high finance has benefited most from these wars of conquest instigated by England. With the slogan "democracy," this conspiracy of imperialism and capitalism has led to countless complications worldwide, and especially in Europe.

In the year 1914, these forces managed to assault Germany and to force it into battle. The goal was the destruction of German economic life, the looting of Germany's economic resources, and, to this end, rendering the nation defenseless. The battle then was waged not against the National Socialist Third Reich, but against the constitutional-democratic federal state.

Barely had we managed to uplift the German Volk and to lead it to a new ascent—after the disintegration of the German economy and German life had lasted over one-and-a-half decades—through the power of the National Socialist movement before the same forces once more proclaimed their old objective: the independent Germany, recovering by itself, had to be destroyed again! And, as before, they once more believed that hired hands were most suited to bringing about the conflict.

Poland was chosen to pick a fight with Germany for no good reason and to answer with force all efforts to secure a reasonable settlement in peaceful cooperation. Confronted with the might of the new German Wehrmacht of the Third Reich, which had been set up in the meantime, this attempt failed within a few weeks. Now Great Britain attempted by way of Norway to penetrate the German right flank. With a few hours' warning, it was possible to parry the attack. In weeks of heroic struggle, it also was made to fail. German soldiers stood firm from Kirkenes to the Bight of Helgoland, and thus secured the entire German Lebensraum.

These defeats forced Churchill to search for new ways. Thus, he came to the decision to move through Belgium and Holland, which were allied with England, to strike at the heart of the German economy, the Ruhr. This time, France was chosen to bear the main burden of the battle. In a historic, unique triumphant march, the German Wehrmacht frustrated this attempt also and cleansed western Europe of the English.

Rejecting my new peace proposals, Churchill now determined to throw the weight of the British empire against Italy and, above all, to seize the North African coast with the help of troops from New Zealand and Australia. Today, this attempt also may be regarded as having failed thanks to the cooperation of German and Italian forces.

April 6, 1941

Since the beginning of the war, England has persistently striven to win the Balkans as a theater of war. Indeed, British diplomats have succeeded in first trapping Greece by offering a guarantee, following the example of the World War, and finally by abusing it for their own purposes. The documents published today give us insight into the practice of a procedure which tries time and time again to get others to fight and bleed to death for English interests in accordance with the most ancient British recipes. In contrast to this, I have repeatedly emphasized the following:

1. that the German Volk is not in opposition to the Greek people, and
2. we will never tolerate that, as happened during the World War, a power gains a foothold on Greek territory aiming to penetrate the German Lebensraum from there when the time is ripe. We swept the northern flank clean of the British. We are determined not to tolerate a like threat in the south either.

In the service of a true consolidation of Europe, I endeavored from the day I seized power to establish friendly relations above all with Yugoslavia. Consciously, I forgot about everything that had happened between Germany and Serbia. Not only did I offer the Serbs the hand of the German Volk, but I also labored, as an honest broker, to assist in a review of the difficulties in the relations between Serbia and individual nations allied to Germany.

Indeed, it appeared as though a relaxation of tensions was slowly but successfully replacing an unbearable atmosphere and paving the way for fruitful cooperation, not only of a political but also and above all of an economic nature. And what other goal could Germany have been pursuing in an area where it defended neither territorial nor political claims or interests?

In order to eliminate the feeling in Yugoslavia that the German policy would either at present or in the future change to its detriment, I tried to integrate the Yugoslav state into that group of powers which are determined to build up the European continent in the future, in accordance with the principle of respect for the justified interests of all in a common work in peace and quiet. I believed this was best suited to counteract Yugoslav fears that this objective as regards Yugoslavia was or could possibly become different from the perspective of Germany and Italy or Germany and Hungary.

I did this, although the leadership of the Yugoslav and the Greek states were supporting the interests of the warmongers from the western democracies in a most irresponsible manner, as we know from the French documents.

On March 25, 1941, in Vienna, Yugoslavia solemnly acceded to the Tripartite Pact. I and the entire German Volk were happy about this because it seemed to preclude an expansion of the war to the Balkans. Perhaps even the faint hope was justified finally to resolve the existing conflict through a reasonable settlement.

April 6, 1941

However, barely had the ministers who had signed the treaty returned to Belgrade before elements hired by the English, a military clique forever organizing coups d'état, struck back. The government which sought peace with Germany was toppled. An official statement was published according to which this had become necessary precisely because of its policy toward Germany. Besides this, scenes took place which are a disgrace in international life, and which the German Volk as a great power is not willing to tolerate patiently. The German envoy was insulted; the German military attaché was attacked; one of his assistants, an officer, was injured; numerous officials, representatives of companies, and so on, were publicly maltreated. German exhibition halls, businesses, offices, and firms were demolished and devastated. Countless women and men were beaten up, especially our Volksdeutsche, their businesses and apartments partially plundered, and a number of ethnic Germans were murdered in the process.

These events were staged by the same creatures who, in the year 1914, had already plunged the world into nameless misfortune with the assassination at Sarajevo. And, just as at that time, the British Secret Service financed and incited this military clique of criminals. And even if the events are the same, one thing has changed:

Now, the attacked state is not the erstwhile Austria but the present German Reich! The new Serb government has ordered a general mobilization. It has admitted to doing so secretly for days. Thus, it has revealed that it believes it to be able to have force replace peaceful relations with Germany. The force that it has summoned will now destroy it! The German Volk does not hate the Serb people! The German Volk sees no reason, above all, to fight Croatians and Slovenes. It does not want anything from them!

The German Volk will get even with the Serb clique of criminals in Belgrade which believes it can place itself a second time at the disposal of the British assassination attempt on peace in Europe.

Now that I have had to witness once again how, over a period of eight years, we labored in vain to build up a friendship, I determined to restore tolerable relations and an order which does justice to ethnic principles in this part of Europe, in collaboration with my ally, to entrust the further representation of German interests to that power which alone—once again—seems capable of protecting law and reason.

Since this morning, the German Reich is fighting the usurpers of Belgrade and those units which Great Britain is again attempting to lead from the Balkans into battle against peace in Europe.

The German Wehrmacht will not lay down its arms in this area until it has overthrown this circle of conspirators in Belgrade for good, and the last British man has left this part of the continent as well. May the unhappy, blinded

April 6, 1941

people realize that they owe all this to the worst "friend" this continent has had in the last three hundred years and continues to have: England.

The German Volk has entered this fight in the knowledge that its leadership has done everything humanly possible to spare it this confrontation. All we now ask of Providence is that it continue to protect and bless the paths of our soldiers, as it has done up to now!

Adolf Hitler

Hitler issued the following order of the day to the soldiers at the southeastern front:¹⁶¹

Berlin, April 6, 1941

Soldiers of the Southeastern Front!

Loyal to the principle of letting others do the fighting for it, England chose Poland to start the war in the year 1939, intending ultimately to defeat Germany in a new war, and, if possible, to destroy the German Wehrmacht. Within a few days, German soldiers on the eastern front destroyed and eliminated this instrument of British warmongers.

Then, one year ago, on April 9, England undertook to reach its goal by striking at the northern flank of Germany. Also, within a few weeks, in an unforgettable struggle, German soldiers repulsed this attack in the campaign in Norway. What the world had not thought possible came true. The Wehrmacht of the German Reich secured our northern front up to Kirkenes.

A few weeks later, Mr. Churchill believed the time had come for England and France to strike at the Ruhr through their allies, Belgium and Holland. The historic hour for the soldiers of our western front began. In the most glorious battle in the history of war, the armies of the capitalist west were defeated and finally destroyed. After forty-five days, this campaign was decided.

Now, Mr. Churchill brought the power of the British Empire to bear on our allies in North Africa. There, too, we met this threat through the cooperation of German and Italian units.

The new aim of the British organizers of this war is now to carry out a plan which they had already formed before the war and the realization of which was postponed time and time again by the gigantic German victories. In commemoration of the landing of British troops at Salonika in the World War, they trapped Greece with a guarantee and finally made it subservient to English ends.

Time and time again, I warned of a projected landing by British troops which would threaten the Reich in southeastern Europe. Regrettably, these warnings were in vain. I further tried, with the same persistent patience, to persuade the Yugoslav statesmen of the necessity of cooperation between the nations interested in the restoration of peace in these areas. Once the foundation for a like cooperation had been secured by the accession of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact, without Yugoslavia's demanding more than participation in the restoration of a reasonably organized Europe in which Yugoslavia and its people would have their share, those same criminal elements

April 6, 1941

seized power in Belgrade, criminals who continue to be in England's pay and who unleashed the World War in the year 1914. Just as in Poland, the wild instincts of inferior subjects were mobilized against the German Reich. Under the circumstances, I immediately had to recall the German colony from Yugoslavia. Members and officers of the German mission, civil servants at our consulates were violently attacked; our diplomatic missions were destroyed; German schools—just as in Poland—were devastated; countless ethnic Germans were deported, abused, or killed. Beyond this, Yugoslavia, which for weeks had secretly called up reservists, now ordered a general mobilization.

This is the answer to my eight-year-long, ever patient efforts to establish close and friendly relations with this state.

While British divisions are again landing in Greece, as during the World War, in Serbia they think they have enough time to prepare for a new assassination attempt on Germany and its allies—just as in the World War.

Soldiers of the southeastern front! Your hour has come! You will now protect the interests of the Reich in southeastern Europe, just as your comrades did in Norway and in the west one year ago. In so doing, you will be no less brave than the men of the German divisions who victoriously fought in the autumn of 1915 in those areas in which you are now deploying!

You will act humanely if the enemy treats you humanely. There where he shows the brutality peculiar to him, you will force him down harshly and mercilessly!

The struggle on Greek soil is not a struggle against Greece, but against that enemy who, just as one year ago far up north, now attempts far down south to turn the tide of war in his favor. Therefore, we will fight there, along with our allies, for as long as it takes for even the last Englishman to find his "Dunkirk" in Greece! Whoever among the Greeks supports this enemy of the world will fall with him.

Now that the German soldier has proved that he can beat the British in the snow and ice of the extreme north, he will likewise be able to do his duty in the heat of the south, now that this has become necessary. We all pursue only one goal: to secure for our Volk its freedom and, thus, for the German man, his means of livelihood in the future. The thoughts, the love, and the prayers of all Germans are once again with you, my soldiers.

Adolf Hitler

Of course, Hitler wished to take command himself of the campaign in the Balkans. Therefore, he went directly to the front, that is, to Styria. His special train served as "the Führer headquarters" for the period from April 10 to 25. The train stood ready at Mönchskirchen on a single-track line approximately twenty-five kilometers south of Vienna. The locomotive was kept constantly under steam so that, in

April 15, 1941

case of impending danger, it could escape to the safety of a nearby tunnel.

The attack took the Yugoslav army completely by surprise. In contrast with the First World War, it did not have time to rally its forces and move south to avoid contact with the enemy. German troops converged on it from three sides, joined by Hungarian and Bulgarian formations. Together, they swiftly tore the Yugoslav formations apart and surrounded them.

On April 11, the advancing German troops met up with the Italians, whom Hitler had ordered for ill-concealed reasons to discontinue their attack on Greece, turn around, and march from Albania into Yugoslavia.

On this occasion, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini the following telegram:¹⁶²

Duce!

At the moment when German and Italian formations shake hands for the first time in the Yugoslav theater of war, I send you my heartfelt greetings.

In loyal comradeship,

Adolf Hitler

On April 13, Hitler issued Directive No. 27, which contained technical details “regarding further operations in the Balkans.”¹⁶³

At this time, he also decreed the reintegration of the formerly Austrian parts of Slovenia around Maribor (Marburg), into the German Reich. While he had repeatedly declared that Germany’s borders to the southeast were completely pacified, he thought of the Yugoslavs as bad boys who, like the Belgians and the French (but unlike the good Danes!), therefore, had to return the territories gained in the years 1918 and 1920.

The Axis powers, at the behest of the Führer, took Croatia under their wings as an “independent” state. As early as April 11, the Croatian general Kvaternik proclaimed Croatia’s independence. On April 14, Ante Pavelich took over the government in Zagreb as “state leader” (*Poglavnik*). The head of the Ustasha movement¹⁶⁴ had previously lived in Italy. He sent telegrams to Hitler and Mussolini, assuring them of his loyalty. Hitler replied on April 15 as follows:¹⁶⁵

I thank you for your telegram and for the telegram from General Kvaternik, in which you announced the proclamation of the independent state

April 19, 1941

of Croatia in accordance with the will of the Croatian people, and in which you requested recognition by the German Reich of independent Croatia.

It is my great joy and satisfaction that I am able to announce recognition of the independent Croatian state at this hour in which the Croatian people have regained their yearned-for freedom due to the victorious advance of the troops of the Axis powers. The German government will be happy to negotiate the borders of the new state in a free exchange of views with the nationalist Croatian government. My best wishes for you and the future of the Croatian people.

Adolf Hitler

On April 13, German and Hungarian troops had marched into Belgrade; by March 17, the Yugoslav army at Sarajevo had capitulated.

On April 18, Hitler issued the following appeal for the Second *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* of the Red Cross, which was headed "Berlin," from his headquarters. It read as follows:¹⁶⁶

Berlin, April 18, 1941

German men and women!

A difficult year of fighting lies ahead of us. It will be recorded in history as a great and memorable event in the greatest struggle of the German Volk for its freedom and, thus, for its economic future and survival. Historic decisions of unique proportions will be made. The German homeland will once more look to its sons with proud confidence and gratitude. In our great age, at the heroic risk of their own lives, they are securing life for coming generations of Germans. Just as the immeasurable must be demanded of the men of our Volk, who are fighting as soldiers, so the German homeland must be no less willing to make sacrifices. There is no better way to thank our soldiers for their mission than to help the healing of their wounds.

The second *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* of the Red Cross should therefore unite all Germans, even more than the first one did, in the joyous readiness to help our fighting heroes. Thus, I renew my appeal to the German Volk to make voluntary donations to the second *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* of the Red Cross in order to give the wounded and sick, who as the best soldiers in the world are sacrificing themselves for their Volk, the best care as a gift from the homeland.

Adolf Hitler

On April 19, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria on his special train.¹⁶⁷ The discussion concerned Bulgaria's future share in the conquest of Yugoslavia and Greece. Similar topics figured in the talks between Hitler and Ciano the next day.

A birthday reception in front of Hitler's special train marked his birthday.¹⁶⁸ In a speech on this occasion, Göring referred to the Führer

April 20, 1941

as a “strategic genius.” Afterwards, Hitler shook hands with him, Raeder, Brauchitsch, and Keitel. An open-air concert concluded the festivities at the Führer headquarters. Rudolf Hess had chosen not to appear before Hitler in person. Instead, he congratulated him in a radio broadcast.

Hitler received congratulatory telegrams from King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini. He replied as follows:¹⁶⁹

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for the friendly good wishes transmitted to me on my birthday.

Adolf Hitler

My heartfelt thanks, Duce, for the comradely good wishes on my birthday. In these days, I feel more and more certain, as you do, that Germany and Italy, closely allied in their political ideologies and in the force of their weapons, will secure the victory and a new future for Europe.

With comradely greetings,

Adolf Hitler

The Führer had the following general thank-you message published on his birthday:¹⁷⁰

From all Gaus of the Greater German Reich and from abroad, I received such a great number of best wishes and other tokens of appreciation on my fifty-second birthday, that I herewith express my sincere thanks to all those who thought of me on this day.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler also thanked Viktor Lutze, the SA chief of staff, for the best wishes on his birthday and the reports on the deployment of the SA in a telegram of a heartfelt nature.¹⁷¹

Also on April 20, Hitler appointed Rosenberg his agent for “questions connected to the east European area.” Undoubtedly, he was not trying to do this “muddlehead” a favor; he disliked Rosenberg’s cultist ideas,¹⁷² but he needed someone whom he could later blame, if necessary, for his wild campaign of extermination in the Soviet Union. The decree read as follows:¹⁷³

Führer Headquarters, April 20, 1941

I appoint Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg as my agent for the management of questions connected to the east European area.

Reichsleiter Rosenberg will have at his disposal an agency for the management of questions connected to the east European area, to be established in accordance with his instructions, for the purpose of fulfilling the tasks assigned to him.

April 25, 1941

The requisite funding for this agency will be met in one lump sum from the budget of the Reich Chancellery.

Adolf Hitler

On April 24, Hitler sent Raeder from his headquarters a handwritten letter on Raeder's sixty-fifth birthday along with his picture. His naval adjutant presented both to Raeder.¹⁷⁴ On the same day, Hitler received Horthy at the Führer headquarters.¹⁷⁵ They discussed what part of Yugoslavia Hungary should receive. In the meantime, the war in Greece was nearing its end. It had been initiated by German troops on the morning of April 6 without prior declaration of war. Already on April 9, they had taken Salonika. On April 23, the Greek Army of Epirus capitulated. Thermopylae fell on the same day. British troops were evacuated. On April 27 German troops moved into Athens, and by April 29 the Peloponnesus and all Greek islands, with the exception of Crete, were in either German or Italian hands.

On April 25, Hitler considered the conquest of Crete. He issued Directive No. 28 as follows:¹⁷⁶

Operation Mercury (Merkur)

1. The occupation of the island of Crete (Operation Mercury) is to be prepared in order to have a base for conducting the air war against England in the eastern Mediterranean.

The assumption is that the entire Greek mainland, including the Peloponnesus, is in the hands of the Axis powers.

2. I assign command of the operation to the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, who will principally draw upon the Airborne Corps and the Luftwaffe units that are employed in the Mediterranean.

The army, subject to agreement with the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, has the task of making suitable reinforcements ready in Greece for the Airborne Corps, including a mixed tank battalion which can be transferred to Crete by sea.

The navy will make the preparations for the communications by sea, which must be secured by the beginning of the occupation of the island. For the protection of the communications and, as far as necessary, for the supply of transport space, the commander in chief of the navy will make the requisite agreements with the Italian navy.

3. All means are to be utilized to bring up the Airborne Corps together with the 22nd Division, which has again been placed under command of the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, into the assembly area to be designated by the latter. The necessary trucking space is to be made available to the Wehrmacht transportation chief by the high commands of the army and Luftwaffe. The transport movements must not lead to any delay in the strategic concentration for Barbarossa.

April 28, 1941

4. For antiaircraft protection in Greece and in Crete the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe may draw upon the antiaircraft units of the Twelfth Army. The commanders in chief of the Luftwaffe and of the army will make the necessary arrangements for their relief or replacement.

5. After occupation of the island, the Airborne Corps in whole or in part will have to be made ready for further employment. Its early replacement by forces of the army is therefore to be provided for.

For construction of the coastal defense by the commander in chief of the navy, guns captured by the army may be utilized if necessary.

6. I require the commanders in chief to report to me on the measures planned, and I require the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe to report also on the projected date for the completion of preparations. I myself will issue the order for execution of the operation.

Adolf Hitler

For Hitler, the campaign in the Balkans ended on April 26. On this day, he went on an excursion to Graz and, wearing a leather coat, inspected a national, political reform school. Afterwards, he visited “liberated” southern Styria and the city of Maribor on the Drau River.¹⁷⁷

On April 27, Hitler appeared in Klagenfurt and “spent a moment” in front of the monument dedicated to the mountain troops of the First World War.¹⁷⁸

On April 28, Hitler was back in Berlin. He received Graf von der Schulenburg, who had returned from Moscow, at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁷⁹

The ambassador labored to convince Hitler of the peaceful intent of the Soviet Union. Of course, this did not work. Angered by the Russian-Yugoslav Nonaggression Pact of April 5,¹⁸⁰ according to Schulenburg’s record, “the Führer then said that it was not yet clear who had pulled the strings in the overthrow of the Yugoslav government, England or Russia.” Hitler maintained that “he had been forewarned by events in Serbia. What had happened there was to him an example of the political unreliability of a state.”

Finally, the ambassador pointed to the enormous deliveries the Russians had made. But Hitler was not in a mood to hear good things about Russians. He claimed that “Russian deliveries were limited by transportation conditions” and ended the discussion. After all, why should he talk with a “miserable, unworldly German diplomat”¹⁸¹ about Russia? It was time to issue concrete instructions for Operation Barbarossa. He permitted the necessary discussions with Finland to take place.¹⁸²

April 29, 1941

On April 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito on his fortieth birthday.¹⁸³

At noon on the same day, Hitler spoke at the Sportpalast in Berlin before “nearly nine thousand officer candidates of the army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS.”¹⁸⁴

Hitler first greeted Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Himmler, who had lined up in front of him. In his speech, he discussed the standard three themes: the inevitability of struggle in life, the relationship between population and Lebensraum, and the Germans as not only the best but also the numerically strongest people. He juggled all sorts of figures and followed them up with nearly endless “party narratives.”¹⁸⁵ He spoke about the “inner theater of war” after 1918, about nationalism and socialism, about the seizure of power, and so forth.

Finally, he addressed the present situation and maintained that it was different from that in 1914.

Today the German nation is united as never before. Today the Reich rules a large economic area Today the German Wehrmacht is doubtlessly the most gigantic instrument of war of all time that there ever was on this earth.

He was not able to say anything concrete about the end of the war, however. Instead, he declared that he would never capitulate, that is, submit to the “will of another.”

And when you ask me, “Führer, how long will the war last?” then I can only tell you: until we have won! No matter what the circumstances! There was one word which I, as a National Socialist, refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your supreme commander. Once more, this one word is “capitulation,” and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never! And you have to think exactly the same way.

The Führer spoke the truth here. “Submission to the will of another” was undoubtedly the worst thing he could imagine.

Afterwards, Hitler hinted that he might be forced to make decisions which “the individual might not understand.” In all likelihood, he was referring to the campaign against Russia, since, until then, only von Papen had been enthusiastic about this idea.

If the leadership, if I, make decisions which the individual might not understand—where would we be now if we had waited only eight days in the south?¹⁸⁶

May 1, 1941

In concluding, Hitler imparted a few sayings to the young officers, among them the following:

Pain is the eternal companion of man. Wherever a German officer stands, German soldiers will always rally about him.

Since Göring was not present, Raeder, as the senior officer, spoke the final words. He affirmed that the young officers would “die heroically.” Then he cheered his supreme commander with three cries of *Sieg Heil!*

On April 30, Hitler visited von Ribbentrop at his apartment in Berlin-Dahlem and congratulated him on his forty-eighth birthday.¹⁸⁷

On the same day, conferences on the future conduct of military operations took place at the Reich Chancellery. The defeat of Yugoslavia and Greece had been so swift that hardly more time was needed than Hitler had allocated for Operation Marita (against Greece from bases in Bulgaria).

Hitler now regarded the campaign in the Balkans in 1941 as a parallel to the campaign in Norway in 1940.¹⁸⁸ He was convinced that he could afford such operations on the periphery without endangering his main operations (the campaign in France in 1940, and the campaign in Russia in 1941). Therefore, it was unreasonable to blame the failure of the campaign in Russia, as he later did, on its delayed beginning, or on the putsch in Belgrade, or on Mussolini’s adventure in Greece.¹⁸⁹

Had Hitler truly wished to attack Russia earlier than he did, he could have set the date for this on April 30, 1941, for late May or early June, even in due consideration of concentration and transportation taking four weeks. However, he chose Sunday, June 22,¹⁹⁰ instead. Perhaps he hoped the terrain would be in better condition by then,¹⁹¹ perhaps because he first wished to see through Operation Mercury, the conquest of Crete. The English should see that “nothing was impossible” and that he was capable of taking even a large island from the air. Then they would undoubtedly come to appreciate his point of view, as soon as Barbarossa began. If they tried to interfere with his plans by landing in Portugal, for instance, he would counter with Operation Isabella¹⁹² and destroy their plans.

Hitler’s thoughts on April 30 were taken down in three secret orders from the Führer headquarters, dated May 1 and 9. They read as follows:¹⁹³

May 1, 1941

Führer Headquarters, May 1, 1941

Conference with Chief L on April 30, 1941

1. Timetable Barbarossa: The Führer has decided: beginning Barbarossa: June 22, from May 23 on, planning for maximum performance. At beginning of operations, OKH reserves will not have arrived in designated areas.

2. Relative power in Operation Barbarossa: Sector North: German and Russian forces about the same. Sector Center: strong German superiority. Sector South: Russian superiority.

3. Russian assembly: further strong troop movement to the German-Russian border.

4. Assessment of development Barbarossa by commander in chief of the army: expected hard frontier battles, duration up to four weeks. In the longer term, only weak resistance has to be expected. Assessment of Russian soldiers: wherever placed, the Russian will give battle to the end.

5. Talks with Finland. Talks approved by the Führer in accordance with OKW./WFSt./Abt. LIOp. 44 594/41 g. K. Chefs. of April 28, 1941.

6. Talks with Hungary only possible in last third of the month of May. Führer thinks Hungarians willing to take defensive measures along border with Russia, but will not permit German forces into Hungary.

7. Talks with Romania will be possible only later.

8. Disguise talks with friendly countries: German attack planned in the west, need to cover front in the east. Participation of friendly countries as purely defensive measures.

9. Iberian Peninsula: Führer expects English landing in Portugal, an enlargement of approaches to Gibraltar, and possible establishment of aerial bases in Morocco.

10. Distribution of forces: [technical details follow].

Führer Headquarters, May 1, 1941

Re: Spain and Portugal. The Führer expressed the following ideas:

1. Increasingly frequent references in the English press and propaganda to German preparations for an attack on the Iberian Peninsula and on Gibraltar especially.

It is possible that the English themselves are looking for a pretext for landing in Spain or Portugal at an appropriate time (Barbarossa). Simultaneous attacks to expand approaches to Gibraltar are possible; attempt of intervention in Morocco cannot be ruled out either.

In view of the forces and means of transportation at the disposal of the enemy a simultaneous landing in France can be excluded in the event he carries out his supposed intentions on the Iberian Peninsula.

Führer Headquarters, May 9, 1941

1. The operation has the code name "Isabella." The commander in chief west is charged with its preparation and implementation.

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This year also, Hitler did not find the time to say a few words on "Labor Day," May 1. He was busy preparing a victory speech for the Reichstag on the campaign in the Balkans. And so, on May 1, he had his deputy speak.

Rudolf Hess chose to give the talk at the Messerschmidt Works in Augsburg.¹⁹⁴ He presented the Pioneer of Labor award in gold to Reichsleiter Max Amann, Reich Minister Ohnesorge, and the aircraft designer Willy Messerschmidt. Hess spoke at great length, mentioning his personal interest in the Messerschmidt Works. Ten days later, it became apparent just where this "personal interest" had led him!

At 6:00 p.m. on May 4, Hitler spoke before the Reichstag, reporting triumphantly on the campaign in the Balkans.

He began his speech in the following manner:¹⁹⁵

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

At a time when deeds are everything and words count for little, it is not my intention to step before you as the elected representatives of the German Volk more often than absolutely necessary.

While he claimed that words "count for little," he nevertheless gave a wordy account of the campaigns in Poland, Norway, Belgium, and France, as well as of his repeated "peace offers."

Once he had reached the topic of the air war, he again threatened to strike back "a hundred times" and called Churchill a "fool," a "drunk," and a "madman."

He [Churchill] has now got this war. My promise to pay him back for every bomb a hundred times from a certain point on, if necessary, has not even once moved this man to think about the criminal nature of his actions. He declared that this did not weigh on his conscience. Yes, he even assured us that, after such bomb attacks, the British people looked up to him all the more with radiant cheerfulness, so that every time he returned to London he did so with his strength renewed! Perhaps Mr. Churchill's belief, fixed as it was, that he could continue to wage war in this manner was given new strength. However, we are no less determined to strike back a hundred times in the future for every bomb, if necessary, and to do so until the British people have rid themselves of this criminal and his methods.

And if Mr. Churchill from time to time thinks that he needs to lend force and emphasis to his war through propaganda, then we are likewise willing to begin the war in this way. The appeal of this fool and his satellites to the German Volk to leave me on May 1 of all days can only be explained by either a paralytic disease or the delusion of a drunk. In this abnormal mental state also lies the cause of the decision to transform the Balkans into a theater of war. For five years, this man has been running like a madman through Europe, looking

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for something to burn. Regrettably, there are always hirelings to be found who will open the gateway to their countries for this international incendiary.

Since, in the course of the winter, he had managed to force the view on the British people, clouded in claims and swindle, that the German Reich—exhausted by the campaign last year—was at the end of its tether, he now felt obliged to start a new fire in Europe in order to prevent an awakening. He returned to the project which he had already had in mind in the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940.

My deputies, men of the Reichstag, you will recall the published documents of *La Charité*,¹⁹⁶ which revealed an attempt to transform the Balkans into a European theater of war as early as the winter 1939-1940. The men responsible for arranging this undertaking were Mr. Churchill, Halifax, Daladier, Paul Reynaud, General Weygand, and General Gamelin. As the documents make clear, they counted on the possibility, in the event that this assassination attempt on the peace in southeastern Europe succeeded, of mobilizing around a hundred divisions in the interest of England. The sudden collapse in May and June of last year caused these plans to be given up for the time being. However, already last autumn, Mr. Churchill again began to consider this problem. If it had become more difficult in the meantime, then this was due to a development in the Balkans; a change in Romania which once and for all excluded this state as a possible ally for England. The new Romania under the leadership of General Antonescu advocated an exclusively Romanian policy, irrespective of the hopes of the British war profiteers. In addition to this, there is the attitude of Germany itself.

My deputies, before I speak about this question today, I want to give an overview of the goals of German policy in the Balkans as I have them in mind, and how we will go about reaching them.

1. As before, the German Reich has no territorial or selfish political interests in the Balkans. This means that the German Reich is not interested in the territorial problems of these states, or their domestic situation, for whatever selfish reasons.

2. However, the German Reich has labored to establish close economic ties with these states and to consolidate them. This was not only in the interest of the Reich, but also in the interest of the countries themselves, for, if ever the emergency economies of two trading partners rationally complemented each other, then this was the case with the Balkan states and Germany. Germany is an industrial state and needs foodstuffs and raw materials. The Balkan states are agrarian; they produce raw materials and need industrial products. This inevitably resulted in the possibility of a very fruitful expansion of mutual trade. If English or American circles regard this as an unjustified penetration of the Balkans by Germany, then this is a stupid as well as a brazen presumption, because every state will conduct its economic policy in accordance with the interests of its people and not in accordance with the interests of foreign, rootless, Jewish-democratic capitalists. Besides, England as well as America could work in these areas only as sellers, never as buyers. It takes the entire macroeconomic stupidity of capitalist democracies to imagine that states can

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exist in the long run if they are obliged to buy from you, but you do not want to and cannot buy anything from them. Not only has Germany sold to the Balkan states, but it has also been the biggest buyer there, a consistent and solid buyer. It has paid for the products of the farmer in the Balkans with the labor of the German industrial worker, and not with the swindle of monies and currency which have suffered from chronic inflation for years.

Therefore, it was not surprising that Germany became the most important trading partner of the Balkan states. This was not only in the interest of the Germans, but also as much in the interest of the people of the Balkans themselves. Only the purely capitalist-oriented brains of our Jewish democracies could claim that if one state delivers machines to another, it thereby dominates this state. In truth, a like domination could only be a mutual one. Actually, it is easier to make do without machines than without foodstuffs or raw materials. Thus, the partner who receives grain or raw materials for his machines is perhaps more tied down than the recipient of industrial products. No! There were neither victor nor vanquished in this business, only partners. And it is the great ambition of the German Reich of the National Socialist Revolution to be a decent partner, paying with decent, solid ware and not with democratic, fraudulent paper (*demokratische Schwindelpapiere*).

3. If one wishes to speak of political interests in this matter, then the German Reich has had only one interest in view of this, namely, to see its trading partner internally healthy and strong. The German Reich has done everything to contribute help to these countries with its influence, assistance, advice, and deeds, in order to consolidate their existence and their domestic order, irrespective of their forms of government. Indeed, adherence to this approach has led to the increasing prosperity of these countries and the slow emergence of mutual trust. All the greater were the efforts of the incendiary of the world (*Weltbrandstifter*), Churchill, to disrupt this peaceful development and, through completely worthless British promises of assistance, British guarantees, and so on, to force on this pacified area in Europe an element of disquiet, insecurity, distrust, and, finally, conflict. In this, he had the support of all those dark phenomena who, influenced by the British in economic and ideological questions, are willing to sacrifice the interests of their own people for the benefit of their material and spiritual patrons.

With like "guarantees," they first trapped the Romanian state and then, above all, the Greek. That there was no power behind these guarantees to give real assistance, that it was only a question of luring states to go off the rails in the interest of British policy has been amply proven in the meantime. Romania has had hell to pay for this guarantee, which was intended to estrange it from the Axis powers.

Greece, which least needed a like guarantee, was likewise ready to heed the English birdcall and to tie its fate to the financial patronage of its royal lord. Even today, I believe that I owe it to historical truth to differentiate between the Greek people and their narrow, corrupt class of leaders. Inspired by a king enslaved to England, it had its eye not on fulfilling the tasks of the Greek government, but on appropriating the goals of the British war policy. I

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sincerely regretted this. For me, as a German whose education as a youth as well as in later life was imbued with a profound admiration for the civilization and art of the country from which the first light of human beauty and dignity emerged, it was very hard and bitter to watch this development without being able to do anything against it. Through the documents of La Charité, we had gained insight into the activities of the forces which, sooner or later, were bound to bring terrible disaster upon the Greek state.

In late summer of last year, Mr. Churchill had managed to substantiate the Platonic guarantees to Greece in the heads of certain elements to such an extent that the result was a persistent series of violations of neutrality. Primarily, this concerned Italy. Thus, already in October of 1940, it was felt necessary to approach the Greek government with proposals and to demand guarantees of a nature suited to end this situation which had become unbearable for Italy. Given the influence of the British warmongers, this request was brusquely rejected, and the peace in the Balkans ended. The beginning of bad weather, snow, storms, and rain, in combination with the truly valiant resistance of the Greek soldiers—I must do justice to history here—left the government in Athens enough time to rethink its unfortunate decision and to search for a reasonable solution to the situation.

Germany, with the faint hope of somehow contributing to a clarification of the question, did not sever relations with Greece. However, it was my duty to point out to the world that Germany would not stand by and watch a reenactment of the Salonika idea of the World War without taking action. Regrettably, my warning that if the English tried to gain a foothold in Europe we were determined immediately to force them back out to sea was not taken seriously enough. And so we looked on all winter, as the English increasingly tried to establish bases for a new Salonika army. They began to lay out airports, attended to organization on the ground, convinced that this would allow the deployment to be conducted more speedily. Finally, there was the continuous transport of matériel, carrying equipment for an army, which—in the opinion and insight of Mr. Churchill—was to be brought to Greece within a few weeks. As mentioned earlier, my deputies, this did not remain hidden from us. We carefully watched these peculiar activities for many months, though with restraint.

The setback which the Italian army suffered in North Africa, due to the technical inferiority of its antitank defenses and of its tanks, finally convinced Mr. Churchill that the time had come to move the theater of war from Libya to Greece. He withdrew the remaining tanks, as well as the infantry divisions made up mainly of Australians and New Zealanders. He was convinced that he was pulling off a coup which would set the Balkans on fire at once. And so Mr. Churchill made one of the biggest mistakes in this war. Once there was no doubt left that the English intended to gain a foothold on the Balkans, I took the necessary steps to bring the appropriate forces to this area of vital importance for Germany, step by step, in order to be able to counter immediately any potential nonsense by this gentleman.

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I must stress here that all this was not directed against Greece. The Duce himself never asked me to place at his disposal even one German division in a like case. He was convinced that, once the warm season began, the fight against Greece would end quickly and victoriously, in one way or another. I shared this opinion. The concentration of German troops was not a question of helping Italy against Greece. Instead, it was a preventive measure in view of the British attempt to sneak secretly into the Balkans, under cover of the fracas of the Italian-Greek war, in order to bring about a decision there, recalling the example of the Salonika army of the World War, and, above all, to draw other forces into the whirlpool of the war. Among other things, this hope rested on two states: Turkey and Yugoslavia. However, in the years since the seizure of power, I labored especially to bring about close cooperation with these two states, based on economic expedience.

Yugoslavia, as far as its Serbian core was concerned, had been our enemy in the World War. Yes, the World War began in Belgrade. In spite of this, the German Volk, which is not resentful by nature, did not harbor any hatred. Turkey was our ally in the World War. The unfortunate outcome of this struggle weighed Turkey down as much as it did us. The great, ingenious creator of young Turkey¹⁹⁷ was the first to set a wonderful example for the uplifting of those allies who had been forsaken by fortune and had suffered a terrible fate. While Turkey maintained independence in its decision-making, thanks to the realistic attitude of its state leadership, Yugoslavia became the victim of British intrigues.

My deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

Most of you know—above all, my old party comrades—how hard I tried to establish sincere relations, understanding, and even friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia. I worked on this for years. I believed I was supported in this by individual representatives of this country who thought close cooperation between our two states would be beneficial, as I did. Once the Balkans threatened to be drawn into this war, sooner or later, by the British intrigues, I labored to do everything in my power to keep Yugoslavia out of so dangerous an involvement. In this spirit, our foreign minister, party comrade von Ribbentrop, undertook in numerous meetings and talks to point out, with the patience which is characteristic of him, and with ingenious persistence, the expedience, yes, the necessity, of keeping at least this part of Europe out of this wretched war. In this spirit, he approached the Yugoslav government with proposals of a nature so excellent and loyal that, even in the former Yugoslav state, voices in favor of close cooperation were heard with increasing frequency. In this sense, it is perfectly correct when Mr. Halifax¹⁹⁸ today declares that it was not Germany's intention to bring about a war in the Balkans. Yes, it is right that we sincerely labored to open up an avenue, by initiating close cooperation with Yugoslavia, for ending the conflict with Greece while allowing for the justified ambitions of Italy.

The Duce not only approved of our efforts to bring Yugoslavia into a community of interests as regards our desire for peace but also supported them with all his power. So finally it became possible to move Yugoslavia to accede

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to the Tripartite Pact, which asked nothing of Yugoslavia, but held only advantages for it. I owe it to historical truth to state today that this pact and the supplemental agreement did not oblige Yugoslavia to render assistance. Quite the contrary! Yugoslavia received solemn assurances from the parties of the Tripartite Pact that it would not be approached with requests for assistance, and also that we were willing to refrain from the start from transporting war matériel across its territory. Beyond this, in response to a substantiated claim by its government, Yugoslavia received the assurance that, in the event of territorial readjustments in the Balkans, it would be granted sovereign access to the Aegean Sea, which, among other things, would include the city of Salonika. And thus, on March 25 of this year, a pact was signed in Vienna which held out the prospect of a great future for the Yugoslav state and might secure peace in the Balkans.

My deputies, you will understand that I left this beautiful city on the Danube River that day with a feeling of true happiness. Not only did my work in foreign policy over eight years appear to bear fruit, but I also thought that perhaps, at the last minute, I had rendered a German intervention in the Balkans superfluous.

Two days later, all of us were shaken by the news of the coup of a handful of hired putschists. Their deed brought the jubilant cry of the British prime minister, who proclaimed that he finally had something good to report. My deputies, you will further understand that now I immediately ordered the attack. One cannot treat the German Reich in this way. You cannot plead for friendship for years, you cannot conclude a treaty which only benefits the other party and then see how, overnight, not only this treaty is broken, but also the representatives of the German government are insulted in response, the military attaché is threatened, his assistant is injured, countless other Germans are ill-treated; offices, schools, and exhibition halls, and so on, are demolished; the apartments of Reich Germans are destroyed; and ethnic Germans are hunted down and killed, as though they were fair game.

God knows I wanted peace.

If Mr. Halifax jeers that this was well known and that is why they had to force us to fight, as though this meant the triumph of British statesmanship, then all I can do, confronted with such baseness, is to protect the interests of the Reich with the means, which, thank God, are at our disposal. I was able to make this decision all the more calmly as I knew it to be in agreement with the following realities:

1. the unchanging loyal sentiment and attitude of Bulgaria toward the German Reich, and
2. the now likewise justly outraged public opinion in Hungary.

Both our old allies had to regard such an act as a provocation, especially since it was committed by a state which once before had set Europe aflame and on whose conscience, as a result, rested the enormous suffering of Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

The general instructions for the conduct of operations, issued by me through the high command of the Wehrmacht on March 27, set the army and

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the Luftwaffe a difficult task. Literally with a flick of the wrist, an additional great assembly had to be initiated; units which had already arrived had to be moved again; supplies had to be secured; the Luftwaffe had to take up position in numerous improvised operational bases which were, in part, flooded at first. Without the understanding assistance of Hungary, as well as the very loyal attitude of Romania, it would hardly have been possible to carry out the instructions as ordered in the little time available. I chose April 6 as the date for the attack. On this day, Group South, deployed in Bulgaria, was ready for the attack. The deployment of further armies would follow immediately once they were ready. The dates fixed were April 8, or 10 and 11, respectively.

The idea of the operations was the following:

1. To advance with one army out of Bulgaria toward Greek Thrace in the direction of the Aegean Sea. The point of main effort was on the right wing, where deployment of one mountain division and one tank division was to force a breakthrough to Salonika,

2. To push a second army through in the direction of Skopje with the objective of establishing in the speediest manner possible a connection with the Italian forces in Albania. These two operations were to start on April 6.

3. Another operation, which started on the eighth, provided for a breakthrough of one army out of Bulgaria in the general direction of Nish, with the objective of reaching the area around Belgrade. In cooperation with a German corps, the Banat was to be occupied on the tenth, and, from there, Belgrade was to be attacked from the north.

4. On the eleventh, an army assembling in Carinthia-Styria and western Hungary was to begin an offensive in the general direction of Zagreb-Sarajevo and Belgrade.

In this connection, we entered into voluntary agreements with our allies Italy and Hungary. The Italian armed forces were intended to advance along the coast, from their Julian front in the general direction of Albania, and from Albania across Scutari to join hands with the units there, as well as to break through the Yugoslav frontier positions across from Skopje to join up with the German army advancing in this section, and finally to break through the Greek front in Albania and, if possible, to push it back to the sea. At the same time, the Dalmatian and Ionian Islands were to be occupied, and all other bases taken. Between the two air forces as well, there had been agreements on cooperation.

The command of the German armies deployed against Macedonia and Greece was in the hands of Field Marshal von List, who had proved exceedingly successful in previous campaigns. This time also, under the most difficult circumstances, he fulfilled this mission in a superior manner. The forces advancing from the southwest and from Albania against Yugoslavia were under the command of Colonel General von Weichs. He, too, along with the units subordinate to him, reached his objectives in the shortest time possible. The army and Waffen SS, operating under the high command of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and the chief of the general staff, Colonel General Halder, forced the Greek Thracian army to capitulate after only five days, effected a union with the Italian forces advancing from Albania, brought Salonika into German

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hands, forced Serbia to capitulate after twelve days, and thereby created the conditions for the difficult as well as glorious breakthrough from Larissa to Athens. This operation was crowned by the occupation of the Peloponnesus and numerous Greek islands. The high command of the Wehrmacht will undertake a detailed appraisal of these truly historic accomplishments. Its chief, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Jodl proved as outstanding as always in these operations.

The Luftwaffe, under the personal high command of the Reichsmarschall and his chief of the general staff, General Jeschonnek, was deployed in two groups under the command of Colonel General Löhner and General von Richthofen. Its tasks were the following:

1. To beat the enemy air force, to destroy its ground organization,
2. To attack all militarily significant targets in the center of the conspiracy, Belgrade, and thus to eliminate them from the start, and
3. To help the engaged German troops, through the active deployment of planes and antiaircraft defenses, to break down the resistance of the enemy, to make his escape difficult, to preclude his embarkation, if possible, and to give crucial help to the tasks of the army through the deployment of airborne troops and parachutists.

After this report on operations, Hitler felt the moment had come to say a word of consequence: "Nothing is impossible for the German soldier!" He declared as follows:

My Deputies!

The German Wehrmacht has outdone itself in this campaign! The deployment alone presented many difficulties. The attack on the moderately fortified positions, especially along the Thracian front, belongs among the most difficult tasks for an army. During this campaign, tanks fought on terrain which previously had been thought impassable for tanks. Motorized units attained achievements to the credit of the man, his expertise, his courage, his endurance, as well as the quality of the matériel. Infantry, tank, and mountain divisions, as well as the units of the Waffen SS, competed with one another in an untiring deployment of valor and dedication, endurance and tenacity, to reach the command objectives. The work of the general staff was again truly outstanding. The Luftwaffe has added to its historic glory a new, special one: with self-sacrifice and daring which only the man who knows the difficulties of the terrain can appreciate, it flew sorties for days, often in terrible climatic conditions which, only a short time ago, had been thought completely impossible. As always, antiaircraft guns accompanied the infantry and tank divisions on roads, which could barely be described as such.

Only one sentence can be written about this campaign: nothing is impossible for the German soldier!

In this theater of war, the drivers of the combat vehicles, as well as those of the columns, the drivers of the supply convoys, of the tractors of the artillery and antiaircraft artillery deserve special mention. In the struggle against

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fortified positions, in the construction of bridges and roads, our engineers deserve a special page of glory. The signal corps deserves our highest praise. Across bottomless roads, dynamited streets, talus and scree material, narrow paths through the rocks, torrential streams, broken bridges, sky-high passes, bare cliffs, the triumphant march advanced and extinguished the war in two states within three weeks.

We realize how great a share our allies had in these successes. Especially the six-month-long struggle of Italy in Greece, under the most difficult circumstances and exacting sacrifices, not only tied down the main Greek force but also weakened it so considerably that its collapse became inevitable. The Hungarian army also rendered proof of its old glory. It occupied the Batshka and, along with its motorized units it marched forward across the Sava River. To do justice to history, I am obliged to state that, of the enemies confronting us, the Greek soldier fought with death-defying valor. He surrendered only after further resistance had become impossible and senseless.

However, I am now forced to speak about that adversary who occasioned this struggle and was the reason for it. As a German and as a soldier, I hold it to be beneath me ever to disparage a valiant enemy. It appears to me to be necessary, however, to protect the truth from the lies of a man who as a soldier is a miserable politician, and as a politician is likewise a miserable soldier. Mr. Churchill, who began this fight, is searching for something to say which, sooner or later, as in the case of Norway or Dunkirk, can be transformed by lies into a success. I find this dishonorable, but understandable with this man. If ever someone else, as a politician, suffered so many defeats and, as a soldier, witnessed so many catastrophes, he would not have remained in office six weeks, unless he possessed the one ability which distinguishes Mr. Churchill, namely, to lie with a pious face for as long as it takes to distort the truth to such an extent that the most terrible defeat is transformed into a glorious victory. Mr. Churchill can befog his countrymen with this, but he cannot eliminate the consequences of his defeats.

A British army of sixty to seventy thousand men landed in Greece. Before the catastrophe, the same man maintained it had been two hundred forty thousand men. The objective of this army was to attack Germany from the south, to deal it a defeat, and to bring about a turn in the fortunes of war from here, as in 1918. Barely two weeks after the start of operations, the ally driven into the disaster by Mr. Churchill once again, namely, Yugoslavia, was defeated. Three weeks later, the British troops in Greece had been either killed, wounded, taken prisoner, drowned, or chased away. Those are the facts! The prophecy I made during my last Reichstag speech, namely, that wherever the British set foot on the continent, they would be attacked by us and driven back to sea, proved to be more correct than that of Mr. Churchill!

Now he has the nerve to claim that this war cost us seventy-five thousand dead, more than double the campaign in the west. He takes things a step further: through one of his hirelings, he has informed his exceptionally intelligent Englishmen that the British, having slain enormous masses of Germans, finally turned away, disgusted with the slaughter, and, so to speak,

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retreated because of this. And so the Australians and New Zealanders would still be in Greece, had not the English slain so many Germans, with their mixture of the courage of a lion and the softheartedness of a child, that they finally turned away from their own heroic deeds in disgust and horror, climbed aboard their ships, and sailed away. This was probably the reason why we found mostly Australians and New Zealanders among the dead and prisoners of war. Something like that you can tell your audience in a democracy. I will now tell you the results of this campaign in a few short figures.

Hitler once again indulged his arithmomania in the account that followed. Time and again, he stressed the relatively few German losses. This was the last time, however, that he dared to present so frivolous a balance sheet.

In the course of operations against Yugoslavia, excluding soldiers of German ethnicity and Macedonians, who were for the most part released immediately, purely Serb prisoners captured were: six thousand two hundred ninety-eight officers, three hundred thirty-seven thousand eight hundred sixty-four men. These figures are not yet final, they are merely the result of counts up to now. The figure for the Greek prisoners (eight thousand officers, two hundred ten thousand men) cannot be compared with those or taken at face value because, as far as the Greek army of Macedonia and Epirus is concerned, they were surrounded and forced to surrender in the course of common German and Italian operations. In view of the generally valiant behavior of the Greek soldiers, these prisoners were and are being released immediately.

The number of captured English, New Zealand, and Australian officers and men stands at nine thousand. The booty cannot yet be estimated. Our share, due to the effectiveness of German weapons, already amounts to more than half a million rifles, over a thousand guns, thousands of machine guns, antiaircraft guns, mortars, numerous vehicles, and great amounts of ammunition and equipment.

I would like to add to this the amount of enemy tonnage sunk by the Luftwaffe. Seventy-five ships with a tonnage of four hundred thousand tons were destroyed. A hundred forty-seven ships with a tonnage of seven hundred thousand tons were damaged. The deployment of the following German forces led to these results:

1. Thirty-one full divisions and two half-divisions were assigned to operations in the southeast. The initial deployment of these forces took seven days.

2. Of these, eleven infantry and mountain divisions, six tank divisions, three fully motorized and two half-motorized divisions of the army and the Waffen SS actually saw action.

3. Of these divisions, eleven were engaged for more than six days of fighting, and ten for less than six days of fighting.

4. Eleven divisions were not deployed at all.

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5. Already prior to the conclusion of operations in Greece, three divisions could be withdrawn. Eight more divisions were not brought up because they were no longer needed. Two divisions were stopped at the jumping-off points for the same reason.

6. Only five divisions made contact with the English enemy. Of the three panzer divisions included in these, only two were engaged. The third was stopped in the course of operations and, as it was no longer needed, it was likewise withdrawn.

Therefore, I have established that only six panzer divisions, one mountain division, and the *Leibstandarte* actually fought the English, New Zealanders, and Australians.

The losses of the German army and of the German Luftwaffe, as well as of the Waffen SS, have been fewer in this campaign than in any other to date. In the war against Yugoslavia, Greece, that is, Great Britain in Greece, the Wehrmacht recorded the following losses: for the army and Waffen SS: fifty-seven officers and a thousand forty-two noncommissioned officers and men dead; a hundred eighty-one officers and three thousand five hundred seventy-one noncommissioned officers and men wounded; thirteen officers and three hundred seventy-two noncommissioned officers and men missing in action. The Luftwaffe: ten officers and forty-two noncommissioned officers and men dead; thirty-six officers and a hundred four noncommissioned officers and men missing in action.

My deputies! I can only repeat that we feel the difficulty of the sacrifice for the individual families, that the entire German Volk thanks them with all its heart. In sum, the losses were so few that they represent the greatest justification; first, for the approach and timetable of this campaign; second, for the conduct of operations; third, for their implementation.

It is the training of our corps of leaders, which is beyond comparison, the great expertise of our soldiers, the superiority of our equipment, the quality of our ammunition, as well as the ice-cold valor of the individual man which allowed us to secure this historic and truly decisive success with so little sacrifice, and this at the same time as the two allied Axis powers were also able to destroy the so-called success of the British forces in just a few weeks. For we cannot separate the activities of the German Africa Corps, connected with the name of General Rommel, and of the Italian forces in the struggle for Cyrenaica, from the operations on the Balkans. One of the most amateurish (*stümperhaft*) of strategists¹⁹⁹ has lost two theaters of war in one blow. That this man, whom any other people would have court-martialed, arouses new admiration as prime minister in his country is not a sign of that greatness demonstrated by Roman senators in antiquity toward their defeated military commanders, but instead it is evidence of the eternal blindness with which the gods strike those whom they wish to destroy.

The consequences of this campaign are extraordinary. In view of the possibility, proved by the events, that a small clique of conspirators in Belgrade can start a fire against Germany time and again in the service of extra-continental interests, the elimination of this danger means a relaxation of

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tensions in all of Europe. The Danube, an important traffic route, has been secured for all time against further acts of sabotage. Traffic has been fully restored.

The German Reich has no special territorial interests in these areas, aside from a modest correction of its borders which were violated by the World War. Politically, we are only interested in securing the peace in this region; economically, in the establishing of an order which promotes the production of goods and begins anew the exchange of goods for the benefit of all.

It is in the service of a higher justice that those interests also will be considered that are based on ethnographic, historic, and economic conditions. Germany is only an interested observer of this development. We welcome the fact that our allies are now able to satisfy their justified national and political aspirations. We are happy about the establishment of an independent Croatian state, with which we hope to cooperate in the future in friendship and confidence. Especially in the sphere of economics, this can only be to the benefit of both parties. That the Hungarian people are taking a further step to revise the unjust peace treaty which once was imposed on them fills us with heartfelt sympathy. That the injustice done to Bulgaria is being atoned for moves us especially, since we feel that the German Volk has paid a historic debt of gratitude to its comrades in arms of the Great War in rendering this revision possible through the force of its arms. Our ally Italy receives increased political and territorial influence in the Lebensraum which befits it alone. It has earned this through the exceedingly great sacrifice of blood which it has had to make for the future of the Axis since October of last year.

We feel sincere sympathy for the defeated, unfortunate people of Greece. It has become the victim of its king and of a small, blinded group of leaders. However, it has fought so valiantly that its enemies cannot deny it the proper respect. Perhaps the Serb people will draw the only proper conclusion from this, its catastrophe: the officers of the putsch are a misfortune for the country. This time, those concerned will not so quickly forget the "noble" manner in which the state and its leaders, for whom they had the honor to sacrifice themselves, abandoned them, in accordance with the principle: never expect gratitude once you've served your purpose.

Rarely has greater cynicism been employed in honoring the sacrifice of little people than in this case. For, to drive nations as helpmates into a war and then to declare that one did not really believe in success from the start, that one only did this in order to force someone to fight who did not want to fight in this theater of war, must be the most disgraceful thing which world history has to offer. Only an age in which capitalist greed and political hypocrisy unite, as they do in the democracies today, is capable of regarding such a procedure as so little dishonorable that its responsible masterminds are able to boast of it publicly.

My deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

As we review this last campaign, we once again realize the significance of the best training of the soldiers, as well as of the best equipment. So much blood was saved by what cost so much sweat beforehand. What was taught to our

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soldiers in terms of expertise during their relentless, laborious training proved very advantageous, particularly in this operation. Thanks to this training, thanks to the expertise of the German soldiers and their leaders, a minimum of blood achieved a maximum result. Alas, this minimum sacrifice necessitated maximum weaponry, the quality of this weaponry, maximum ammunition, and the quality of this ammunition. I do not belong to those men who see war as a purely material problem, for matter is dead, and only man gives it life. Alas, even the best soldier must fail if he is handed a bad or otherwise unsatisfactory weapon. The lives of many of our sons therefore lie in the hands of the homeland. Its sweat can spare the blood of our soldiers. Thus, with a view to our fighting front, it is the highest duty of the German Volk to do everything in its power to give the front the weapons it needs. After all, aside from all the other reasons, it was the lack of a new weapon for the offensive strong enough to decide the war and of a corresponding weapon for the defensive which ultimately caused the defeat in the World War.

What our soldiers are capable of achieving, they have proved in this campaign. The sum of the efforts of the individual and of the whole can never be fully appreciated by the homeland. Whatever it places at the disposal of the nation in its fateful struggle, in terms of working power, this stands in no relation to the work millions of our men did at the front, must do, and will do. And I do not want this performance ever to be outdone by any other state. Yes, not only that. We all are obliged to see to it that this advantage we possess does not diminish any further; instead, it should become greater all the time. This is not a problem of capital, it is a problem of labor and, therefore, of our will and our abilities.

Hitler subsequently intimated the increasing need for women to be employed in the war and armament industry. This clearly indicated that Germany's reserves of soldiers and armament workers were beginning to run low. And the man-devouring campaign in Russia had not even started! Hitler declared as follows:

I believe that, above all, the German girl and the German woman are capable of making an even greater contribution. Millions of German women in the countryside are out in the fields replacing the men through hard work. Millions of German women and girls work in factories, workshops, and offices, and do a man's job there. It is not unjust when we demand that many hundreds of thousands of others take these millions of working German Volksgenossen as an example. For, if today we are in a position to mobilize the work of half of Europe in this struggle, still our own Volk stands at the fore of this working process as its most valuable element. If today the democratic agitators of a country—whom the German Volk has not done anything to, and whose claim that it intends to do something to them is an absurd lie—if they threaten to suffocate the inconvenient National Socialist people's state with the might of their capitalist system, their material production, then there is only one answer to this: the German Volk will never again see a second year 1918, but instead it

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will rise up to even greater achievements in all spheres of national resistance. It will all the more fanatically avow the oath that neither the force of arms nor time will ever bend or break us!²⁰⁰

It will hence maintain the superiority of its armament and not allow its advantage to be lessened. Even if the German soldier now already possesses the best weapons in the world, he will receive still better ones this year and the next year. And if, in contrast to the World War, the matériel side of this war today does not represent a burden to him, then this situation will all the more not deteriorate but will improve in the future. We thus are obliged to integrate the working power of the entire nation in this most gigantic armament process of world history. The necessary steps will be taken with National Socialist determination and thoroughness.

My deputies, men of the Reichstag! Beyond this, I can assure you that, calmly and with the greatest confidence, I look to the future. The German Reich and its allies represent a military, economic, and, above all, moral power which is superior to any conceivable coalition in the world. The German Wehrmacht will always intervene whenever and wherever necessary. The confidence of the German Volk will accompany the soldiers on their way. It knows that the war of this world is the result only of the greed of a few international warmongers and the Jewish democracies behind them. These criminals have rejected the German willingness for peace because it is contrary to their capitalist interests. Who, in such a satanic undertaking, dares use the name "God," commits blasphemy against Providence and, according to our profound conviction, his reward can only be destruction. So, beyond this, today we fight not only for our own existence, but to free the world of a conspiracy which knows no scruples in subordinating the happiness of nations and man to its base egotism. After a struggle of fifteen years, the National Socialist movement once defeated these enemies at home; the National Socialist state will know how to defend itself abroad, too.

The year 1941 shall enter history as the greatest year of our rising up! In this spirit, the German Wehrmacht, army, navy, and Luftwaffe will do their duty.

At this point, let me express my gratitude to the German soldier here, who again performed so many outstanding actions in this campaign, and my gratitude to the German Volk in the cities and in the countryside, whose diligence created the conditions for these successes. I would especially like to thank those Volksgenossen who fell as the victims of this war or who are wounded, and those who, as family members, mourn these victims. When, in all this, we look to the almighty ruler of all destinies, then we must be grateful especially for His allowing us to obtain these great successes with the expenditure of so little blood. We can only ask Him not to abandon our Volk in the future either. Whatever we can do to defend ourselves against our enemies shall be done.

A spirit has come to life in this country, the like of which the world has never encountered before! A believing feeling of community has taken hold of our Volk! No power on earth can ever again tear from us what we secured, after

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having followed the wrong track full of inner struggle, and what makes us proud before other people. In the age of the Jewish-capitalist craze for gold, position, and class, the National Socialist people's state stands like a monument of social justice and lucid reason. It will not only outlast this war, but the coming millennium!

Once Hitler had ended, he returned to his seat next to Rudolf Hess. He did not know that this was the last time that he would ever be this close to his "deputy." One week later, the two were worlds apart, and not only the Channel lay between them. . . .

In his closing address, Göring joined the campaign against the British prime minister and declared: "If Churchill thinks that he can do away with the terrible destruction of the city of Plymouth by declaring that he returned from this city feeling refreshed, then we can assure him that we can provide him with enough of such refreshments."

3

Fully satisfied with this Reichstag speech, Hitler returned to the Obersalzberg. On May 7, he sent a congratulatory telegram to First Lieutenant of the Luftwaffe Müncheberg on his fortieth air victory. On May 10, he sent a handwritten letter to Jakob Werlin, the director of the Munich branch of the Daimler-Benz Works, in which he congratulated Werlin on his fifty-fifth birthday. He also sent a congratulatory telegram to the King of Romania on the country's national holiday.²⁰¹

Flying out of Augsburg on the same day, after three earlier attempts which had all failed,²⁰² Rudolf Hess finally managed to escape to England aboard a remodeled "Me110."²⁰³

Since April 27, 1933, Rudolf Hess had been the "Deputy Führer" of the party. On December 1, 1933, he had been appointed Reich minister without portfolio, along with Röhm. Officially, he took part in the codification of domestic laws. In Hitler's Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, Hess had been designated the Führer's second successor after Göring. Still, it would be an exaggeration to say that Hess played a role of importance in the Third Reich. Aside from social duties, his main task recently had been solemnly to initiate newly-appointed party functionaries into office. When Hess climbed aboard his plane on May 10, it was not so much as the "Deputy Führer" that he did so, but rather as a representative of the old guard of the NSDAP.

These old party comrades had known Hitler throughout the years of domestic struggle and triumph. They were in a position to judge how rapidly things had gone downhill after 1939. They felt the inner insecurity revealed in the decisions of this man. Time and again, they had witnessed how his prophecies had failed to come true and how seriously mistaken he had been in assessing his own potential and that of his opponents abroad. One after the other, the members of the "Old Guard" realized where Hitler's conduct of the affairs of the state was

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leading Germany, the party, and themselves. They knew that the end would be a terrible one, but what could they do about it?

Up to now, only a few old party comrades had more and more come to the obvious conclusion.²⁰⁴ But the longer the war lasted, more of Hitler's old followers began thinking about how they could escape the imminent catastrophe. However, only a few came up with a solution.²⁰⁵

Undoubtedly, the man who was in the best position to assess Hitler's catastrophic policies and their consequences was Rudolf Hess. Hearing of Hitler's decision in the summer of 1940 to attack Russia in order to procure England's friendship probably did it for him.²⁰⁶ Hess was very attached to his family, his wife and three-year-old son, who lived in Munich-Harlaching.²⁰⁷ It was not difficult for him to figure out that, as the "Deputy Führer," he stood to lose his head if the war was lost. And so he decided to distance himself from the Führer before "the frenzy of a cornered maniac would drive Hitler into the worst of all his crimes."²⁰⁸

No matter what opinion one has about Hess's escape to England, one has to admire the circumspection and energy with which he set about mastering this virtually impossible task. He faced the following problems:

He had to escape to a country where Hitler's henchmen could not get at him. Where could he go? Sweden, Russia, Turkey, Spain, and unoccupied France²⁰⁹ were out of the question. The Gestapo would catch him there in no time.

The British Isles were really the only choice he had, since Hitler's grasp did not extend there. However, one needed either a submarine or a plane to get there. To use a submarine was too difficult. A plane, on the other hand, held greater promise. Having been a pilot in the First World War, Hess could hope to obtain a plane somehow, if he went about things cleverly.

The second problem was no less difficult to solve: Hess had somehow to keep Hitler from taking revenge on his wife and son. Whether he liked it or not, he had to leave his loved ones behind in Hitler's Germany.

Hess solved this problem exceedingly well. He beat Hitler at his own game by writing him a letter in which he told Hitler that he would leave in order to realize Hitler's theory of 1919—the *idée fixe* of a friendship with England—in person. After all, Hitler had been unable to

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gain this friendship “in spite of all efforts.” If the Führer didn’t like this idea, he could simply declare Hess insane.

The third problem was not as difficult: Hess wished to avoid being seen as a spy or an agent in England, and as a traitor at home. He decided to wear the uniform of the Luftwaffe during the flight, while, upon arrival in England, he would reiterate the same arguments for peace and friendship which he planned to use in his letter to Hitler. If necessary, he could always feign amnesia or a nervous disorder.

To carry out his venture, Hess had attempted to procure a plane from the man in charge of the airplanes, General Udet, by requesting one for “practice flights” in the summer of 1940. Udet refused, as Hess could not provide him with a special permission from the Führer. To obtain such a permit, naturally, was completely impossible.²¹⁰

Hess had better luck with Professor Messerschmidt in Augsburg. Who was Messerschmidt to refuse a request by the Deputy Führer to make “test flights”? All the more, since in the subsequent months Hess proved an experienced, clever pilot who even advised Messerschmidt on how to make technical improvements on the ‘Me110,’ for example, suggesting the installation of special reserve tanks under the wings, tanks which enabled the pilot to fly longer and further.

At home, Hess was not idle either. Since the autumn of 1940, weather reports from Norway reached him daily by telephone. He acquainted himself with the Kalundborg station in order to use it as a bearing transmitter. At night, he pinned a drawing of the flight path to his bedroom wall and learned the particulars of the route by heart, paying particular attention to the area in Scotland where he wished either to land or to parachute. As a precautionary measure, he marked the “North Sea” as the “Baltic Sea” on his map.

Around 6:00 p.m. on May 10, 1941, Hess finally took off from the airport of the Messerschmidt Works at Augsburg-Haunstetten. In accordance with Hitler’s methods,²¹¹ he chose a Saturday for his coup, because he believed that going on a weekend would attract less attention on both sides of the Channel, and because he anticipated that it would take Hitler until Sunday or Monday to react. He ordered his adjutant Pintsch to wait a few hours before driving to Berchtesgaden and handing his letter to Hitler.

Unnoticed by the Luftwaffe, Hess managed to leave German airspace and fly across the North Sea.²¹² Through a nose dive, he escaped a Spitfire,²¹³ which had given pursuit. He reached the eastern coast of

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Scotland around 10:00 p.m. (German time), south of Holy Island. Flying low, he passed over Scotland, and shortly prior to 11:00 p.m. he arrived at his destination, Dungavel, the country estate of the Duke of Hamilton.²¹⁴

Hess encountered great difficulties in trying to get out of the plane because of the aerodynamic drag. He lost consciousness and only at the last minute, just before the airplane crashed, did he manage to bail out.

Arriving on the ground,²¹⁵ Hess gave his name as Captain Alfred Horn²¹⁶ and demanded to speak to the Duke of Hamilton. He revealed his true identity to Hamilton and to other interviewers.²¹⁷ He told them that he had come for the sake of peace between Germany and England. The Führer had always desired this peace. A continuation of the struggle would inevitably lead to England's defeat; this would not be in the interest of mankind, and one should try to prevent it. Churchill would have to step down. As foolish as Hess's insistence was, Hitler had often voiced similar views at all sorts of opportune and inopportune occasions after 1939. Since Hess was not on an official mission to England, the British treated him as a prisoner of war.²¹⁸ After the war, he stood trial at Nuremberg.²¹⁹

When Churchill received news of the arrival of this unexpected caller, he remarked: "There are signs that things are beginning to fall apart [in the Third Reich]."²²⁰

This aptly summed up the Hess case; the Deputy Führer's escape was symptomatic of the change of heart which many old party comrades had undergone in their attitude toward Hitler. Undoubtedly, in the further course of events, many hundreds and thousands would have loved to follow Hess, if only they could have.²²¹

For the time being, the English kept Hess's presence secret. They were waiting for a German reaction. This led Hitler to issue premature news releases, which only made matters worse.

Hitler was still in bed when Hess's adjutant, Pintsch, arrived at the Berghof at 9:30 a.m. on May 11.²²² His manservant Linge knocked at the door and told Hitler that there was a letter from Rudolf Hess for him.

Hitler never dressed as quickly as he did on this morning! A letter from Hess? That was bad news. He had explicitly told his old party comrades not to approach him in writing,²²³ as Hess knew very well. There had to be some devilry behind this!

In uniform, Hitler stood in the great hall on the first floor five minutes later. He opened the letter and read it. Then, he asked Pintsch,

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who had been summoned: "Do you know the contents of this letter?" And this simpleminded man actually said yes. Hitler immediately had him arrested by a criminal-bureau detective. Now the Berghof was buzzing with life, even though it was a Sunday. There was one agitated conference after another. Göring, Udet,²²⁴ Bormann, and von Ribbentrop were called in. The interpreter Schmidt overheard the Führer saying: "I hope he crashes into the sea!"²²⁵

Hitler wished to hush up the entire affair. A scandal was certain if the public found out that a Reich minister, the "Deputy Führer," and his possible successor, had fled. The possibility that Hess had crashed before reaching his destination was Hitler's only hope. And this hope grew as the hours passed and there were no reports of a landing in the London broadcasts.

By Monday, May 12, Hitler believed he had won. He sent Ribbentrop to Rome to calm the Duce. Hitler himself elaborated a statement which was broadcast throughout Greater Germany:²²⁶

According to official party sources, party comrade Hess, who, because of a progressive disease existing for several years, had been prohibited by the Führer from continuing to fly, recently succeeded, contrary to the order in question, in gaining possession of an airplane.

Around 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 10, party comrade Hess took off from Augsburg on a flight from which he has not returned to date. The confusion of a letter left behind regrettably shows traces of mental derangement, so that there is the danger that party comrade Hess has become the victim of hallucinations.

The Führer immediately ordered the adjutants of party comrade Hess arrested as they had knowledge of these flights and, contrary to the orders of the Führer of which they were aware, had failed to prevent or immediately report them.

Under the circumstances, the National Socialist movement regrettably has to fear that party comrade Hess crashed somewhere on his flight or has been killed in an accident.

While in the course of time people had become used to the lies Hitler would disseminate, especially where questions of domestic or party politics were concerned,²²⁷ this was indeed a bit too much. Hess suffering from "mental derangement" and a "victim of hallucinations"? Only eight days before, he had sat next to Hitler in the Reichstag, and, on May 1, he had delivered an important address in Augsburg!

May 12, 1941

Of course, there were madmen among the leaders of the Third Reich. It was only a question of *who* they were! In any event, it was highly suspicious that Hitler was suddenly calling others “mad.”

It was even more remarkable that, according to Hitler’s statement, Hess had “gained possession of an airplane,” contrary to the will of the Führer, and had left on a flight from which he had not returned. Obviously, he did not wish to return (!), and the Führer had had arrests made.

Even the most innocent people in Germany noticed that there was something wrong with Hitler’s communiqué; something very wrong. Only the Italian ambassador Alfieri was naive enough to express his sympathies to Hitler in a telegram on “the loss of his dearest staff member.”²²⁸

Meanwhile, Hitler had everybody who was somehow connected with the flight arrested and questioned: Hess’ adjutants, secretaries, and mechanics, as well as well-known astrologers, practitioners in magnetotherapy, and so on. Among the persons questioned was the highly favored Professor Karl Haushofer,²²⁹ the founder of the geopolitical Lebensraum theory, and his son Albrecht.²³⁰ At the time that Hess had visited Hitler regularly in the Landsberg prison in 1924 and helped him write down *Mein Kampf*, he had been Karl Haushofer’s assistant at the University of Munich.

Naturally, Mrs. Hess was questioned as well, on May 12. Of course, she had had time to prepare for this and denied any knowledge of her husband’s activities. She confidently demanded to speak immediately to the Führer.²³¹

Thanks to Hitler’s statement, the British now knew that their guest of Saturday night truly was Rudolf Hess. Therefore, they no longer hesitated to make his arrival public in a radio broadcast. Now this whole incident became even more embarrassing for Hitler.

Ribbentrop heard the news when he arrived in Rome.²³² As Hitler’s “No. 1 parrot,”²³³ he immediately undertook to persuade the Italians that Hess had really gone insane. When the Italians informed him that, according to British reports, Hess was spending his time writing, von Ribbentrop grew perceptibly disquieted. On Ribbentrop’s departure, the German ambassador von Mackensen allegedly told Ciano’s secretary Anfuso: “Let’s hope that they will all crash and break their necks; but not here, or we’ll have some unpleasant work to do.”²³⁴

May 13, 1941

Confronted with the reports on British radio, Hitler was forced to issue a new statement on the Hess case.

He chose the “National Socialist Party News Agency” (NSK) as his means to do so, pretending that this source was unrelated to the obviously mistaken earlier communiqué.²³⁵ This public announcement read:²³⁶

Berlin, May 13

The National Socialist Party News Agency announces:

Examination of the papers left behind by Rudolf Hess has thus far revealed that Hess lived under the illusion that he could still bring about an understanding between Germany and England through intervening personally with Englishmen known to him. As information from London has in the meantime confirmed, he indeed bailed out of the airplane over Scotland in the vicinity of the location he was trying to reach, and was found there, apparently injured.

As was known within the party, Rudolf Hess, after suffering from a severe organic disease for years, had recently resorted to various remedies, practitioners in magnetotherapy, astrologers, and so on. At present, it is being determined how far these persons are to be held responsible for bringing about the mental derangement which caused Hess to take this step. It is equally conceivable, however, that Hess was consciously lured into a trap by the English side.²³⁷

The entire manner in which he proceeded already confirms the information contained in the first statement—that he suffered from hallucinations. Better than anyone else, he knew the numerous peace proposals that came from the honest heart of the Führer. Apparently, he deluded himself into believing that by making a personal sacrifice he could prevent a development which, in his eyes, could only end in the complete destruction of the British Empire. As his notes reveal, Hess, the scope of whose duties was restricted to the party, as is well known, had no clear idea about the implementation or the consequences of this step.

The National Socialist Party regrets that this idealist has become the victim of hallucinations with such consequences. This has no effect on the continuation of the war against England, which was forced on the German Volk. As the Führer declared in his last speech, it will be continued until the British rulers are overthrown or willing to make peace.

Hitler’s second public announcement was no better than the first. Again, he spoke of “hallucinations,” and even of “a severe organic disease” which already had afflicted Hess “for years.” This was hard to believe of a man who had just accomplished a daring and unheard-of feat in aviation. If truly he had suffered from “hallucinations,” then why had he been allowed to run about freely and to assume public office? And

May 13, 1941

where had the Gestapo been, where the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), where the special surveillance units of the SS assigned to watch party members, when Hess had been making his preparations? And why had there been no mention of Scotland as Hess's destination in the first statement, if he himself had listed it in the papers he had left behind?

As irate as Hitler might have been about the whole Hess affair, he didn't hesitate to use it as an opportunity to expand his political power. As in earlier instances, like the Pfeffer crisis in 1930, the Strasser crisis in 1932, and the Blomberg crisis in 1938, he simply appropriated the office in question. He was able finally to do away with the undesirable position of "deputy Führer." All subaltern tasks were assigned to the servile Bormann.²³⁸ The measure was published as follows:²³⁹

May 12, 1941

The National Socialist Party News Agency announces:

The Führer has decreed the following:

"The former office of the deputy Führer now bears the designation party chancellery. It is subordinate to my person. As before, its leader is party comrade Reichsleiter Martin Bormann."

Adolf Hitler

Hitler carried things even further, summoning all Reichsleiters and Gauleiters to the Reich Chancellery and delivering a speech as he had done during the Strasser crisis. On this May 13, Hitler reiterated the latest version of the Rudolf Hess case, read his letter to the audience, and reported on the status of the investigation.²⁴⁰ The following communiqué was published on the speech:²⁴¹

Berlin, May 13

The National Socialist Party News Agency announces:

Today, a meeting of all Reichsleiters and Gauleiters of the NSDAP, which Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring also attended, took place at the Führer's residence. The leaders of the party rallied to the Führer, who spoke to the assembled men in their determined will to victory.

The discreet mention of the presence of the Reichsmarschall was remarkable in that, as a Reichsleiter, he would be expected to attend such a meeting in any event. As president of the Reichstag, he usually paid homage to Hitler in a short address at such a rally. In view of the situation, however, Hitler apparently felt it was necessary to stress Göring's loyalty. After all, Göring was designated to succeed Hitler even before Hess, and he also was a pilot. Who was to say that he would not also go "insane" and fly from the nest shortly?

May 20, 1941

The German public had to take a lot in terms of public announcements during those days. Many remained silent at this time; many others had no qualms about stating their opinion that, whatever may have happened, Hess, in any event, made a statement: he would not go along with that (Hitler's government) anymore. Others made ironic comments.²⁴²

In the days to come, Hitler was quite happy that Hess did not say more than he did, and that the English let matters be. Of course, he would have acted differently. As he greatly overestimated the power of propaganda, he certainly would have tried to make political capital out of the story.^{243, 244}

On May 13, Admiral Darlan, vice president of the French ministerial council, visited Hitler at the Berghof.²⁴⁵ In view of the pending war against Russia, Hitler had decided to make a gesture by releasing a hundred thousand French prisoners of war who were veterans of the First World War.²⁴⁶

On May 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the President of Paraguay, General Hilgino Moringo, on the country's national holiday.²⁴⁷

On May 16, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published a somewhat peculiar declaration by the Japanese foreign minister.²⁴⁸ Matsuoka stressed that "there was only one situation in which Japan would not feel obliged to fulfill its obligations under Article III of the Tripartite Pact," that is, if Germany attacked America by itself. This could only mean that Japan was not necessarily going to follow the German lead. After all, Hitler constantly felt provoked by America and, if it came to a clash, it would be most difficult for Japan to judge who was the aggressor.

On May 17, Hitler issued Directive No. 29, which dealt with the chain of command in the Balkans.²⁴⁹ He was careful not to allow his Italian ally too many liberties.

On May 20, parachutists and airborne troops launched the assault on Crete. The battle for the island, which was not mentioned by the OKW until May 24, lasted until June 2 and was marked by heavy losses. It showed that airborne operations are extremely risky if connections to supply bases cannot swiftly be established on land or by sea.²⁵⁰ But why would Hitler care about losses, as long as he drove the British from Crete and showed them that they were not safe from him anywhere, and that therefore it would be best if they made peace with him.²⁵¹

May 23, 1941

On May 22, Hitler, who had returned to the Berghof, received the Italian ambassador Dino Alfieri on the occasion of the second anniversary of the signing of the Pact of Steel.²⁵²

In the middle of May, the Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al Kailani, who sympathized with the Axis, had instigated an uprising against the British garrisons in his country. He had requested German assistance. In spite of a number of successful coups, his chances for success were close to zero, as the British military force in the Near East could easily deal with any undertakings of that sort.

Whether Hitler actually believed that the Iraqi could succeed is questionable. After all, as mentioned before, Hitler was a great “admirer” of the British Empire. In the Near East, he continually needled the British in the hope that these slaps in the face would promote their readiness to accept peace on his terms.

On May 23, Hitler issued a bombastic “Directive No. 30: The Middle East,” which read:²⁵³

1. The Arab liberation movement in the Middle East is our natural ally against England. In this connection, the uprising in Iraq has special importance. It strengthens beyond the boundaries of Iraq the forces hostile to England in the Middle East, disturbs English communications, and ties down English troops and shipping at the expense of other theaters of war.

I have therefore decided to advance developments in the Middle East by giving assistance to Iraq.

Whether and how the English position between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf—in connection with an offensive against the Suez Canal—will later be definitively defeated, is to be decided only after Barbarossa.

2. In summing up my specific decisions, I order the following for the support of Iraq:

- the dispatch of a military mission;
- support by the Luftwaffe;
- arms shipments.

3. The military mission (cover name: Special Staff F) is placed under General Felmy of the Luftwaffe.²⁵⁴

Its tasks are as follows:

- (a) to advise and assist the Iraqi armed forces;
- (b) to establish military liaison, where possible, with forces hostile to England outside Iraq as well;
- (c) to gain experience and intelligence for the German Wehrmacht in this area.

Its composition, in conformity with these duties, shall be determined by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

May 23, 1941

The following applies regarding the chain of command:

(a) All Wehrmacht personnel to be sent to Iraq and, in addition, the Syrian liaison unit are subordinate to the head of the military mission.

(b) The head of the military mission is subordinate to the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht with the proviso that orders and directives for the air-force units are issued exclusively by the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe.

(c) The head of the military mission deals only with the military authorities of Iraq. Negotiations with the Iraqi government on affairs of the mission will be conducted by the representative of the Foreign Ministry in Iraq.

In the case of military arrangements that could have foreign-policy repercussions, the head of the military mission must first come to an agreement with the Foreign Ministry representative in Iraq.

(d) The members of the military mission for the time being are considered volunteers (in the manner of the Condor Legion). They wear a tropical uniform with Iraqi insignia. The latter will also be carried by German aircraft.

4. Luftwaffe

Its employment, which is to be limited in numbers, in addition to having a purely military effect, serves also the purpose of strengthening the self-confidence and will to resist of the armed forces and people of Iraq.

The manner and extent of German intervention will be determined by the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe.

5. Arms shipments

The necessary dispositions (shipments from Syria on the basis of the agreement concluded for that purpose with the French, and from Germany) will be made by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

6. Guidance of the propaganda in the Middle East is the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry, which collaborates with the High Command of the Wehrmacht (WFSt/WPr) for that purpose.

The basic idea of the propaganda is as follows:

“The victory of the Axis brings to the countries of the Middle East liberation from the English yoke, and thus the right of self-determination. Whoever loves liberty will therefore join the front against England.”

Propaganda against the French position in Syria must be avoided.

7. Insofar as members of the Italian armed forces are engaged in Iraq, there will be cooperation with them on the basis of this directive. Their subordination to the head of the German military mission will be aimed for.

Adolf Hitler

In reality, the promised German assistance consisted of no more than said military mission and the flying of a few troops to Iraq.²⁵⁵ In a fateful manner, the whole undertaking resembled the daring but senseless German attempt to take the Suez Canal from the Near East in the First World War.²⁵⁶

May 27, 1941

The revolt in Iraq had collapsed by June 1. A number of German and Italian soldiers were taken prisoner, that is, put in internment camps. The German planes managed to escape via Syria just in time.

The use of the Syrian airports had unpleasant consequences for Hitler, as British forces and de Gaulle's troops began to occupy Syria on June 8 as a result. The French troops under General Dentz²⁵⁷ put up a resistance until June 11 and then surrendered. From this time on, Hitler no longer had access to the Near East.

On May 26, the public was informed that the German battleship *Bismarck*²⁵⁸ had made contact with the superior British naval forces in the Atlantic. In consideration of the "Navy theory,"²⁵⁹ the German naval war conduct in World War II had sought to deploy the few existing naval units as much as possible, especially in the Atlantic. Of the four German battleships, the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* had been so badly damaged in battle against the British battleship *Malaya* in February 1941 that they were forced to return to dock at Brest.

On the night of May 22, the *Bismarck* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* had sailed out of Bergen. On May 24, they made contact with the enemy between Iceland and Greenland and exchanged fire with a British naval formation. In the course of the battle, the British battle cruiser *Hood*, the largest of its kind in the world,²⁶⁰ sustained a direct hit from the *Bismarck*. Since its magazine was immediately affected, the ship blew up. Of its crew of fourteen hundred men, virtually no one survived.

The British fleet then pursued the two German ships. While the *Prinz Eugen* reached safety in the harbor of Brest, the *Bismarck* was hit by a torpedo fired from a plane belonging to the aircraft carrier *Victorious*, on the night of May 24. This reduced its speed.

On May 26, four hundred nautical miles west of Brest, the *Bismarck* sustained two new torpedo hits, this time from bombers of the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*. The German fleet commander, Admiral Lütjens, sent the following message at 11:42 p.m.: "Ship unmaneuverable. We will fight to the last grenade. Long live the Führer! Fleet Commander."

In spite of no longer being able to maneuver and having no chance of being rescued, the *Bismarck* had to allow itself to be shot to pieces on May 27—in accordance with the Navy's code of honor²⁶¹—and to go down with all two thousand men aboard.

Almost exactly twenty-five years after the Battle of the Skagerrak (Jutland),²⁶² the loss of the *Bismarck* terminated the war at sea as regards surface craft. Now the naval commanders would be happy if they

May 31, 1941

managed to return the ships anchored in French ports to Germany, without being molested.²⁶³

On May 28, Hitler established a “War Service Pennant” for commanders of the merchant marine.²⁶⁴ As everybody in Germany was shaken by the loss of the *Bismarck*, this was somewhat out of place.

On May 29, Hitler again concerned himself with domestic politics. He signed decrees on the reconstruction and design of Frankfurt am Main (the city of “German craftsmanship”) and Heidelberg.²⁶⁵ A further decree dealt with the “position of the chief of the party Chancellery.”

Hitler was not about to appoint Bormann minister of the Reich, the way that he had appointed Hess by the law of December 1, 1939. This was completely out of the question— just as it had been in the case of Lutze, Röhm’s successor. The only concession Hitler made was that Bormann became a cabinet minister, like the commanders in chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht. Hitler’s decree read:²⁶⁶

By the decree of May 12, 1941, regarding the National Socialist German Workers Party, I ordered that the former office of the deputy Führer be designated the party chancellery and be subordinate to my person. In addition, in order to warrant the closest cooperation between the party chancellery and the high administration of the Reich, I decree the following:

The Leader of the party chancellery, Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, shall have the authority of a minister of the Reich. He shall be a member of the Reich government and of the ministerial council for the defense of the Reich.

Wherever the office of the deputy Führer is cited in laws, ordinances, and decrees, or other regulations, it shall be replaced by the leader of the party chancellery. The implementing and supplementing regulations necessitated by this decree shall be issued by the minister of the Reich and chief of the Reich Chancellery in agreement with the leader of the party chancellery.

On May 31, the *Völkischer Beobachter* noted with great dismay the intransigent statements which the British Foreign Secretary Eden and the British ambassador in Washington, Lord Halifax, had made.²⁶⁷ According to the paper, Eden had said: “Hitler’s empire must be destroyed! Every German must and should know this!” Halifax had announced that the day would come when England will send “five hundred to six hundred bombers to Germany at the same time.”

On May 31, Hitler informed his friend Mussolini that he desired an immediate meeting. This annoyed the Duce, who told Ciano: “I am sick and tired of being summoned by the bell.”²⁶⁸ His reply to Hitler was more tame, however. He even thought that he had scored a

June 1, 1941

substantial victory by getting Hitler to agree to a meeting on June 2 instead of June 1.

Hitler and Mussolini again met at the Brenner Pass. The communiqué read as follows:²⁶⁹

The Führer and the Duce met on Whit Monday [June 2] at the Brenner Pass. In the presence of the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and the Italian foreign minister Count Ciano, they discussed the political situation in a talk lasting several hours. The exchange took place in the spirit of heartfelt friendship and resulted in a complete agreement of opinion by the heads of state of the two countries.

Actually, Hitler had spoken about the Hess case for several hours and had lamented the loss of the *Bismarck*. He had declared: "German U-boats will force England's capitulation!" In the eyes of Mussolini and of the interpreter Schmidt, there had been no substance to the talks whatsoever. As Mussolini told Ciano:

These conferences that begin with the ringing of a bell are not to my liking; when people call their servant they ring the bell. And besides, what kind of meetings are these? For five hours I am forced to listen to a monologue that is quite pointless and boring. He spoke for hours and hours about Hess, about the *Bismarck*, about things more or less related to the war, but he did not propose an agenda, he did not go to the bottom of any problem, or make any decisions.

The interpreter Schmidt also remarked that Hitler had not said a word to Mussolini about his intention to attack Russia. For Hitler, however, that was the key to his talk with Mussolini! He wanted to leave Mussolini in the dark. He felt that this was necessary because, in spite of himself, Hitler would soon be forced to conduct more substantive talks with the Romanians regarding their involvement in the war against Russia.²⁷⁰ And Mussolini was to believe that there was no more to these talks than to those at the Brenner Pass.

On June 4, the former German Kaiser, William II, died in Doorn.²⁷¹ Fate spared him having to witness a second collapse of Germany, a collapse which far surpassed that of 1918. Hitler wired the widow and the Crown Prince his condolences²⁷² and sent a guard of honor to attend the funeral on June 9 in Doorn. He instructed the Reich Commissar for the Occupied Dutch Territories, Seyss-Inquart, to lay a wreath at the grave. The following German dignitaries attended the event: Field Marshal von Mackensen, General Reinhardt as the head of the National

June 15, 1941

Socialist Reichskriegerbund, Colonel General Haase, Air Force General Christiansen, and Admiral Canaris.²⁷³

On the afternoon of June 6, Hitler received the Croatian head of state Ante Pavelich at the Berghof, greeting him in a black cape. The communiqué on this “state visit” read as follows:²⁷⁴

The discussion with the head of state of young Croatia, whose people the victory of the Axis freed from the yoke of Versailles, was conducted in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between the German and Croatian people.

After the talks, Dr. Pavelich presented the Führer with a Frederician flag from the Seven Years’ War and a chess set of Frederick the Great.

On June 7, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria at the Berghof in the presence of von Ribbentrop.²⁷⁵ Nothing was published on the content of the talk. Apparently, Hitler once more failed to recruit Bulgaria for the war against Russia.

On the morning of June 12, Hitler met with the Romanian head of government, General Antonescu, at the Führerbau in Munich for an important discussion. Before the meeting, Antonescu had laid wreaths at the monument on the Königlicher Platz. The stereotypical communiqué on the talks reported that the “meeting had taken place in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between Germany and Romania.”²⁷⁶

Hitler had initiated Antonescu into his plans for war against Russia. He promised Bessarabia and other lands in Russia to Romania. Naturally, the old trooper, who hated the Slavs, was delighted: “Of course, I will be there from day one. If you go against the Slavs, you can always count on Romania.”

At noon, Hitler gave a reception in honor of Antonescu at the Führerbau, which von Ribbentrop, Keitel, Jodl, von Epp, and numerous other Reichsleiters and generals attended.

On June 15, Croatia formally acceded to the Tripartite Pact in the Doge’s Palace in Venice. Of course, this was a poor replacement for the elaborate ceremony in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna that had marked the accession of Yugoslavia on March 25, an event which had such unfortunate consequences for Hitler. Now, not even the customary exchange of telegrams took place between the heads of state, heads of government, and ministers of the states that formed the Tripartite Pact. As Ciano put it in his diary: “the participation of Croatia has the flavor of homemade tagliatelle.”²⁷⁷

June 21, 1941

On June 17, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Horthy on his birthday.²⁷⁸ Afterwards, he had Schirach place a wreath at the grave of the retired councilor of state Karl Hermann Wolf. The wreath was dedicated to “the pioneer of the Greater German idea.”²⁷⁹

On June 18, a German-Turkish Friendship Pact was signed in Ankara.²⁸⁰ This pact was to secure the south flank of the German attack on Russia. In Germany, it was celebrated as a masterpiece of statesmanship on the part of Hitler and von Papen. In view of the existing military alliance between Turkey and Great Britain, the treaty was indeed remarkable, but its importance was greatly overestimated by Germany. Both parties to the pact guaranteed the inviolability of their borders in article I of the treaty. Article II dealt with friendly consultations on questions concerning both parties. The pact was not fundamentally different from the Russian-Turkish Declaration of Friendship and Neutrality which had been signed on March 24, 1941. Whereas Russia and Turkey respected each other’s neutrality, the friendship between Germany and Turkey ended in the Turkish declaration of war on Germany on March 1, 1945.

On June 18 and 19, an exchange of telegrams took place between the two heads of state. Hitler replied to the telegram of Ismet Inönü in the following manner:²⁸¹

On the occasion of the signing of the German-Turkish treaty which affirms the sincere friendship between our countries, I inform Your Excellency, in reply to your kind telegram, that I also am greatly satisfied with the conclusion of this treaty.

I am also certain that our two countries enter an era of lasting, mutual trust. By thanking you for this assurance of your friendly sentiments, I fondly reciprocate.

Adolf Hitler

On July 19, the Turkish ambassador Gerede brought a handwritten letter from Ismet Inönü to Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.²⁸² Also on this day, Hitler received Field Marshal List, who had commanded the German troops during the campaign in the Balkans.²⁸³ Hitler thanked him with “heartfelt words and the unconditional appreciation of the outstanding achievements of the leaders and the troops.”

On June 21, Hitler awarded Lieutenant Colonel Galland the first Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and sent him the following telegram:²⁸⁴

June 22, 1941

Accept my congratulations on your three new air victories. In appreciation of your heroism, proved time and again, I award you, as the first officer of the German Wehrmacht, the addition of the Oak Leaf with Swords to your Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

Undoubtedly June 22, 1941, was an important day in the life of Adolf Hitler. It was on this day that he launched the undertaking that, in addition to the concept of friendship with England and Italy, had been central to all his ideas and plans after 1919: the war against Russia, the conquest of new Lebensraum. It was true that he had planned things differently; he had thought he could go to war with the explicit approval of England and Italy and their help and friendship.²⁸⁵

While he could be sure of Italy's support, its assistance did not count for much. Things had not worked out as well with England: Germany was in the midst of a war with England!

But did that matter to Hitler? After all, in his opinion, it made little difference in which sequence he realized the concepts of 1919: friendship with England and Italy, war with Russia. He had Italy's friendship, he was ready to attack Russia, and so friendship with England simply had to follow! It would do so all the more since he was now employing the same old trick abroad—the menace of Bolshevism—that he had used so successfully in his fight against the senile German Nationalists at home.

Hitler did not worry too much about the war against Russia at this point. Accustomed to victory, the German Wehrmacht, this “most mighty instrument of war of all time,”²⁸⁶ could easily deal with the “primitive” Russians, whom Bolshevism had instilled with a “cowardly, anxious acquiescence.”²⁸⁷

All Hitler needed now was a plausible pretext for this unheard-of attack on a friendly power, with whom, according to his own words, Germany never again wanted to fight.²⁸⁸

In his proclamation “to the German Volk” on June 22, Hitler maintained that it was all the fault of the “Jewish-Bolshevik rulers.” They had kept him from a “radical ending of the war in the west.” They had blackmailed him and threatened “European culture and civilization.” They had “organized the Serb putsch,” and “together with England and the help of the expected American deliveries,” they wanted “to suffocate and crush the German Reich.” Hitler's proclamation read as follows:²⁸⁹

June 22, 1941

Berlin, June 22, 1941

German Volk! National Socialists!

The hour has finally come for me, weighed down by heavy burdens and sentenced to remain silent for months, to speak openly.

When, on September 3, 1939, the German Reich received the English declaration of war, the British attempted again to foil the consolidation and rise of Europe by fighting the strongest power on the continent. This is how England once destroyed Spain in many wars. This is how it waged war against Holland. This is how, with the help of all Europe, it later fought France. And this is how, at the turn of the century, it began the encirclement of the German Reich and then in the year 1914, it began the World War.

It was only because of its inner discord that Germany was defeated in the year 1918. What followed was terrible. First, they claimed hypocritically that they were only fighting the Kaiser and his regime. Then, after the surrender of the German Army, the systematic destruction of the German Reich was started. While the prophecies of a French statesman that there were twenty million too many people in Germany,²⁹⁰ that is, people who had to be eliminated by hunger, disease, or emigration, seemed to become literally true, the National Socialist movement began its work of uniting the German Volk and thereby initiating the rise of the Reich.

This new rising up of our Volk from need, misery, and shameful contempt was a sign of a purely inner rebirth. England, in particular, was neither concerned nor threatened by this. In spite of this, a new policy of encirclement, seething with hatred, immediately set in again against Germany. At home and abroad, there was the well-known conspiracy between Jews and democrats, Bolsheviks and reactionaries, with the single goal of preventing the establishment of a new German people's state and plunging the Reich again into impotence and misery.

Besides us, the hatred of this international, worldwide conspiracy singled out those people whom fortune has likewise overlooked and who are also forced to earn their daily bread in a hard struggle for existence. Italy and Japan especially were denied their share of the goods of this earth, like Germany—yes, they were virtually forbidden them. The alliance of these nations therefore was only an act of self-defense in view of the threatening, egotistic international coalition of wealth and power.

In 1936, Churchill declared, according to the statements of the American general Wood before a committee of the American House of Representatives, that Germany was again becoming too powerful and therefore had to be destroyed.

In the summer of 1939, England thought the time had come to realize the new destruction by a repetition of a comprehensive policy of encirclement directed against Germany. The method of the campaign of lies staged for this purpose was to declare other people threatened, to trap them with British guarantees and promises of assistance, and then, as in the World War, to let them march against Germany.

June 22, 1941

And so England, from May to August 1939, succeeded in spreading the idea that Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Bessarabia, as well as the Ukraine, were directly threatened by Germany. Some of these states were thereby seduced into accepting the guarantees connected to these claims, and so joined the new front of encirclement against Germany.

Under those circumstances, I believed, before my conscience and the history of the German Volk, that I could not only assure these states, that is, governments, of the falsehood of the British claims, but also calm the strongest power of the East by making solemn declarations on the limits of our respective interests.

National Socialists!

Probably all of you felt that this step was bitter and difficult for me. Never has the German Volk harbored feelings of animosity against the people of Russia. Alas, for over two decades, the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers have labored from Moscow to set afire not only Germany, but also all of Europe. Never has Germany attempted to carry its National Socialist ideology into Russia. However, the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers in Moscow have constantly undertaken to force their rule on our people and others in Europe as well, and not merely ideologically, but especially in terms of military force and power. In all countries, the consequences of the activities of this regime were chaos, misery, and famine.

In contrast to that, I strove in the past two decades to achieve a new socialist order in Germany with a minimum of intervention and without destroying our production, a new socialist order that not only eliminated unemployment, but also increasingly let the profit from the work go to the working man.

The successes of this policy of a new economic and social order for our Volk, the systematic overcoming of social differences and class distinctions, are unequalled in the world.

Therefore, in August 1939, despite great misgivings, I sent my foreign minister to Moscow to attempt there to counteract the British policy of encirclement against Germany. I did this only because of a sense of responsibility to the German Volk, and, above all, in the hope of achieving a lasting détente in the end and, perhaps, lessening the sacrifices which might otherwise be demanded of us.

And then, after Germany solemnly declared in Moscow that the aforementioned areas and countries were outside the German sphere of interest—with the exception of Lithuania—a special agreement²⁹¹ was made in case England succeeded in driving Poland to war against Germany. Here, too, the German demands were limited and stood in no relation to the accomplishments of the German arms.

National Socialists!

The consequences of this treaty, which I desired in the interest of the German Volk, were very hard on the Germans living in the countries concerned.

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Far more than half a million German Volksgenossen—all small farmers, craftsmen, and workers—were forced, practically overnight, to leave their former homeland in order to escape a new regime, which at first threatened them with infinite misery and, sooner or later, with complete extermination. In spite of this, thousands of Germans disappeared! It is impossible to know what happened to them or where they are now. Among them, there are a hundred sixty men with German Reich citizenship.

I remained silent about all this, because I had to remain silent! After all, it was my wish to bring about a *détente* for good and, if possible, a lasting settlement with this state.

However, as soon as we advanced into Poland, the Soviet rulers suddenly claimed Lithuania in violation of the treaty.²⁹² The German Reich never intended to occupy Lithuania. Not only did it not make any such demand on the Lithuanian government—on the contrary, it also declined a request by the Lithuanian government at the time to send German troops to Lithuania for that purpose, as this did not correspond with the goals of the German policy.

In spite of this, I yielded to this new Russian demand. However, this was only the beginning of constantly new extortions, which since then have been repeated time and again. The victory in Poland, exclusively secured by German troops, induced me to direct a new offer of peace to the western powers. It was rejected because of the international and Jewish warmongers.

Already at that time, the cause of this rejection was that England was still hoping to mobilize a European coalition against Germany, including the Balkans and Soviet Russia.²⁹³ And so they decided in London to send Ambassador Cripps to Moscow. He received clear instructions to enter again into diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia and to develop them in the interest of England. The English press reported on the progress of this mission for as long as tactical reasons required.

In the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940, the first consequences became apparent. While Russia undertook to subjugate not only Finland militarily but also the Baltic states, it all of a sudden tried to justify doing so with the mendacious and ridiculous claim that it had to protect these countries from, that is, to prevent, an external threat. No power other than Germany could penetrate these areas along the Baltic Sea or wage war there. In spite of this, I had to remain silent. But the ruling powers in the Kremlin immediately went a step further.

While, in the spring of 1940, Germany withdrew its armed forces far behind the eastern frontier in the spirit of the so-called Friendship Pact, thereby virtually clearing most of these areas of German troops, Russian forces immediately began to deploy to such an extent that this could only be seen as a deliberate threat to Germany.

According to a personal statement made by Molotov at the time, twenty-two Russian divisions were in the Baltic states alone. Since the Russian government always maintained that it had been called in by the local population, the purpose of its presence there could only be a demonstration against Germany. While—from May 10, 1940, on—our soldiers broke the

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French-British power in the west, the Russian concentration along our eastern front continued in an increasingly dangerous degree.

From August 1940 on, therefore, I believed that, in the interest of the Reich, I could not any longer leave our eastern provinces, which have so often been devastated in the past, unprotected from this colossal concentration of Bolshevik divisions.

This brought about what the Anglo-Soviet cooperation aimed for, namely to tie down strong German forces in the east, so that, especially in terms of the [war in the] air, a conclusive end of the war in the west would no longer be possible for the German leadership.²⁹⁴

This was not only the goal of the British but also of the Soviet policy. England as well as Soviet Russia intend to let this war last as long as possible in order to weaken Europe and to make it increasingly impotent.

The alarming Russian attack on Romania ultimately served the purpose of getting hold of an important element of the economic life not only of Germany but also of all Europe, and, possibly, destroying it. However, it was the German Reich which, from the year 1933 on, strove with infinite patience to win the states of southeastern Europe as trading partners. Therefore, we had the greatest interest in their internal, governmental consolidation and order. Russia's invasion of Romania, and Greece's political ties with England, threatened to transform these areas shortly into a theater of war, too.

Contrary to our principles and customs, at that time I directed an urgent appeal to the Romanian government, which itself was responsible for this development, and I advised it to yield to the Soviet extortion for the sake of peace and to cede Bessarabia.

The Romanian government believed that it could tolerate this before its own people only if Germany and Italy gave a guarantee that the continuing existence of the remainder would not be disputed. I did this with a heavy heart.²⁹⁵ Because, after all, if the German Reich gives a guarantee, this means it will vouch for it. We are neither Englishmen nor Jews.

So I believed myself to have rendered a service to peace in these areas practically at the last minute, even if this meant taking on a heavy responsibility myself. In order to resolve these problems for good and to obtain clarity on the Russian attitude to the Reich, as well as under the pressure of the consistently increasing mobilization along our eastern borders, I invited Mr. Molotov to Berlin.

The Soviet foreign minister now demanded a clarification by Germany, that is, its answer to the following four questions:²⁹⁶

Molotov's first question:

In the event of a Soviet attack on Romania, will the German guarantee to Romania be directed against Soviet Russia?

My answer:

The German guarantee is a general one and is absolutely binding for us. Russia has never informed us that, apart from Bessarabia, it has any interests in Romania. The occupation of northern Bukovina has already violated this

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assurance. Therefore, I do not believe that Russia could suddenly have further intentions against Romania.

Molotov's second question:

Russia again feels threatened by Finland. Russia is determined not to tolerate this. Is Germany ready not to assist Finland in any manner and, in particular, immediately to withdraw the German troops that are marching through it to Kirkenes for replacement?

My answer:

As before, Germany has no political interests in Finland. A new war by Russia against the small Finnish people cannot be regarded as tolerable by the German Reich government, all the more so as we cannot believe that Finland is threatening Russia. However, we do not wish the Baltic Sea to become a theater of war again.

Molotov's third question:

Is Germany willing to agree to Soviet Russia's extending a guarantee to Bulgaria and sending Soviet troops into Bulgaria for this purpose? He, Molotov, also wished to declare, for example, that the Soviets did not intend to eliminate the king on this occasion.

My answer:

Bulgaria is a sovereign state, and I do not know whether, unlike Romania, Bulgaria has even requested such a guarantee from Soviet Russia. Besides this, I will have to talk with my allies about this matter.

Molotov's fourth question:

Soviet Russia in any event needs free transit through the Dardanelles. To protect it, Russia requires the occupation of strongholds along the Dardanelles, that is, at the Bosphorus. Will Germany agree to this or not?

My answer:

Germany is prepared to give its consent at any time to a change in the status of Montreux in favor of the Black Sea states. Germany is not willing to agree to Russia's taking possession of bases along the straits.

National Socialists!

I assumed an attitude here, which I had to assume not only as the accountable Führer of the German Reich but also as the responsible representative of European culture and civilization.²⁹⁷ The consequence was a reinforcement of the Soviet activities directed against the Reich, particularly the immediate start of subversive activities inside of the new Romanian state and the attempt to remove the Bulgarian government by propaganda.

With the help of the confused, naive heads of the Romanian Legion, a coup d'état was staged in Romania with the goal of toppling the head of state, General Antonescu, and to create chaos in the country so that the elimination of legitimate authority would remove the preconditions for the German guarantee to take effect.²⁹⁸

Despite this, I still believed that it was best to remain silent.

Immediately following the failure of this undertaking, a renewed reinforcement of the Russian troop concentrations along the eastern border of Germany took place. armored units and parachute troops were moved in

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increasing numbers alarmingly close to the German border. The German Wehrmacht and the German homeland know that, only a few weeks ago, not a single German panzer or motorized division was on our eastern border.

Had there been need of conclusive proof of the coalition between England and Soviet Russia, which had meanwhile come about despite all the diversions and disguises, then the Yugoslav conflict would have served as such.

While I labored to make a last attempt to pacify the Balkans and, with the understanding cooperation of the Duce, I invited Yugoslavia to join the Tripartite Pact, England and Soviet Russia worked together to organize the turmoil which overnight removed the government that was willing to negotiate.

The German Volk can be told today: the Serbian *coup de main* against Germany took place not only under the English, but essentially under the Soviet, flag. Since we remained silent on this matter as well, the Soviet leadership went a step further. Not only did it organize the Serb putsch but also, only a few days later, it concluded the well-known Friendship Pact with its new subservient creatures. This was intended to encourage the Serbs in their resistance to a pacification of the Balkans and to goad them on against Germany.

And this was not a platonic ambition. Moscow demanded the mobilization of the Serbian army.

Since I still believed that it was better not to speak, the ruling powers in the Kremlin went a step further: the German Reich government today possesses documents which prove that Russia, in order to get Serbia finally to fight, promised to deliver weapons, planes, ammunition, and other war matériel via Salonika.²⁹⁹

And this occurred almost exactly at the same moment when I gave the Japanese foreign minister, Matsuoka, advice to seek a *détente* with Russia, always in the hope of rendering peace a service.³⁰⁰

Only the rapid breakthrough to Skopje and the taking of Salonika by our peerless divisions have prevented the ambitions of this Soviet-Anglo-Saxon conspiracy. The Serbian air-force officers escaped to Russia and were welcomed there immediately as allies.

The victory of the Axis powers in the Balkans alone prevented the plan to engage Germany in battle in the southeast for months on end this summer, while, in the meantime, the concentration of the Soviet armies would be completed, their readiness for battle reinforced, and then, together with England and supported by the expected American deliveries, Russia would strangle and eventually: crush the German Reich and Italy. Through this, Moscow not only violated the provisions of our Friendship Pact, it has also betrayed this pact most wretchedly. And all this, while the ruling powers in the Kremlin, as in the case of Finland and Romania, hypocritically spoke of peace and of friendship abroad.

If, previously, circumstances forced me to be silent time and again, the time has come when continuous sitting back and watching would not only be a sin

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of omission, but also a crime against the German Volk, yes, against all of Europe.

Today, approximately a hundred sixty Russian divisions stand at our border. For weeks, there have been persistent violations of this border not only down here, but also far up north, as in Romania. Russian pilots amuse themselves by lightheartedly looking over these borders, perhaps to prove to us that they already feel themselves the masters of these territories. On the night of June 17 to 18, Russian patrols reconnoitered German Reich territory and could only be driven back after a lengthy exchange of fire.³⁰¹

Therefore, the hour has now come in which it has become necessary to oppose this conspiracy of the Jewish-Anglo-Saxon warmongers and likewise the Jewish ruling powers in the Bolshevik control station at Moscow.

German Volk! At this moment, the greatest concentration which the world has ever seen in terms of scope and dimensions is taking place. In unison with the Finnish comrades, the victorious warriors of Narvik³⁰² stand at the Arctic Ocean. German divisions under the command of the conqueror of Norway protect Finnish soil, together with the heroic Finnish freedom fighters under their marshal. The formations of the German front in the east reach from East Prussia to the Carpathian Mountains. On the banks of the Pruth river, the lower reaches of the Danube, up to the shores of the Black Sea, German and Romanian soldiers unite under General Antonescu.

The mission of this front, therefore, is no longer the protection of individual countries, but the securing of Europe and, hence, the salvation of all.

Today, I have therefore determined to lay the fate and the future of the German Reich and of our Volk again into the hands of our soldiers.

May the Lord Almighty help us especially in this battle!

Adolf Hitler

In addition to this proclamation, Hitler issued an order of the day for the soldiers of the eastern front on June 22. While the main ideas were those already expressed in the proclamation, it contained the following passage at the end:³⁰³

German soldiers! Hereby you enter a very hard battle, laden with responsibility. Because the fate of Europe, the future of the German Reich, the existence of our Volk now lie in your hands alone.

May the Lord Almighty help us all in this!

As turgid and wordy as the proclamations of June 22 were, at their core was the claim of a Russian-English “conspiracy” against the Reich—yes, against Europe—and of Russia’s breach of the alliance treaty with the Reich. Under exactly the same pretext, Napoleon I invaded Russia in 1812, also on June 22 (!), a Monday. Napoleon’s proclamation to his soldiers read:³⁰⁴

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Imperial Headquarters at Wilk6w (Wilkowski), June 22, 1812

Soldiers!

The second Polish war has begun.

The first ended at Friedland and Tilsit!³⁰⁵ At Tilsit, Russia vowed eternal alliance with France and eternal war with England. It is now breaking this vow! It is not willing to make a declaration on its peculiar attitude before the French eagles have withdrawn across the Rhine. We would thereby leave our allies at its mercy. Russia is heading for ruin! It must meet its fate! Perhaps it thinks we are degenerate? Are we no longer the soldiers of Austerlitz? It makes us choose between disgrace and war. There is no doubt of our choice. So, let us step forward, let us cross the Neman, and carry the war to its territory! The second Polish war will be as glorious for French arms as the first was. But the peace which we shall conclude will bear a guarantee in itself that there will be an end to the ruinous influence which Russia has exercised on European affairs for fifty years.

Napoleon

Hitler was ignorant of the striking similarity to Napoleon's appeal and the date of June 22.³⁰⁶ He had chosen this date only because June 22 was a Sunday,³⁰⁷ and this would add an element of surprise to the attack.³⁰⁸ These two attacks on Russia had even more in common than the "coincidence" of the same date and pretext. Both conquerors—whose careers, achievements, and goals had already corresponded in several important points—invaded Russia without prior declaration of war.³⁰⁹ They thereby violated a sacred law of war which has been respected ever since antiquity. This in itself already illuminated the same moral attitude of the two statesmen, the only dictators who strove for world power in the modern age.³¹⁰

Despite many observations and numerous warnings, the Russians did not think Hitler was serious about going to war. Not only had Churchill and Roosevelt warned Stalin of the threat of war, but also any traveler journeying through Germany to Moscow could tell of the enormous preparations for war along the German-Russian border. Dozens of German reconnaissance planes had penetrated Russian air space during the preceding months.³¹¹ But the Russians stood as though paralyzed. In the last two years, they had grown accustomed to the idea of friendship with Germany. Now, they did not know what to do. Their only hope was that this was another one of Hitler's bluffs. Perhaps he was seeking to distract attention from an attack on the British Isles.

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Bolshevik Russia faced the same situation in 1941 that Tsarist Russia faced in the year 1812. The peace of Tilsit between Napoleon and Russia in 1807 aroused England's indignation as much as the alliance of 1939 that the Soviet Union entered into with Hitler.

Relying on the German-Russian Pact, the Soviet government adopted an impudent tone in its dealings with England and the United States, which it would never have dared to do otherwise. If a rupture with Germany came about—if Germany attacked Russia—the Soviet Union would be doubly humbled in having to ask for the assistance of the western powers. Understandably, Moscow was reluctant even to consider such a development. The only thing which the Soviet government could pull itself together to do was to make a renewed protest in Berlin against the persistent violations of its air space.

To this end, the Russian ambassador Dekanozov repeatedly called for a meeting with von Ribbentrop. Time and again, he was told that he could not speak to the minister. Finally, he was asked to come to the foreign ministry at 4:00 a.m. on June 22. This was an unusual hour for a meeting, but, considering that the foreign minister did not seem to have time otherwise, Dekanozov was ready to meet with him that morning.

By four o'clock in the morning, the German attack on Russia was already fifty-five minutes old. Von Ribbentrop was not pleased with Hitler's order to inform the Russian ambassador of the new situation. After all, he himself had always advocated German-Russian understanding and had greatly enjoyed his visit to Moscow in 1939. Above all, he knew that nothing good could come of this war. Of course, if the omniscient Führer thought otherwise, then it simply had to be this way! Nevertheless, von Ribbentrop was extremely nervous as, together with Envoy Schmidt, he waited for the Russian ambassador shortly before 4:00 a.m., repeatedly muttering: "The Führer is always right!" and "The Russians would surely attack us, if we did not do it now."³¹²

When Dekanozov came in, he first shook hands with Ribbentrop, sat down, and then got ready to make the *demarches* on behalf of his government. But Ribbentrop interrupted him, saying: "That's not what this is about," and he then proceeded to read a declaration which culminated in the claim that Germany had taken "military countermeasures" against Russia.

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Dekanozov quickly composed himself, expressing his regret that events had developed in this manner, saying that the German government was responsible for this, and, bowing, left the room without shaking hands with Ribbentrop.

What took place at the Foreign Ministry in Moscow at this time was even more scandalous.³¹³ According to the principle, “only to say what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it,”³¹⁴ Hitler had informed the German ambassador, Graf von der Schulenburg, only at the last minute of his intention to attack Russia. He did so in the same shameful manner in which he had already compromised German diplomats in Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Yugoslavia, and Greece. Totally ignorant of what was going on, Schulenburg had met with Molotov the evening before, at 9:30 p.m. on June 21.³¹⁵ The Soviet foreign minister had told him of disquieting rumors of the German government’s dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union, and even of a pending war. He had not understood this dissatisfaction and had asked for an explanation.

Schulenburg had assured Molotov of Germany’s loyalty and had promised to wire an inquiry to Berlin that same night. Instead of receiving a reply, Schulenburg was sent instructions to present a declaration to the Russian foreign minister. It contained the following passage:³¹⁶ “. . . there are reports from England regarding . . . closer political and military cooperation between England and the Soviet Union. The Führer has therefore ordered the Wehrmacht to oppose this threat with all means at its disposal.”

And so Schulenburg found himself at the Russian Foreign Ministry once more early on June 22. Molotov, who had not yet had news of the German attack, which had already been underway for over an hour, thought he was not hearing correctly when Schulenburg told him of German “military countermeasures.”

“That is not possible,” Molotov replied, “tell me about the demands of your government!” As embarrassing as this was for Schulenburg, he had to point out that this was not a mistake and that the war had already begun.³¹⁷ In silence, Molotov listened to the remainder of the declaration. Then, he said: “This is a great misfortune for us and also for you!”

In the course of the day, Molotov broadcast an announcement on radio, explaining that the “Fatherland of Workers and Farmers” had been attacked, declaring the following:³¹⁸

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At four o'clock in the morning [Russian time], German and Romanian armed forces carried the war into our country, without the Soviet Union's being presented with any type of reason or declaration of war. The cities Kiev, Sevastopol, Kovno, and others have been bombed. According to the reports which we have received up to now, over two hundred persons have been killed or wounded.

The attack on the Soviet Union was undertaken in spite of the existence of a treaty of nonaggression between Germany and Russia which has responsibly been respected by us to the most minute detail. This war is not a war waged by the German people; instead, it was forced on them by the rulers of Germany, who proceeded against us in the same manner as they did against the French and Czechs, the Poles, the Serbs and the Norwegians, the Danes, the Belgians and the Dutch, and against other nations. While at four o'clock this morning German and Romanian batteries opened fire on us, the German ambassador in Moscow, Graf von der Schulenburg, appeared before me at 5:30 a.m. in order simply to inform me that Germany had opened hostilities against us.

I pointed out to the German ambassador that, up to this moment, Germany had not lodged the slightest complaint, nor had it made any type of protest or demand. I emphasize before the Russian nation and the world that neither does Hitler's proclamation correspond to the truth, nor do his arguments rest on facts. It is not the first time in the history of the Russian people that they have been invaded. They fought against Napoleon and won that fight with their enthusiastic love for the fatherland.

I informed the German ambassador on behalf of the Soviet government that we would take on the challenge. The Russian people are fighting for their fatherland, their honor, and their freedom. We will win!

People of the Soviet Union! Unite as never before! Believe in our army, fleet, and air force! Everyone of us will do his duty!

In Rome, the German Embassy was likewise the site of agitated activity early that morning. Naturally, Hitler had waited until firing had begun to inform his friend Mussolini of the attack on Russia.

On June 21, Hitler had penned the following message to Mussolini:³¹⁹

Duce: I am writing this letter to you at a moment when months of anxious deliberation and continuous nerve-racking waiting are ending in the hardest decision of my life.

He cited a variety of reasons for this "hardest decision," that is, to attack the Soviet Union: with the Russians in the rear, he claimed, "the German Command can no longer vouch for a large-scale attack in the west." Also, "the elimination of Russia means, at the same time, a tremendous relief for Japan." Moreover, "England will be all the less ready for peace while it is able to pin its hopes on its Russian partner."

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The elimination of Russia would enable Germany and Italy “to secure a common food-supply base in the Ukraine.”

His excuse for waiting to tell Mussolini about his plans was most original: “If I have waited until this moment, Duce, to send you this information, it is because the final decision itself will not be made until seven o’clock tonight.”

At 3:00 a.m. on June 22, the German Embassy Counselor von Bismarck visited Ciano with Hitler’s lengthy letter in hand and demanded that it be immediately presented to Mussolini.³²⁰ Since the Duce was in Riccione at the time, Ciano had to wire him the contents of the letter.

Mussolini was greatly annoyed by the manner in which Hitler treated him once again.

There was absolute silence on their part and only a “wake-up call” at night to inform him of the accomplished fact. “Even I don’t dare disturb my servants at night,” said the Duce, “but the Germans make me jump out of bed at any hour without the slightest consideration.”³²¹ Despite his annoyance, Mussolini immediately sent out instructions to declare war on Russia and to move Italian divisions to the new front. While Hitler had written that he did not need Italian forces, he was nonetheless glad to receive this assistance.³²²

Mussolini feigned his eagerness to help Hitler against Russia. On July 1, he told Ciano:

I hope for only one thing, that in this war in the East the Germans will lose a lot [of] feathers. It is false to speak of an anti-Bolshevik struggle. Hitler knows that Bolshevism has disappeared for some time. No code protects private property like the Russian Civil Code. Let him say rather that he wants to vanquish a great continental power [which was equipped] with fifty-two-ton tanks [and] which was getting ready to settle his account.³²³

So this was the attitude of Italy, a country which, according to Hitler,³²⁴ was as predestined as England to rejoice in the conquest of new Lebensraum for Germany.

What about England’s attitude? Hitler didn’t miss the opportunity to instruct the German media, including radio, to portray the new war as the “yearned-for crusade³²⁵ against Bolshevism.” Correspondingly, this “holy war” was being followed with great interest all over the world, including the United States and Great Britain.

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Whoever followed events on German radio or in the German papers on June 22 and 23 felt as though he or she was in a madhouse. With phrases which at best could impress men like von Papen,³²⁶ Hitler sought to induce the Anglo-American powers to ally themselves with Germany as their savior from Bolshevism! And this after Hitler himself had once again proved, through his impudent attack on Russia, that he was led only by his thirst for conquest and power.

Anyone who knew the western powers could imagine how they must have rejoiced at Hitler's decision to establish a second front³²⁷ and to waste his forces in Russia. Even if he succeeded in taking this country, he would be so weakened that it would cost the western powers relatively little effort to defeat him for good.

Still on the evening of June 22, England gave a fitting reply to Hitler's grotesque speculations. In a speech which since has become famous, Churchill declared as follows:³²⁸

. . . At four o'clock this morning Hitler attacked and invaded Russia. All his usual formalities of perfidy were observed with scrupulous technique. A non-aggression treaty had been solemnly signed and was in force between the two countries. No complaint had been made by Germany of its non-fulfillment. Under its cloak of false confidence, the German armies drew up in immense strength along a line which stretches from the White Sea to the Black Sea; and their air fleets and armoured divisions slowly and methodically took their stations. Then, suddenly without declaration of war, without even an ultimatum, German bombs rained down from the air upon the Russian cities, the German troops violated the frontiers; and an hour later the German ambassador, who till the night before was lavishing his assurances of friendship, almost of alliance, upon the Russians, called upon the Russian foreign minister to tell him that a state of war existed between Germany and Russia.³²⁹

Thus was repeated on a far larger scale the same kind of outrage against every form of signed compact and international faith which we have witnessed in Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium, and which Hitler's accomplice and jackal Mussolini so faithfully imitated in the case of Greece.

All this was no surprise to me. In fact I gave clear and precise warnings to Stalin of what was coming. I gave him warning as I have given warning to others before. I can only hope that this warning did not fall unheeded. All we know at present is that the Russian people are defending their native soil and that their leaders have called upon them to resist to the utmost.

Hitler is a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder. Not content with having all Europe under his heel, or else terrorized into various forms of abject submission, he must now carry his work of butchery and desolation among the vast multitudes of Russia and of Asia. The terrible military machine, which we and the rest of the civilized world so foolishly, so supinely, so insensately allowed the Nazi gangsters to build up

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year by year from almost nothing, cannot stand idle lest it rust or fall to pieces. It must be in continual motion, grinding up human lives and trampling down the homes and the rights of hundred of millions of men. Moreover it must be fed, not only with flesh but with oil.

So now this bloodthirsty guttersnipe must launch his mechanized armies upon new fields of slaughter, pillage and devastation. Poor as are the Russian peasants, workmen and soldiers, he must steal from them their daily bread; he must devour their harvests; he must rob them of the oil which drives their ploughs; and thus produce a famine without example in human history. And even the carnage and ruin which his victory, should he gain it—he has not gained it yet—will bring upon the Russian people, will itself be only a stepping-stone to the attempt to plunge the four or five hundred millions who live in China, and the three hundred and fifty millions who live in India,³³⁰ into that bottomless pit of human degradation over which the diabolic emblem of the Swastika flaunts itself. It is not too much to say here this summer evening that the lives and happiness of a thousand million additional people are now menaced with brutal Nazi violence. That is enough to make us hold our breath.³³¹ But presently I shall show you something else that lies behind, and something that touches very nearly the life of Britain and of the United States.

The Nazi régime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It is devoid of all theme and principle except appetite and racial domination. It excels all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression. No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial. I see them guarding their homes where mothers and wives pray—ah yes, for there are times when all pray—for the safety of their loved ones, the return of the breadwinner, of their champion, of their protector. I see the ten thousand villages of Russia, where the means of existence was wrung so hardly from the soil, but where there are still primordial human joys, where maidens laugh and children play. I see advancing upon all this in hideous onslaught the Nazi war machine, with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, its crafty expert agents fresh from the cowering and tying-down of a dozen countries. I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of the Hun soldiery plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts. I see the German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, delighted to find what they believe is an easier and a safer prey.

Behind all this glare, behind all this storm, I see that small group of villainous men who plan, organize and launch this cataract of horrors upon mankind. And then my mind goes back across the years to the days when the Russian armies were our allies against the same deadly foe,³³² when they fought with so much valour and constancy, and helped to gain a victory in which all share, alas, they were—through no fault of ours—utterly cut off. I have lived

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through all this, and you will pardon me if I express my feelings and the stir of old memories.

But now I have to declare the decision of His Majesty's Government—and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, in due course, concur—for we must speak out now at once, without a day's delay. I have to make the declaration, but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air, until with God's help we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated its people from his yoke. Any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe.³³³

The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free people in every quarter of the globe. Let us learn the lessons already taught by such cruel experience. Let us redouble our exertions, and strike with united strength while life and power remain.

After this speech by Churchill on the evening of June 22, it was clear that Hitler had already lost the war against Russia, at least politically. His theory, based on the belief that the English would, like the German nationals earlier, fall for this old trick of invoking fear of Bolshevik Russia and become his allies, proved to be wrong with catastrophic consequences.³³⁴

On June 22, Hitler sent Lieutenant Colonel Mölders a telegram to award him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords on his seventy-second air victory.³³⁵

The next day, he received the Italian minister of people's education, Alessandro Pavolini, at the Reich Chancellery in the presence of Goebbels.³³⁶

On June 24, Slovak troops crossed the border to join in the war against Russia. On this occasion, an exchange of telegrams took place, the only exchange of its kind between the dictators who participated in this campaign and who, on other occasions, had so eagerly exchanged telegrams.

Hitler replied to Tiso in the following telegram:³³⁷

I thank Your Excellency for the information, relayed to me by telegram, that Slovakia has entered the fateful struggle for Europe's future on the side of Germany, along with the assurance of your loyal dedication. In the unshakable

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conviction that we are right, I am certain that a complete victory will be imparted to our arms.

Adolf Hitler

Hungary severed its diplomatic ties to Russia on the same day.³³⁸

It was not until June 24 that Moscow finally decided to accept the British offer of assistance and officially informed the United States that Germany and Russia had entered into war. Obviously, the Soviets were embarrassed to admit that they had made deals with Germany for so long and had disregarded warnings of German disloyalty. Of course, they were also apprehensive of the securities the western powers would probably demand in order to prevent another special pact with Hitler. They remembered well the harsh conditions which England had imposed on Russia after similar events in the year 1812.³³⁹

On the morning of June 25, Finland noticed that it had become the "target of Soviet attacks" and was taking "defensive measures."³⁴⁰ A general mobilization had already been ordered in Finland on June 20. On June 22, Hitler had declared: "In unison with the Finnish comrades, the victorious warriors of Narvik stand at the Arctic Ocean."³⁴¹

On June 25, Sweden yielded to German pressure and permitted a German division to be transported from Norway across its territory to Finland.

Denmark severed relations with the Soviet Union on June 25. On June 30, it announced the creation of a "Free Corps Denmark," which would participate in the campaign against Russia. Spain organized a "Blue Division" for the same purpose. Recruitment of French volunteers for a "Legion" began on July 2.

The English perceptively increased the number of bomber flights over Reich territory after June 22, as is evident from the number of downings cited in the OKW report.

For days, no information was available on the situation of the front in the east, other than everything going "according to plan." It was not until Sunday, June 29, that a dozen "special reports" on more or less significant initial successes were made public.³⁴²

On the same day, Hitler signed a decree which, in view of Hess's escape, named Göring as the Führer's successor in the event of his death. However, this decree was not published in either the press or the Reich Law Gazette.

June 30, 1941

On June 30, Hitler received the three U-boat commanders Liebe, Schultze, and Endrass, and presented them with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.³⁴³

In the course of the following weeks, it became clear that Hitler was greatly mistaken in his assessment of the military aspects of the campaign, and so were his generals! Hitler's theory of the "cowardly and anxious" Bolsheviks, whom he intended to overrun as swiftly and brutally as he had the German communists, ended in a fiasco.

As during the Reich's wars against France after the French Revolution, it became clear that ideological changes in a regime did not affect the people's willingness to resist. Bolshevik Russia fought the German invaders as energetically as Tsarist Russia had defended itself against the armies of Charles XII and Napoleon I. Neither Hitler's methods of terror nor the technological improvements in the equipment of his armies could change this.

Hitler had calculated that it would take his panzers, which, in theory, could cover hundreds of kilometers every day, a few days—at most a few months—to reach Moscow, Leningrad, and the Volga.

In 1812, it took Napoleon eighty-four days to advance from the Neman to Moscow, that is, to cover a distance of nine hundred fifty kilometers. On September 14, he had reached his destination. Hitler's troops likewise set out on June 22, but by September 14 Moscow was still three hundred kilometers away.

The German High Command had also believed that the Russian steppe was ideal terrain for tanks and that this alone would be decisive. Its calculations and plans proved wrong. Four weeks of heavy frontier fighting and everything would be over, so the generals had thought.³⁴⁴

The long-winded OKW reports of the first weeks revealed that, militarily, Hitler's coup in Russia had also failed. This venture and its consequences would haunt him to the end of his life. Even Hitler could not deny that the campaign against Russia had failed. But the reasons he gave for this failure missed the point entirely and reached from Mussolini's Greek adventure to the alleged "high treason" by the German generals.³⁴⁵

After the Second World War, the German generals eagerly tried to prove that, had things gone according to their plans, this campaign could have been won. Numerous military historians examined different stages of the battle and developed theories on how things might have gone if this or that battle had been planned differently, if this or that

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advance had come earlier, had been conducted more energetically or more cautiously.

As interesting and necessary as such research might be, one should never forget the clear historical facts or attempt to challenge their significance. And the facts are the following:

1. Whether or not Hitler's campaign against Russia was successful, it was without significance for the ultimate outcome of the Second World War. This means: that even if Hitler had succeeded in conquering all of Russia and subjugating it, the western powers would have defeated and destroyed him sooner or later. Under such circumstances, the war might have lasted a year or two longer. But never would Hitler have been able to control effectively so vast a terrain and, at the same time, prevent an invasion by the Allies. In addition to this, Hitler never would have been satisfied with a successful campaign against Russia. His insatiable thirst for further conquests would have compelled him onward immediately to attack India.³⁴⁶

2. Hitler's campaign against Russia failed because Germany's war potential was insufficient to break the Russian resistance. A different operational plan or strategy could not have changed this.

3. What was surprising about Hitler's campaign was that in spite of the harshness and brutality with which the German Wehrmacht proceeded, it failed to attain even one of its goals:

While, in some instances, the Wehrmacht reached the municipal areas of the cities, it was unable to take either Murmansk or Leningrad, Moscow, or Stalingrad. In the south, too, it proved unable to get hold of the oil fields in the Caucasus,³⁴⁷ although the Swastika flag flew on Mount Elbrus for a while.

In essence, the German conquests remained restricted to the Baltic states, eastern Poland, the Ukraine, and the Crimea, that is, those areas, which the Imperial armies had also taken in the First World War.

This conclusion is remarkable insofar as Hitler had maintained that under his leadership "nothing is impossible for the German soldier,"³⁴⁸ and that the Wehrmacht that he had created was "the most gigantic instrument of war of all time."³⁴⁹

4. The successful resistance of the Soviet Union in view of the invasion by Hitler must be attributed, as in the case of Napoleon I, to the power of the Russian artillery. Like the line divisions and the guards of Napoleon,³⁵⁰ the German armies in the Second World War suddenly found themselves confronted with the combat strength, precision, and

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superiority of the Russian batteries and mortars. The Russian cannons in front of Moscow in 1941, the missiles of the *Stalinorgeln* (multiple rocket launchers), and the five thousand guns firing at Stalingrad belong forever to the picture of the great Russian defensive war from 1941 to 1945. And the thunder of artillery, which during the war announced every new victory to the citizens of Moscow, was at the same time an honor salute to Russia's best branch of the armed services.³⁵¹

From the end of June 1941 on, Hitler was at the "front," that is, he stayed at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia.³⁵² He expected his stay to last approximately four weeks, which corresponded to the time he had spent at the Felsenest headquarters in the Eifel mountains the year before.³⁵³ He thought it would include a few more or less extensive sight-seeing tours and inspections of the front in the more or less conquered Russia, similar to how things had been in the west in 1940. But those four weeks, with few interruptions, would turn into three-and-a-half years!

During lunches and dinners at his Werwolf headquarters at Winniza (Vinnitsa) in the Ukraine from July 1941 to August 1942, Hitler would conduct the so-called "Table Talk."³⁵⁴ This "Table Talk" was a continuation of the monologues Hitler usually gave late at night at the Berghof or at dinners at his apartment at the Chancellery in Berlin. Here, too, he insisted on absolute silence while he spoke. Nobody was allowed to contradict him, irrespective of the topic he talked about, whether it was politics, art, history, technology, or the like. Mrs. Goebbels perhaps best summed up the "Table Talk" when she told Ciano on one occasion: "It is always Hitler who talks! He can be Führer as much as he likes, but he always repeats himself and bores his guests."³⁵⁵

The topics which Hitler discussed in the "Table Talk" had mostly been discussed on countless previous occasions: the idea of the earth as a "trophy cup" which passes into the hands of the strongest people,³⁵⁶ the supposed identity of struggle at home and abroad,³⁵⁷ motorization and mass production of the Volkswagen,³⁵⁸ the abnormality of the Zeppelin and the present form of ship propulsion,³⁵⁹ Rosenberg's ludicrous book on mythology,³⁶⁰ the desired friendship with England and the great achievements of the English,³⁶¹ world Jewry,³⁶² city planning,³⁶³ and supposed casualty figures for the Thirty Years' War.³⁶⁴ Often he would swagger and, for cheap effect, would claim things that could not possibly be true chronologically.³⁶⁵

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Sometimes Hitler would also speak of current affairs, for example, the treatment and organization of Russia, the suppression of the non-German population,³⁶⁶ the extermination of millions of Leningrad's citizens through bombardment and starvation,³⁶⁷ the planning of gigantic highways and railroads with a gauge of four meters.³⁶⁸ Hitler's attacks on lawyers likewise played a role of importance and will be discussed in more detail later.

In September 1942, the "Table Talk" suddenly ended. Hitler was just criticizing a measure Field Marshal List had taken in the southern sector, when Jodl interjected that the Führer himself had ordered him to do so.³⁶⁹ Unbelievable! Hitler screamed: "That is a lie!" Foaming with rage, he left the dining room. That was the end of the "Table Talk" for all time. The God-man Hitler, who was always right, had been insulted. Someone had dared accuse him of making a mistake, of committing a sin!

From July 1941 on, Hitler's lifestyle markedly changed. He spent most of the day in rooms in the bunkers and barracks of his headquarters, which had to be lighted artificially even in daytime. The monotonous daily routine of discussion of the situation, reception of news, and issuing of directives was disrupted only by the repetitive awarding of the Knight's Cross in all categories to officers. On occasion, Hitler flew to some backward operational theater. Every once in a while, potentates from the satellite states or even his friend Mussolini made an appearance. Visits from unterführers, ministers, and so on, became increasingly rare over time.



XLVIII Horses deployed to move army units in the harsh winter of 1941

Photo: Publisher's archives



XLIX Rommel at the site of a gun emplacement

Photo: Publisher's archives

July 17, 1941

4

On July 12, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to State President Háchá on his sixty-ninth birthday.³⁷⁰

Two days before, the OKW had reported on the double battle for Bialystok and Minsk, stating that the “greatest battle of matériel and encirclement (*Material- und Umfangsschlacht*) in world history” had taken place there.³⁷¹ Following this battle of world-historic dimensions, Hitler obviously believed that Russia had had it. Therefore, on July 14, he issued “guidelines on the reduction of the army,” which began with the following note:³⁷²

The military domination of the European area after the defeat of Russia allows us to reduce the size of the army considerably.

On July 15, Hitler awarded Lieutenant Colonel Mölders the first Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds. He sent him a handwritten letter:³⁷³

Accept my sincere congratulations on your five new air victories today. With these successes, you have downed a hundred one enemies in the Greater German fight for freedom and, together with your successes in the Spanish Civil War, you have emerged victorious a hundred fifteen times from battle in the air.

In appreciation of your everlasting, heroic struggle in the fight for the freedom of our Volk and in recognition of your great services as a fighter pilot, I award you, as the first officer of the German Wehrmacht, the highest German medal for bravery, the Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds as an addition to the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

I add my best wishes for your future to my gratitude and that of the entire German Volk,

Adolf Hitler

On July 17, Hitler received Air Force General Student and Major General Ringl,³⁷⁴ who headed a delegation of soldiers who had fought in

July 18, 1941

Crete and had been awarded the Knight's Cross. In an address, Hitler said that "this daring feat is one of the prerequisites to the successful continuation of our fight for freedom."

On July 18, Hitler decorated Lieutenant Colonel Galland and other officers.³⁷⁵ On July 19, Hitler felt compelled to issue Directive No. 33 on the "continuation of the war in the east,"³⁷⁶ in spite of the recent "greatest battle of matériel and encirclement in world history." He felt that it was necessary to attempt once again to encircle enemy troops in the Ukraine. The directive read:

Directive No. 33: Continuation of the War in the East

(1) The second round of battles in the east has ended on the whole front with the breakthrough of the Stalin Line and sweeping advances of the armored units. For Army Group Center, the elimination of the strong enemy combat forces remaining between the motorized units will still require considerable time.

The northern wing of Army Group South is hampered in its action and freedom of movement by the Fortress of Kiev and the Fifth Soviet Army in its rear.

(2) The aim of the next operations must be to prevent further strong elements of the enemy from withdrawing into the vast Russian expanse, and to destroy them.

Preparations to that effect are to be set afoot along the following lines:

(a) eastern front—south:

The principal objective is the destruction of the enemy's Sixth and Twelfth Armies while they are still west of the Dnieper by a concentric attack. The Romanian main forces will have to cover this operation in the south.

The enemy's Fifth Army can also most quickly be destroyed by joint action between forces of the Army Group Center's southern wing and Army Group South's northern wing.

Some infantry divisions of Army Group Center will have to turn south. Additional forces, particularly motorized units, will have to be employed in a southeasterly direction after fulfilling their present missions, securing their supplies, and screening in the direction of Moscow. This will be in order to cut off from escape those enemy forces which transfer to the far side of the Dnieper and thus into the depths of the Russian space, and to destroy them.

(b) eastern front—center:

Army Group Center, after eliminating the numerous encircled enemy pockets and after making its supplies secure, will continue to advance toward Moscow with infantry units. Motorized units, not being employed southeastward toward the Dnieper Line, will have the mission of cutting Moscow-Leningrad communications, thereby covering the right flank of the thrust of Army Group North toward Leningrad.

July 21, 1941

(c) eastern front—north:

The advance in the direction of Leningrad must not be resumed until the Eighteenth Army has closed up with the Fourth Armored Group and their deep flank is securely covered toward the east by the Sixteenth Army. Army Group North must also endeavor to block the withdrawal to Leningrad of the Soviet forces still fighting in Estonia.

The early seizure of the Baltic islands as possible bases of the Soviet fleet is desired.

(d) Finnish front:

It remains the mission of the Finnish main forces, reinforced by the bulk of the 163rd Division, to attack the enemy confronting them. The main effort will be east of Lake Ladoga. Ultimately, the Finnish forces, by concerted effort with the Army Group North, will destroy them.

The objectives of the attack under command of the 36th Corps and the Mountain Corps remain unchanged with the understanding that, for the time being, stronger support cannot be expected from air units and therefore, if necessary, one will have to put up with a temporary postponement of operations.

(3) For the Luftwaffe, upon the release of any units from the eastern front—center, it is especially important to support the main effort (*schwerpunkt*mässig) of the attack along the eastern front—south through the commitment of air and antiaircraft forces, and, if necessary, by prompt reinforcements or suitable regrouping.

The attack on Moscow with forces of the Second Air Fleet, reinforced by fighter formations from the west, is to be carried out as soon as possible as “retaliation for the Soviet attacks on Bucharest and Helsinki.”

(4) The mission of the navy remains to maintain the maritime traffic, especially in order to transport supplies for the land operations as far as enemy activity in the sea and in the air permits. Furthermore, while we progressively threaten the enemy bases, our actions must as much as possible be directed at preventing enemy forces from escaping to Swedish ports of internment.

After the fleet units in the Baltic are set free once more, the motor torpedo boats and minesweepers—at first in the strength of one flotilla of each—are to be transferred to the Mediterranean.

Several submarines are to be dispatched to the Arctic Ocean for the support of the German operations in Finland, which are hampered by enemy reinforcements by sea.

(5) In the west and north, all three Wehrmacht branches must be on the alert to repel possible British attacks on the Channel Islands and the Norwegian coast. The rapid transfer of combat aircraft from the western theater to all parts of Norway must be ready and prepared.

Adolf Hitler

On July 21, at the Führer headquarters, Hitler received “the Croatian deputy head of state and minister of defense, Marshal

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Kvaternik, who was briefly visiting Germany,” and engaged him in a “heartfelt conversation.”³⁷⁷

On July 26, Hitler was too busy to participate in the opening of the Greater German Art Exhibition in Munich. The previous year, he had asked Hess to substitute for him. Since Hess was no longer available, he had Goebbels open the exhibition.³⁷⁸

On July 29, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini the following congratulatory telegram on his birthday:³⁷⁹

In loyal comradeship, I express to you, Duce, my heartfelt congratulations and those of the German Volk on your birthday, to which I add sincere best wishes for your personal welfare as well as for the future of the Italian people, which, under your leadership and in close brotherhood in arms with the German Volk, is fighting for a new Europe and is marching towards our mutual victory.

Adolf Hitler

Also on July 29, General von Schröder died in Hohenlychen. He had commanded the army in Serbia and had formerly been the president of the Reich Air Defense Union (*Reichsluftschutzbund*). He died as the result of a “sudden embolism,” caused by an earlier flying accident.³⁸⁰ Schröder was the first in a series of high-ranking officers, state administrators, and party functionaries to die such a “sudden death.” In the years 1941 through 1945, papers in Germany reported on a multitude of “sudden deaths,” usually resulting from heart disease, stroke, or flying accident and, at the same time, announced a state funeral. In a few cases, it later became known that the persons in question had committed suicide (for example, Air Force General Udet, Luftwaffe chief of staff Jeschonnek, Field Marshal Rommel, and Gauleiter Bürckel).

The “bad state of health” of high-ranking officers, functionaries in state and party, and the number of state funerals became so alarming that people on the street jokingly began to refer to those who dared to criticize the general situation as “candidates for a state funeral.” While it is possible that a number of these deaths truly resulted from illness or accident, on the whole, they do appear odd, especially since the SS Führers apparently enjoyed better health.

By now, the campaign in Russia had been underway for over five weeks without bringing about any decisive victory. Therefore, on July 30, Hitler issued Directive No. 34, which read as follows:³⁸¹

July 29, 1941

The development of the situation in the last few days, the appearance of strong enemy forces on the front and on the flanks of Army Group Center, the supply situation, and the necessity of giving the 2nd and 3rd Armored Groups about ten days of time to reorganize their formations, force me for the moment to postpone the more distant missions and targets assigned in Directive 33 of July 19 and its supplement of July 23.

I order therefore the following:

I. (1) In the northern sector of the eastern front, the attack with the main effort between Lake Ilmen and [the city of] Narva to be continued in the direction of Leningrad with the objective of encircling Leningrad and establishing contact with the Finnish army.

This offensive is to be screened off north of Lake Ilmen in the Volkov sector, and south of Lake Ilmen to be pressed to the northeast only as far as securing the right flank of the advance north of Lake Ilmen demands it. Before that the situation around Velikie Luki is to be cleaned up. All forces not required for this mission are to be added to the assault wing to the north of Lake Ilmen. The thrust of the 3rd Armored Group upon the Valdai Hills that was planned earlier will not take place until the armored formations are again fully ready for action. Instead, however, the left wing of Army Group Center must be pushed ahead to the northeast as far as the flank protection of the right wing of Army Group North demands it.

Estonia is first to be cleared with all the forces of the Eighteenth Army; only then can divisions be brought through in the direction of Leningrad.

(2) Army Group Center, with the utilization of favorable terrain sectors, will shift over to the defensive. Insofar as it is necessary to gain favorable jumping-off positions for the later assault operations against the Twenty-First Soviet Army, some attacks with limited objectives may still be carried out. For the rest, the 2nd and 3rd Armored Groups are to be withdrawn from the front as soon as the situation permits, and be speedily reorganized.

(3) On the southern sector of the eastern front, operations will be, for the time being, continued with forces of Army Group South alone. Their objective must be the destruction of the strong enemy forces west of the Dnieper, and, for the rest, by gaining bridgeheads near Kiev and to the south, the creation of suitable conditions for later pushing the 1st Panzergrenadier Division across to the eastern bank of the Dnieper.

The Soviet 5th Army, fighting in the swamp area northwest of Kiev, must be forced to give battle west of the Dnieper and must be destroyed. The danger that it might break through to the north across the Pripet must be prevented as early as possible.

(4) Finnish front:

The attack in the direction of Kandalaksha is to be called off. The threats to the flank from Motoskiy Bay are to be eliminated by the Mountain Corps, and only those forces left to the 36th Corps headquarters that are necessary for defense and for the feigning of further assault preparations.

The cutting of the Murmansk railway is now to be attempted in the sector of the 3rd (Finnish) Corps, especially in the direction of Loukhi; all the forces

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suitable for this attack are to be transferred there, with any surplus units to be turned over to the Karelian army. If, because of difficult terrain, the attack by the 3rd (Finnish) Corps should come to a halt too, the German forces are to be withdrawn and added to the Karelian army. This applies particularly to mobile units, tanks, and heavy artillery. The 6th Mountain Division is to be moved to the Mountain Corps with the utilization of all available transport routes. Whether the rail route through Sweden to Narvik can also be used will be clarified by the Foreign Ministry.

II. Luftwaffe

(1) eastern front—north:

The Luftwaffe will shift the main effort in the air combat to the northeastern front by bringing the bulk of the 8th Air Corps into the First Air Force. The reinforcements are to be brought in early enough to be utilized at the beginning of the main thrust of the attack by Army Group North (early on August 6).

(2) Center:

It will be the mission of the Luftwaffe units remaining with Army Group Center to provide the absolutely necessary fighter protection on the front of the Second and Ninth Armies and possibly to support local attacks. The attacks on Moscow are to be continued.

(3) Southeastern front:

Missions as before. No reduction of the Luftwaffe units employed with Army Group South is planned.

(4) Finland:

The principal mission of the Fifth Air Force is the support of the Mountain Corps. In addition, the attack of the 3rd Finnish Army Corps is to be supported at some promising sector.

The necessary preparations are to be made for the possibly necessary dispatch of forces in support of the Karelian army.

Adolf Hitler

Crucial to the success of these undertakings was “the attack with the main effort between Lake Ilmen and Narva is to be continued in the direction of Leningrad with the objective of encircling Leningrad and establishing contact with the Finnish army.” Therefore, Hitler invited the Finnish general Oehqvist³⁸² to the Führer headquarters that day.

German troops had met with strong resistance at Smolensk, as Napoleon’s soldiers had in 1812. The Russians were not ready to give up their “holy city” without a good fight.³⁸³

On August 6, the city was finally taken. After a pause of four weeks, the OKW issued a long-winded, comprehensive report on the successes to date. Several photos taken at the Führer headquarters that were published at this time show Hitler, Göring, Keitel, Brauchitsch, and Halder looking rather pensive.³⁸⁴

August 14, 1941

Also on August 6, the following announcement from the Führer headquarters was made public:³⁸⁵

On the occasion of the liberation of Bessarabia, the Führer and Supreme Commander awarded the Romanian head of state and supreme commander of the Romanian troops, General Antonescu, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. The Führer personally presented the award at the southern front of the theater of war in the east.

In order to do so, Hitler had flown from Rastenburg to Berdichev along with his interpreter Schmidt. He had a political discussion with Antonescu and was present as Rundstedt delivered his situation report. Immediately after that, he returned to East Prussia.³⁸⁶

On August 9, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to Mussolini, whose second son Bruno had crashed during a test flight near Pisa.³⁸⁷

On August 19, Hitler bade farewell to the Spanish ambassador de Los Monteros, who had been recalled from Berlin.³⁸⁸

On the same day, Hitler issued a supplement to Directive No. 34.³⁸⁹ He wanted the Crimea, the Donets Basin, and Kharkov to be taken, and the moving of mountain troops in the direction of Batumi to be considered.

The goal must be to take from the enemy the entire administrative, armament, and transport center surrounding Moscow before the onset of winter.

Operations against Leningrad must be concluded before the attack in the direction of Moscow begins.

On August 14, the Atlantic Charter, which Churchill and Roosevelt had drawn up aboard the battleship *Prince of Wales*, was made public.³⁹⁰

Hitler was furious about the meeting of the Anglo-American statesmen and, at the same time, jealous. He immediately thought about arranging a meeting with Mussolini, but first he needed the triumphal setting and military victories.

In Hitler's opinion, it was the fault of the generals that operations in Russia had not yet been concluded. Contrary to his instructions, they had failed to defeat the Russians swiftly. In order to set them straight, he made clear that they should follow his instructions only. On August 21, he decreed the following:³⁹¹

The proposal of the army (dated August 18) concerning the continuation of the war in the east does not correspond to my intentions. I order the following:

August 25, 1941

1. The most important goal, which must be reached before the onset of winter, is not to take Moscow, but the Crimea, the industrial and coal areas along the Donetsk Basin, and to cut off the Russian oil supplies from the Caucasus, and, in the north, to seal Leningrad off and to unite with the Finns.

2. The rare, operationally advantageous situation that was created by the establishment of the Gomel-Potshop line must immediately be taken advantage of for a concentric operation of the inner wings of the Army Groups South and Center.

Its goal must be not only to force the Soviet Fifth Army behind the Dnieper through a general attack of the Sixth Army, but also to destroy this enemy before he can break out from the Desna-Konotop-Sula line. This will secure Army Group South so that it can gain a foothold east of the central section of the Dnieper and continue operations in the direction of Rostov-Kharkov in the center and on the left wing.

3. Irrespective of later operations, Army Group Center must deploy sufficient forces so that the goal, the destruction of the Russian Fifth Army, is accomplished, and the Army Group, in positions which economize power, remains ready to thwart enemy attacks against the center of its front.

The intention remains unchanged to drive the left wing of Army Group Center toward the heights around Toropec in order to establish contact with the right wing of Army Group North.

4. The taking of the Crimean Peninsula is of supreme importance to securing our oil supplies from Romania. A swift crossing of the Dnieper in the direction of the Crimea must be sought by all means before the enemy has time to lead up new forces, even if mobile units have to be deployed.

5. Only the firm sealing-off of Leningrad, the union with the Finns, and the destruction of the Russian Fifth Army create the preconditions and free the forces that are necessary, in the spirit of the orders supplementing Directive No. 34 (dated August 12). Those orders: to attack the enemy Army Group Timoshenko with good hope of success and then defeat it.

Adolf Hitler

On August 25, Hitler received Mussolini, whom the interpreter Schmidt had brought from the Brenner Pass, at the small Görlitz station near Rastenburg. The "meeting of the Axis partners" began.³⁹²

The time was not a happy one for the gentlemen since, on this day, England and Russia moved to occupy Iran. Shah Reza Pahlavi³⁹³ put up resistance for three days before he had to admit that, in time of war, it was best for small powers to submit to bigger ones. Hitler had thought that small states were his game, but he hadn't realized that the Anglo-American powers were not willing to let that happen and that he himself was too weak to do things against their will.

August 29, 1941

From the station, the two dictators drove to the Wolfsschanze headquarters. That evening, there was a bivouac in a forest glade at the Führer headquarters.

The next day, they flew to Brest-Litovsk, where Mussolini was brought especially to study the effectiveness of a new German gun with a sixty-centimeter caliber, which had been used in taking the place. After a meal at the field mess, they returned to Wolfsschanze.

That night, Mussolini went on alone to Gorsk aboard his special train. The two dictators met there again on August 27. To protect the two special trains against aerial bombing, they were parked inside a concrete pipe.

On August 28, they flew to Uman in the Ukraine aboard Hitler's four-engined Focke-Wulf plane Condor 'D 2600.' There they got into jeeps. After driving around for some time, they finally found the Italian division, which Mussolini was supposed to inspect. Of course, Hitler was leading as usual and allowed Mussolini only to play second fiddle to him. Mussolini took his revenge by flying the plane back to Gorsk himself and terrifying Hitler.

In the course of the "discussions" during those days, according to Schmidt's report, Hitler once again overwhelmed Mussolini with "numbers and technical details." He spoke of the imminent collapse of Russia and England, and of the inevitable final victory of Germany. While Mussolini listened in silence, he apparently felt strengthened morally, since he later sent Hitler a most enthusiastic telegram of thanks.³⁹⁴

On August 29, the Führer's headquarters published a communiqué on the talks, which was obviously intended to counteract the Atlantic declaration of August 14 by Roosevelt and Churchill. It read as follows:³⁹⁵

The Führer and the Duce met at the Führer's headquarters in the period between August 25 and 29.

During the talks, which took place at the Führer's headquarters, all military and political questions concerning the development and the duration of the war were discussed in great detail. These questions were examined in the spirit of the close comradeship and the feeling of being united by a common fate which are characteristic of the relations of the two Axis powers. The talks were suffused by the unchangeable will of the two people and their leaders to bring the war to a victorious end.

The new European order that will result from this victory should, as far as possible, eliminate the causes that, in the past have led to the European wars.

August 31, 1941

The destruction of the Bolshevik danger and of plutocratic exploitation will create the possibility of a peaceful, harmonious, and fruitful cooperation between all people of the European continent in the political, as well as in the economic and cultural spheres.

In the course of this visit, the Führer and the Duce went to significant points on the eastern front. An Italian division deployed in the struggle against Bolshevism was inspected. Field Marshal von Rundstedt greeted the Führer and the Duce on their visit to the southern front. In addition, visits to the headquarters of the Reichsmarschall and the commander in chief of Army Group South took place.

The Italian ambassador to Berlin, Dino Alfieri, the chief of the Italian armed forces general staff, General Cavallero, the cabinet chief envoy Anfuso, who substituted for Foreign Minister Count Ciano (who was unable to come because of an illness),³⁹⁶ Generals Marras and Gandin, as well as a series of other high-ranking general staff officers, accompanied the Duce. The German ambassador von Mackensen and the German military attaché to Rome, Lieutenant General von Tintelen, likewise accompanied the Duce on his tour. On the German side, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, participated in the political and military discussions.

On August 30, Hitler sent the following congratulatory telegrams to Mannerheim and Ryti on taking Vyborg:³⁹⁷

Today, the fight for Finland's freedom was crowned by the capture of Vyborg. Along with me, the German Volk, and especially the German Wehrmacht, share the pride and joy of the Finnish people, filled with admiration for the bravery of your soldiers.

As an external symbol of the solidarity between the German and Finnish armed forces in our common, fateful struggle and in appreciation of your bravery and that of your troops, I award you, in the name of the German Volk, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with clasps to the Iron Cross First and Second Class of 1914.

Adolf Hitler

On the capture of the city of Vyborg by the Finnish troops, I send you my heartfelt congratulations and those of the entire German Volk. This great success is a significant milestone on the way to completely liberating Finland from the enemy and to a final victory over nation-destroying Bolshevism.

Adolf Hitler

On August 31, Hitler sent a greeting to the Leipzig Fair on its opening.³⁹⁸

The next day at the Führer headquarters, he received the Spanish general Munoz Grande, commander of the "Blue Division," to have him report to be ready "to destroy the enemy of the world."³⁹⁹

September 6, 1941

On September 3, the eve of his fiftieth birthday, Reich Minister Todt was received by Hitler at the Führer headquarters.⁴⁰⁰

On the same day, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the Croatian Marshal Kvaternik on the death of his wife.⁴⁰¹

On September 4, Hitler sent a handwritten letter to Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb, the commander in chief of Army Group North, on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁴⁰²

On September 6, the state funeral that Hitler had ordered for the publisher Hugo Bruckmann took place in Munich. Gauleiter Adolf Wagner brought "the Führer's last greetings and a gorgeous wreath."⁴⁰³

On the same day, Hitler issued Directive No. 35, which read as follows:⁴⁰⁴

The initial successes against the enemy forces in the area between the inner wings of Army Groups South and Center have, with a view to the progressive encirclement of the Leningrad area, created the basis for a decisive operation against Army Group Timoshenko, which is now tied down on the central front by offensive fighting. Army Group Timoshenko must be beaten and annihilated within the limited period of time left before winter weather sets in. To attain this it is essential to concentrate on the wings all army and Luftwaffe forces that become available and that can be transferred in time.

In accordance with the presentation of the commander in chief of the army, I order for the preparation and execution of these operations the following:

1. On the southern half of the front, it must be the objective of the forces of Army Group South advancing northward across the Dnieper, in coordination with the attack by the southern wing of Army Group Center, to annihilate the enemy lodged in the Kremenchug-Kiev-Konotop triangle. As soon as execution of this mission permits, the elements of Second and Sixth Armies and Second Panzer Group that are no longer needed must be regrouped for new operations.

Army Group South, as of about September 10 at the latest, must launch a surprise push of mobile units reinforced by infantry divisions and supported by the Fourth Air Force concentrated for massive blows, out of the bridgehead won by the Seventeenth Army in a northwesterly direction via Lubny, while the Seventeenth Army gains room in the direction of Poltava and Kharkov.

On the lower Dnieper, the offensive against the Crimea must be continued with the support of the Fourth Air Force, as must also the offensive out of the Dnepropetrovsk bridgehead if forces are available for that purpose. A drive by mobile units south of the lower Dnieper in the direction of Melitopol would bring substantial advances for the mission of the Eleventh Army.

2. In the Army Center, the preparations for the operation against Army Group Timoshenko must be carried forward in such manner as to permit at the earliest possible date (end of September) the launching of the attack which

September 6, 1941

would have as its object the annihilation of the enemy in the area east of Smolensk by a double envelopment—with strong, massed armored forces on the wings—aimed in the general direction of Vyazma.

To this end, heavy concentrations of mobile forces must be formed:

On the southern wing—probably in the area southeast of Roslavl and with a northeastern direction of thrust—from the available forces of Army Group Center together with 5th and 2nd tank Divisions released for the purpose.

In the sector of Ninth Army—probably with direction of thrust via Byeloy—by transferring the strongest elements that can be obtained from Army Group North.

Only after the bulk of Army Group Timoshenko has been beaten in this tightly contained operation of annihilation by close-in envelopment, will Army Center be required to launch the advance in the direction of Moscow, resting on the Oka on the left, and on the upper Volga on the right.

The Luftwaffe is to support the attack with the Second Air Force, which is to receive timely reinforcement especially from the northeastern sector, providing for main concentration of the wings and committing the bulk of the divebombing units (8th Air Corps) with the mobile units on both attacking wings.

3. On the eastern front north, encirclement of the enemy forces fighting in the Leningrad area (which also requires seizure of Schlüsselburg) must be carried out in cooperation with the Finnish Corps attacking on the Karelian Isthmus in such a manner as to permit release to Army Group Center, on September 15 at the latest, of substantial portions of the mobile troops and of the First Air Force, especially the 8th Air Corps. Before that, a tighter encirclement of Leningrad to the east at least must be sought and, in addition, if the weather permits, a total air attack is to be launched against Leningrad; there the most important objective is destruction of the water works.

In order to help along the Finnish advance through the fortifications laid out along the old Russo-Finnish frontier, and with a view to narrowing the combat zone and eliminating enemy air bases, it is necessary as soon as possible to launch forces of Army Group North across the Neva sector toward the north.

Kronshtadt Bay must, in cooperation with the Finns, be sealed off by mine fields and artillery so as to prevent any escape of enemy forces into the Baltic (Hangö, Baltic islands).

The battlefield around Leningrad must be screened off to the east, also on the lower Volkhov, as soon as troops can be made available for the purpose; a linkup with the Karelian army in direction of the Svir should be sought only after annihilation of the enemy around Leningrad is assured.

4. With regard to the further development of the operations, preparations must be made for providing cover for the Moscow offensive of Army Group Center by part of Army Group South using a flank-securing force (made up of mobile troops becoming available there), which is to advance in a general northeastern direction. Also, a drive shall be launched by forces of Army

September 12, 1941

Group North on both sides of Lake Ilmen for the purpose of securing the northern flank and linking up with the Finnish army of Karelia.

5. Anything that saves time and thus speeds up the respective deadlines would benefit the overall operation and the preparations for it.

Adolf Hitler

The cover name for the offensive against Moscow was *Taifun* (typhoon).

From September 8 to 10, Horthy was Hitler's guest. The following long-winded communiqué was published on this "memorable" meeting at the East Prussian headquarters:⁴⁰⁵

Führer Headquarters, September 11

On an invitation by the Führer, the regent of the kingdom of Hungary, von Horthy, visited the Führer from September 8 to 10 at his headquarters on the eastern front.

The Regent was accompanied by the royal Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister, von Bardossy, as well as the chief of the Hungarian general staff, Field Marshal-Lieutenant Szombathely. The Hungarian envoy to Berlin, Field Marshal-Lieutenant Sztojai, as well as the German envoy to Budapest, von Jaglow, also accompanied the regent on his travels.

During his stay, the Führer and the regent discussed the political and military situation. The discussions were conducted in the spirit of the traditional brotherhood in arms of the two people, which is shown once again today in the common struggle against Bolshevism.

On the German side, the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, participated in the discussions, and, on the Hungarian side, the Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister, von Bardossy, and the chief of the Hungarian general staff, Field Marshal-Lieutenant Szombathely.

During his stay at the Führer headquarters, Regent von Horthy visited the commander in chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, at the army high command. At the end of his stay, he accepted an invitation by Reichsmarschal Göring to his headquarters.

The discussions between the Führer and the regent of the kingdom of Hungary, von Horthy, ended on September 10. In a ceremonial act, the Führer awarded the regent, in his capacity as the supreme commander of the royal Hungarian armed forces, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

At the Wolfsschanze headquarters on September 11, Hitler received the newly appointed Spanish ambassador, Count Mayalde, and the newly appointed envoys Count Tovar of Portugal and Mohr of Denmark, who presented their credentials to him.⁴⁰⁶

September 22, 1941

On September 12, Hitler issued the following appeal to the German Volk for the wartime Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Campaign) 1941-1942:⁴⁰⁷

Führer Headquarters, September 12, 1941

For the ninth time, I call on the German Volk to make a voluntary contribution to the Winterhilfswerk.

In these historic days, our Wehrmacht is fighting in a gigantic struggle for the existence of the German nation, and beyond this for the preservation of a Europe that throughout the millennia has given mankind culture and civilization and shall do so again in the future.

As once at home, today in a world hostile to us, Jewish capitalists and Bolsheviks have joined forces in order to destroy the National Socialist German Reich as the strongest fortress of this new Europe and, above all, in order to exterminate our Volk.

For two years, the German soldier has risked life and limb in the defense of our dear homeland and Volk. At this moment, together with our allies, he is fighting all the way from the northern part of Europe down to the shores of the Black Sea against an enemy who is not human, but consists of beasts. The successes of his sacrifice in blood and sweat, in cares and privations, are unheard-of in world history. Through its attitude and its own sense of sacrifice, may the homeland prove itself worthy of the heroic deeds of its sons.

Their efforts shall reinforce the idea of our National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft at home and strengthen the knowledge at the front that the German Volk stands behind them and that their struggle will not be in vain, but is helping to realize the great National Socialist ideal of community.

May the world recognize that front and homeland in the German Reich are a unity sworn together in loyalty and therefore invincible.

Adolf Hitler

Also on September 12, Hitler sent Reichsleiter Hühnlein a congratulatory telegram on his sixtieth birthday.⁴⁰⁸

On September 15, he transmitted a “heartfelt” congratulatory telegram to the Italian Crown Prince Umberto on his birthday.⁴⁰⁹

On September 22, Hitler had to come to terms with the realization that, in spite of the “hero of Narvik”⁴¹⁰ and the “heroic” Finnish people,⁴¹¹ it did not seem as though it would be possible to take Murmansk “this year.”

Directive No. 36.⁴¹²

I. Unusual difficulties with the terrain, inferior communications, and Soviet reinforcements constantly channeled to Karelia and Lapland were the reason why the weak forces of headquarters, Army of Norway, and the Fifth Air Fleet, despite outstanding performance and unflinching courage, have so far not succeeded in reaching the Murmansk railway. Interference by the enemy

September 22, 1941

with our sea lines of communication on the Arctic coast has further reduced the prospects that the Mountain Corps will reach Murmansk this year.

Yet it was possible to tie down and draw away from the Russian main front considerable enemy forces, to push the enemy everywhere over the old Finnish borders, and to eliminate any threat so far to northern Finland, especially the nickel mines.

II. The ultimate aim of the operations in northern and central Finland, to destroy the enemy forces stationed around Murmansk and along the Murmansk railway, must be maintained.

The importance of this area lies in the nickel mines, which are vital for the German conduct of the war. The enemy is aware of that importance. We can expect the English to establish themselves around Murmansk and Kandalaksha with strong air-combat forces, perhaps even to operate with Canadian or Norwegian troops, and to bring to Murmansk war materiel on the largest scale. One must also expect air raids, even during the winter, on the nickel mines and on the living quarters of the miners. Our own efforts must match the extent of this danger.

III. I therefore order the following:

(1) Headquarters, Army of Norway:

(a) In the sector of the 3rd (Finnish) Army Corps, attacks shall be discontinued; forces released thereby are to be transferred to the 36th Army Corps.

(b) The 36th Army Corps shall make every preparation to resume the offensive in the direction of Kandalaksha in the first half of October, with the objective at least to cut off Murmansk from the rail link before winter comes. Furthermore, it should be examined whether a continuation of this offensive in winter offers better prospects for success than in the autumn.

The Finnish High Command will be requested to dispatch the 163rd Division as soon as possible by rail via Rovaniemi to headquarters, Army of Norway.

(c) The attack of the Mountain Corps in the direction of Murmansk is, for the time being, to be discontinued, and continued with the northern wing only as needed to improve the position and deceive the enemy. In view of the tasks of the navy, it is, however, necessary to seize at least the western part of the Rybachi Peninsula before the beginning of winter and thereby to eliminate enemy activity by artillery and patrol craft against the entrance to the port of Liinahamari.

Reconnaissance and deliberations regarding such an attack shall begin immediately, and the result is to be reported as soon as possible. Special weapons which are still to be brought up for use against land and sea targets, and which are suitable for employment, will be allocated.

Whether the intentions of the army headquarters for the winter can be realized, that is, to leave two reinforced mountain divisions in the area around Petsamo and to put the 2nd Mountain Division into rest quarters in and around Rovaniemi, can only be decided later, but remains desirable. The later relief of

September 23, 1941

the 3rd Mountain Division by the 5th Mountain Division or a newly constituted mountain division is also planned.

(d) In order to shift the supply train of the Mountain Corps to the Arctic Highway, fleets of trucks will be bought and rented in Sweden. If this trucking capacity should not suffice, additional trucks will be ordered from the homeland.

(e) I have directed Minister Todt to build as quickly as possible, with ruthless utilization of Russian prisoners of war, a field railway from Rovaniemi along the Arctic Highway to Petsamo.

(f) In order to resume the offensive against Murmansk, the bringing in of all the modern offensive weapons that are usable in the tundra is being planned.

(2) Navy

The mission of the navy is to attack the enemy supply route to Murmansk even during the winter, especially during the period when the Luftwaffe is more or less at a standstill.

For this purpose, a suitable auxiliary base is to be established for light naval craft—preferably in Petsamo Bay—if it is possible to seize the western portion of the Rybachi Peninsula. The supply line by sea to Kirkenes and Petsamo, even if interrupted at times, must again and again be attempted and reopened.

The coastal defense of Petsamo Fjord and the fjord at Kirkenes must be reinforced to the extent that it can deal with attacks even from heavy naval vessels.

(3) Luftwaffe

It is of decisive importance that the Fifth Air Force, with strong forces that are equipped for action in winter, should remain in the area of northern Norway.

These forces are to be apportioned in such a way that, up to the beginning of the bad-weather season, the intended continuation of the Kandalaksha operation and the seizure of the western part of the Rybachi Peninsula can effectively be supported. Meanwhile, the sea supply route and the rear communications of the enemy, as well as his supply and storage installations, must be constantly harassed.

This struggle must be continued during the bad-weather season at every opportunity and extended to include interference with enemy supply trains and construction of fortifications.

To that end, our Luftwaffe ground organization must be retained as far as possible in the north Norwegian and Finnish theater and made effectively winterproof.

Protection against air raids must be secured for the quarters of our own troops, for their supply, but especially for the nickel mines and for the sea base to be established there.

The ground organization and supplies shall be replenished to such an extent that the resumption of the advance on Murmansk at a given time can be supported with strongly reinforced air formations.

Adolf Hitler

September 24, 1941

On September 23, a state ceremony ordered by Hitler in honor of the former commander of defense District VII (southern Bavaria) and army commander, Colonel General Ritter von Schobert, took place in Munich, in front of the army museum. Colonel General Fromm conveyed the Führer's sympathies to the family.⁴¹³

On September 24, an enormous headline in the *Völkischer Beobachter* announced the conclusion of "the greatest battle of annihilation (*Vernichtungsschlacht*) of all time" in the pocket east of Kiev.⁴¹⁴ Following this victory, Hitler felt it was time to consider the offensive against Moscow, which was scheduled to begin in late September.⁴¹⁵ He personally journeyed to Borisov, the headquarters of Army Group Center, to give final instructions to its commander in chief, Field Marshal von Bock.

Because of his fear of assassination attempts, Hitler had sent his column of cars ahead several days before, so that he did not have to travel the four kilometers from the Borisov airfield to the headquarters in the unreliable vehicles of the Wehrmacht.

Bock pointed to the difficulties of launching an offensive against Moscow so late in the year and suggested that the army pass the winter months in fortified positions.⁴¹⁶ Hitler had a fit of rage. Unbelievable! The generals were trying to keep him from landing his "final gigantic blow"⁴¹⁷ and from taking Moscow. He declared as follows:

In the days when I was not yet Reich Chancellor, I always thought of the general staff as a bloodhound whose collar I had to grip tightly lest he attack everybody. After I had become Reich Chancellor, I found out that the German general staff is nothing like a bloodhound. This general staff has always prevented me from doing what I felt was necessary. The general staff was against rearmament, the occupation of the Rhineland, the invasion of Austria, the occupation of the Czech territory, and finally the war against Poland. The general staff advised me not to wage war against France. The general staff advised me not to wage war against Russia. I always have to get these bloodhounds moving first.

After this harangue against the general staff, Bock no longer dared to speak his mind. Hitler scheduled the offensive against Moscow for early October 2.⁴¹⁸ In addition, Hitler discussed how he planned to treat the citizens of the Russian capital:

No German soldier would be allowed to enter the city. In a vast sweep, it would be sealed off. No soldier, no civilian—whether man, woman, or child—would be allowed to leave it. Any attempt would be repelled by force of arms.

September 27, 1941

Hitler had taken preliminary steps to flood Moscow and its surroundings by means of huge installations and to drown it in water. Where previously there had been Moscow, a gigantic lake would be formed, which would forever keep the metropolis of the Russian people out of the sight of the civilized world.

On September 27, the anniversary of the signature of the Tripartite Pact, an extensive exchange of telegrams between the concerned heads of state, ministers, and so on, took place. Hitler himself sent telegrams to Mussolini and Prime Minister Prince Konoye:⁴¹⁹

Duce!

On this day on which, one year ago, Germany, Italy, and Japan joined forces in the Tripartite Pact, I think of you in heartfelt friendship. The Tripartite Pact has proved the basis for a future new order; to it numerous other young and constructive nations have acceded in the meantime. The pact will continue to be a guarantor of the success of the tasks that still lie before us. Only future generations will realize that it was the determination of the people united together in the Tripartite Pact which saved the world from the exploitation of powers alien to this area and from the deadly threat of Bolshevism.

Adolf Hitler

On the anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, I wish to express the heartfelt feelings of solidarity with the great nation of the east, which surge through me and the German Volk. With great sympathy, the German Volk follows the struggle of the Japanese people in securing their existence and for the absolute vital rights of the East Asian people under the leadership of Japan. I am certain that, in cooperation with the people allied in the Tripartite Pact, Japan will achieve the goals which will guarantee the Japanese people and all of East Asia a secure and prosperous future.

In this spirit, I greet Your Highness on this day,

Adolf Hitler

Still, these telegrams could not conceal the fact that Germany had lost power in the last year. It had become obvious that the German Wehrmacht was not capable of dealing with the English and, surprisingly, not with the Russians either!

This changing assessment of German military strength had its effects also in those countries which had previously been conquered. Here and there resistance was felt. In Norway, a state of emergency had to be declared on August 1. Terboven assumed all governmental power.

In France on September 13, the possession of arms was forbidden under penalty of death. In Prague, the situation became so critical that

September 29, 1941

Hitler felt he had to relieve Neurath of his duties, supposedly because of an illness. He entrusted executive power to the bloodthirsty chief of the Gestapo, SS Obergруппenfürher Heydrich. Hitler's decree of September 27 read as follows:⁴²⁰

For the duration of the illness of the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Reich Minister Baron von Neurath, I assign SS Obergруппenfürher Heydrich to conduct the affairs of the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia by proxy.

Heydrich did his job as Hitler wanted: on his first day in office, there were twenty-four executions. On September 30, a hundred eighty-eight persons were executed. The former prime minister of the protectorate, General Elias, was among them.

On September 27, Gottfried Feder, who had died three days before in Murnau, was buried in Munich. Gauleiter Wagner placed a wreath from the Führer, who had failed to order a state funeral this time.⁴²¹

On September 28, Hitler established a new pin-on war medal: the German Cross.⁴²²

In Directive No. 35 of September 6, Hitler had demanded that Leningrad be surrounded by September 15 at the latest, and that a link to the Finnish troops be established by this date. It was already late September, and neither of these tasks had been accomplished. On the contrary, the resistance of Leningrad's soldiers and workers grew stronger by the day.⁴²³ Hitler was angry and decided to have "the city swallowed up by the earth." The navy war office informed Army Group North of Hitler's decision on Leningrad in a letter, dated September 29, 1941:⁴²⁴

Reference: The future of the city of St. Petersburg [Leningrad]

II. The Führer is determined to have the city of St. Petersburg swallowed up by the earth (*vom Erdboden verschwinden zu lassen*). After the defeat of the Soviet Union, no one will be interested in the continued existence of this population center. Finland has likewise not indicated any interest in having this city continue to exist directly on its new border.

III. It is intended to encircle the city tightly and to level it to the ground (*dem Erdboden gleichzumachen*) with artillery fire of all calibers and continuous air raids.

IV. Requests for a surrender resulting from the situation of the city will be declined, since the problems of housing and feeding the population cannot and should not be solved by us. We are not interested in sustaining in existence even a part of the population of this metropolis in this war. If necessary, there will be a forced deportation into the eastern Russian area.

October 2, 1941

Two months later, Hitler publicly claimed that he had never intended to reach Leningrad:⁴²⁵

Someone who has marched from the East Prussian border up to ten kilometers outside of Leningrad can also march those ten kilometers from outside Leningrad into the city.

But this is not necessary. The city is encircled. Nobody will enter it anymore. It will fall into our hands. And when they say, “only as a heap of ruins”—I am not interested in any city Leningrad, but only in the destruction of the industrial center Leningrad. If it pleases the Russians to blow up their cities, then perhaps they are saving us a bit of work. Questions of prestige—let me repeat this—do not play a role with us.

Hitler could declare as much as he liked; he talked like the fox about the sour grapes! One year later, he repeated the same pitiful statement in the case of the prestige-oriented undertaking of Stalingrad.⁴²⁶

The great offensive in the direction of Moscow began on October 2. Hitler issued a proclamation, which was read to the soldiers on the night of October 1. He claimed that “this time” (!) things had gone “according to plan.” It was merely a question of a “last gigantic blow, which shall crush this enemy before the onset of winter!”

The proclamation read as follows:⁴²⁷

Führer Headquarters, October 2, 1941

Soldiers of the Eastern Front!

Filled with grave concern for the existence and the future of our Volk, I decided on June 22 to direct an appeal to you in order to forestall the threatening attack of an opponent at the last minute. As we know today, it was the intention of the rulers in the Kremlin to destroy not only Germany, but also Europe. Comrades, you have realized two things in the meantime:

1. This opponent armed himself militarily for his attack to such an enormous extent that even our greatest fears were surpassed.

2. Lord have mercy on our Volk and on the entire European world if this barbaric enemy had been able to get his tens of thousands of tanks to move before we could. All of Europe would have been lost. For this enemy does not consist of soldiers, but, for the most part, of beasts (*Bestien*).

Now, my comrades, you have personally seen this “paradise of workers and peasants” with your own eyes. In a country, whose vastness and fertility could feed the whole world, a poverty reigns that we Germans cannot imagine. This is the result of nearly twenty-five years of Jewish rule which, as Bolshevism, basically reflects the basest form of capitalism. The bearers of this system are the same in both instances: Jews and again Jews!

Soldiers!

When I called on you to ward off the danger threatening our homeland on June 22, you faced the greatest military power of all time.⁴²⁸ In barely three

October 2, 1941

months, thanks to your bravery, my comrades, it has been possible to destroy one tank brigade after another belonging to this opponent, to eliminate countless divisions, to take uncounted prisoners, to occupy endless space. And this space is not empty, it is a space in which this opponent lives and from which his gigantic war industry receives raw materials of all types. In a few weeks, three of his most vital industrial districts will be completely in your hands!

Your names, soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, and the names of our brave allies, the names of your divisions, regiments, your ships and squadrons, will be tied for all time to the mightiest victories in world history.

You have taken over two million four hundred thousand prisoners, you have destroyed or captured seventeen thousand five hundred tanks and over twenty-one thousand guns, you have downed or destroyed on the ground fourteen thousand two hundred planes. The world has never seen anything like this!

The area which the German troops and those allied with us are occupying today is more than twice as large as the German Reich in the year 1933, more than four times as large as the English motherland.

Since June 22, the strongest system of positions has been broken through, mighty streams have been crossed, countless towns stormed, fortress and bunker installations smashed or smoked out. Starting in the far north, where our exceedingly brave Finnish allies showed their heroism a second time, down to the Crimea, you stand today, together with Slovak, Hungarian, Italian, and Romanian divisions, about a thousand kilometers deep in enemy territory.

Spanish, Croatian, and Belgian units now join you, others will follow. Because this struggle, perhaps for the first time, is regarded by all European nations as a common action to save the continent of the most valuable culture.

Mighty also is the work which is being done behind your gigantic front. Nearly two thousand bridges over twelve meters in length have been constructed; four hundred five railroad bridges have been set up; twenty-five thousand five hundred kilometers of railroad have begun operation again; yes, over fifteen thousand kilometers of railroad have already been adjusted to European gauge. Thousands of kilometers of road are under construction.

Vast areas have already been taken over by civil administration, and normality of life is quickly being reestablished under reasonable laws. Enormous stores of provisions, fuel, and ammunition are ready!

This greatest success of the struggle was secured by sacrifices, the numbers of which—while most difficult for the individual comrade and his family—on the whole do not amount to five percent of those of the World War.

What you, my comrades, together with our brave allied soldiers, have behind you in terms of accomplishments, bravery, heroism, privations, and efforts in the last three-and-a-half months, no one knows better than someone who himself once did his duty as a soldier in the past war.

But in these three-and-a-half months, my soldiers, the preconditions were finally created for that last gigantic blow, which shall crush this enemy before the onset of winter! As far as is humanly possible, all preparations have been

October 3, 1941

completed. This time,⁴²⁹ everything was prepared step by step and according to plan in order to bring the opponent into such a situation that we can deal him the deadly blow now.

Today, the last great decisive battle of this year begins.

It will have a crushing effect on this enemy and, at the same time, on the instigator of this war itself, England. By beating this opponent, we will eliminate England's last ally on the continent. Thereby, we will free Germany and all of Europe from a danger, the like of which has not imperiled the continent more dreadfully since the times of the Huns and later the Mongolian invasions. The German Volk will therefore be with you even more in the coming few weeks than ever before.

What you and the soldiers allied with us have accomplished already obliges us all to profound gratitude. The entire German homeland accompanies you in the coming difficult days with bated breath and good wishes. Because, with God's help, you will give it not only the victory, but also the most important prerequisite for peace.

Adolf Hitler, Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Once again, Hitler had prematurely praised himself in this proclamation.⁴³⁰ He was so convinced that within a few days he would be in Moscow, that he traveled to Berlin to deliver a triumphant speech.

On the afternoon of October 3, Hitler spoke at a "mass rally," organized by Goebbels at the Sportpalast on the opening of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk. After lying about the course of the war up to this point, he daringly proclaimed a new offensive of "a gigantic scope" against an enemy who "consists not of humans, but of animals, of beasts." He claimed that Molotov would leave Moscow by the next day or the following one. Russia had already "broken down" and would never "rise again." With regard to his English opponents, he complained that he was faced with "democratic zeros" and "insane idiots." Hitler's speech read as follows:⁴³¹

My German Volksgenossen!

When I speak to you again today after many long months, then I do so not to account to one of those statesmen who only recently were wondering why I was silent for so long. Posterity will one day be able to assess and find out what carried more weight in these three-and-a-half months: the speeches of Mr. Churchill or my actions. I have come here today in order to give a short introduction to the Winterhilfswerk, as always. This time, coming here was very difficult for me because, at this hour, a newly-begun operation on our eastern front is resulting in a gigantic success. In the last forty-eight hours,⁴³² it has been underway on a gigantic scope. It will help crush our opponent in the east.

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I now speak to you in the name of those millions who are fighting at this moment in order to ask you, the German homeland, to take on yourselves, besides all other sacrifices this year, the additional sacrifice for the Winterhilfswerk.

Since June 22, a struggle of truly world-decisive importance is raging. Only posterity will clearly recognize the scope and consequences of this event. Posterity will one day find out that a new era began with it. But I did not want this struggle. Since January 1933, when Providence entrusted me with the leadership and guidance of the Reich, I had only one goal, and the program of our National Socialist Party essentially outlines it. I have never been untrue to this goal. I have never given up my program. I tried then to bring about the inner recovery of a people who, after a war that was lost due to its own fault, had the deepest fall in its history behind it. This alone was a gigantic task! I began working on this task at a time when all others had either been frustrated by it or no longer believed in the possibility of seeing through a like program.

What we have achieved in these years of peaceful reconstruction is unique. Therefore, for me and my assistants, it is tantamount to an insult when we have to deal with these democratic zeroes, who are unable to look back on a single truly great accomplishment in their lives.

I and my assistants did not need this war to give lasting fame to our names. The works of peace would have taken care of that—and sufficiently. And, besides, it was not as though we had concluded our creative work. In many spheres, we were just beginning. The inner redevelopment of the Reich had succeeded under the most difficult conditions, since, after all, we must feed a hundred forty persons per square kilometer in Germany. Things are easier for the outside world. In spite of this, we have solved our problems, while the outside, the democratic world, to a great extent foundered precisely because of these problems. Our goals were the following:

1. the inner consolidation of the German nation,
2. obtaining equal rights for us abroad,
3. the unification of the German Volk and, thereby, the restoration of a natural state which for centuries had been artificially disrupted. Through this, my Volksgenossen, our program was laid down from the start, the necessary measures were determined from the start. This did not mean, however, that we sought war. But one thing was certain: under no circumstances would we renounce the restoration of German freedom and, hence, the condition for a German resurrection.

On the basis of these thoughts, I made many proposals to the world. I do not need to repeat them here. The daily publishing activities of my assistants take care of that. How many proposals I offered to this outside world, how many proposals for disarmament, how many proposals for a peaceful, new, reasonable economic order, and so on! All of them were rejected. Mostly, they were rejected by those men who obviously did not believe they could fulfill their missions in works of peace, or, rather, keep their own regimes at the helm.

In spite of this, in peaceful work throughout many years, we slowly succeeded not only in completing our great domestic reforms, but also in

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beginning the unification of the German Volk, in creating the Greater German Reich, in bringing back millions of German Volksgenossen to their actual homeland. In doing so, their weight was added to that of the German Volk as a factor in power politics. In this period, I succeeded in gaining a number of allies. At their head stood Italy, with whose statesman I have a personal, close, and sincere friendship still. Our relations with Japan also steadily improved. Besides that, there were a number of people and states in Europe whose constant sympathy and friendship we had enjoyed in the past, above all, Hungary and a few Nordic states.⁴³³ Others have joined these people. Regrettably, not that one people whom I have courted the most during my lifetime: the British. Not that the English people as a whole are responsible for this. No, there are a few men whose stubborn hatred and insanity have sabotaged every attempt at reaching an understanding. They are supported by that international enemy of the world whom we all know: international Jewry.

Regrettably, it was not possible to establish the connection that I had always hoped for between Germany and Great Britain, and, above all, the English people. That is why, as in 1914, the day came when a most difficult decision had to be made. I did not shrink from that either. Because one thing was clear to me: if it was not possible to win England's friendship, then it was best that its animosity should bear on Germany at a time when I still led the Reich. For, if my measures and concessions failed to court England's friendship, then it was lost for all time. At that point, nothing remained but struggle. I am grateful to Providence that I myself am able to lead this struggle. I am convinced that no understanding is possible with these men. They are insane idiots. All they could say in the past ten years was: "We want another war with Germany!"

As in all those years in which I sought an understanding under any circumstances, Mr. Churchill only cried: "I want my war!" Now, he has it. And all his cohorts, who had nothing better to say than that it would be a "lovely" war and who, on September 1, 1939, could only congratulate one another on the coming, "lovely" war, have probably learned to change their minds in the meantime. And, if they still have not realized that this war will not be a "lovely" affair for England, over time they will realize it, as sure as I am standing here!

These warmongers, not only of the old, but also of the new world, managed to use Poland as a dummy. Cleverly, they told it, first of all, that Germany was not what it pretended to be, and, secondly, that, if you had a guarantee, you would at any rate receive the necessary help. That was at a time when England was not begging the world for help, but instead was generously promising anyone its help. This has greatly changed since then. Now, we feel that England is begging the world for help in its war. At the time, I submitted proposals to Poland. Today, after the course events have taken, I must say that it was Providence—almighty Providence—which prevented my proposals from being accepted.⁴³⁴ It knew why this could not be allowed to happen, and, today, I also know why.

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Two years ago, the conspiracy of democrats, Jews, and Freemasons managed to plunge Europe into war. Arms had to decide. Since then, a struggle between the truth and the lie has been taking place. As always, this struggle will end victoriously for the truth. In other words, whatever pack of lies British propaganda, international world Jewry, and its democratic accomplices tell, they will not change the historical facts. And it is a historical fact that neither do the English stand in Germany, nor have other states conquered Berlin, nor have they advanced westward or eastward, but the historical truth is that, within the past two years, Germany has defeated one opponent after another.

I did not want this. Immediately after the first confrontation, I extended my hand again. I myself was a soldier and I know how much it costs to gain victory: how much blood and misery, despair, deprivations, and sacrifices it takes. However, my hand was rejected even more brusquely. And since then, you have seen how every single one of my peace proposals was used by the warmonger Churchill and his followers to tell the threatened people that this was a sign of German weakness, that it was proof that we could not fight any longer and were about to capitulate. Therefore, I gave up trying it this way again. I came to the conviction that we must fight for a clear decision here, a decision with an impact on world history for the next hundred years.⁴³⁵

Always striving to limit the extent of this war, I determined in the year 1939 to do something which you, my old party comrades, understand to be most difficult for me to accept—let me say—in terms of humiliation. At the time, I sent my minister to Moscow. It was a bitter victory over my sentiments. But, at moments when the welfare of millions of others is at stake, sentiments are not important. I tried to obtain an understanding. You know it best yourselves, how honestly and sincerely I handled this commitment. Our press did not write anything about Russia, nor did we say anything against Bolshevism in our meetings.

Regrettably, from the start, the other side did not play by the rules. The result of this agreement was treason. All of northeastern Europe was liquidated. What it meant for us at the time, to have to watch in silence as the small Finnish people were strangled, you know best yourselves. However, I remained silent.⁴³⁶ How it hit us when the Baltic states were overpowered, only he can appreciate who is familiar with German history and knows that there is not a single square kilometer that was not opened up to human culture and civilization by the pioneering work of Germans.⁴³⁷

I remained silent, although every week I felt more and more that the Soviet Union thought the hour had come to proceed against us, and although, at a time when we had barely three divisions in East Prussia, I saw twenty-two Soviet divisions assembling there. Once I received documents showing that airfield upon airfield was being built along our border, that one division after another was being massed together, coming out of the gigantic Soviet Empire, it became my duty to be worried. There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, in the sense that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously. Standing at the head of the German Reich, I happen to feel responsible for the German Volk, its existence, its

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presence, and, insofar as this is possible, for its future. Therefore, I was forced to take different measures. They were purely defensive in nature. In August and September of the past year, I realized one thing: a confrontation in the west, which would above all have tied down the entire German Luftwaffe, was no longer possible, because, at our rear, there was a state which was preparing daily to proceed against the Reich at such a moment. However, just how far its preparations had already gone is something we have only realized fully now. I again wanted to clear up the whole problem at the time and, therefore, I invited Molotov to Berlin. He made the four demands of which you are aware:

First, Germany had finally to consent to the Soviet Union's proceeding to Finland's liquidation, since it again felt threatened by that country. I could not help but refuse this consent.

The second question concerned Romania: the question was whether the German guarantee would also protect Romania against the Soviet Union. I had to keep my word here, too. I do not regret doing it. For I found General Antonescu in Romania to be a man of honor who has also blindly kept his word.

The third question concerned Bulgaria. Molotov demanded that the Soviet Union be allowed to establish garrisons in Bulgaria in order to effect a Russian guarantee to this state. What that actually meant we knew well enough, thanks to the examples of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I could refer to the fact that such a guarantee would be determined by its content. I had not heard of such a wish and, therefore, I would have to investigate the matter and discuss it with my allies.

The fourth question concerned the Dardanelles. Russia demanded bases at the Dardanelles. If Molotov attempts to deny this now, then this is not surprising. If tomorrow or the day after, he is no longer in Moscow, he will probably deny not being in Moscow any longer.⁴³⁸ But he made this demand, and I rejected it. I had to reject it, and it was perfectly clear to me that extreme caution was now called for. Ever since, I have carefully watched the Soviet Union. Every division which we observed was scrupulously registered by us and was duly answered by countermeasures. The situation had so darkened by May that no doubt was left that Russia intended to attack us at the first opportunity. By the end of May, these considerations had grown stronger, so that the possibility of an imminent showdown, a matter of life and death, could no longer be denied.

I had to remain silent at the time, and it became difficult for me in two respects. It was not so difficult before the homeland, because, in the end, you have to understand that there are times when you cannot speak, unless you want to endanger the whole nation. It was more difficult for me to remain silent before my soldiers, who now stood at the eastern border of the Reich, one division next to another, and did not know what was going on, who had no idea of what had really changed in the meanwhile, and who, one day, would perhaps be asked to line up for a difficult battle, yes, the most difficult battle of all time. Because of them, I could not speak. Had I mentioned a single word about it, it would not in the least have changed Mr. Stalin's decision. However,

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it would have eliminated the element of surprise, the ultimate weapon in my hand. And any such advance notice, any such intimation, would have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of our soldiers.

Therefore, I remained silent even when I finally decided to take the first step myself. Because if I see an opponent bringing a rifle to his shoulder, then I am not going to wait for him to pull the trigger. Instead, I am determined to pull it before he does.

I may say today that this was the most difficult decision in my life up to now. Every such step opens a gate behind which mysteries are hidden, and only posterity will know for sure how everything came about and what happened.

And so everybody has to come to terms with his own conscience. He has to trust his own Volk and the forged strength of its arms. Finally, as I have said so many times before, he has to ask for the blessings of the Lord God, Who bestows them on him who is willing and ready to enter the sacred struggle, full of sacrifice, for his own existence.

On the morning of June 22, this greatest struggle in the history of the world began. Since then, three-and-a-half months have passed. Today, I can state: everything since has gone according to plan.⁴³⁹

Whatever surprises the individual soldier or troop may have had, the leadership never for a second allowed the initiative to be taken from it during this time. On the contrary, to this day, every action has gone as much according to plan as it did in the east against Poland, then against Norway, and finally against the west, and in the Balkans. And I have to state something else here: neither did the correctness of our planning deceive us, nor did the competence, the unique historic bravery of the German soldier. Finally, the quality of our weapons did not deceive us. Neither the smooth functioning of all our operations at the front, the domination of the gigantic rear areas, nor the German homeland deceived us. However, something did deceive us: we had no idea⁴⁴⁰ how gigantic the preparations of this opponent against Germany and Europe had been, and how immensely great the danger had been, how this time we escaped by a hair's breadth the destruction not only of Germany, but also of all Europe. I can say this here today.

I say this here today because I may say today that this opponent has already broken down and will never rise again! There was a power massed against Europe, of which most people regrettably had no idea and of which many today still have no idea. This could have become a second Mongolian invasion by a new Genghis Khan.

That this danger was averted, we owe primarily to the bravery and perseverance of our German soldiers, to their willingness to sacrifice. Then, we owe it to the sacrifices of all those who marched with us. For the first time, something like a European awakening occurred on this continent this time. In the north, Finland fights, a truly heroic people. In its vast spaces, it frequently stands alone, depending on its own strength, its courage, its bravery, and its capabilities. In the south, Romania fights. It recovered with surprising speed from one of the most difficult crises of state which can befall a country and people, under a man who is as brave as he is enterprising.

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Thus, we embrace the expanse of the theater of war, stretching from the White to the Black Sea. And, in these areas, our German soldiers are fighting, and together with them, in their ranks, the Italians, the Finns, the Hungarians, the Romanians, the Slovaks. The Croats are marching up. The Spaniards are now going into battle. The Belgians, the Dutch, the Danes, the Norwegians, even the French, have joined up with this great front or will do so shortly.

By and large, you are familiar with the course of these unique events, insofar as they can be grasped now. Two great army groups lined up and had the task of breaking up the center. One of the two wings had the mission of advancing to Leningrad, the other of occupying the Ukraine. Essentially, these first tasks have been accomplished. Our opponents, in this time of enormous, unique struggle of world-historic impact, frequently ask, "Why isn't anything happening now?" Well, something was always happening. And precisely because something was happening, we could not speak.

If I were England's prime minister today, then, under the circumstances, there would always be peace there, simply because nothing is happening there. And here is the difference. My Volksgenossen! I have to speak here today before the entire German Volk. We could not keep on talking, not because we failed sufficiently to appreciate the persistently great accomplishments of our soldiers, but because we did not wish to inform our opponent about situations too soon, even if his miserable intelligence service would not in any event find out until days, or weeks, later. I already had this explained in the Wehrmacht report the other day.⁴⁴¹ The German Wehrmacht report is a report on the truth. Now, some stupid British-newspaper lout declares that it still has to be confirmed. The German Wehrmacht report has always been thoroughly confirmed up to now.

After all, there is no doubt that we won in Poland, and not the Poles, although the British press, claims differently. There is no doubt that we are sitting in Norway, and not the English. There is no doubt that we were successful in Belgium and Holland, and not England. And there is no doubt that Germany won in France, and not the other way around. Finally, there is no doubt that we are in Greece, and not the English or the New Zealanders. They were not the victors, we were. And so the German army report spoke the truth and not the. . .⁴⁴²

And it is no different in the east now. According to the English version, we suffered defeat upon defeat there in the past three months. But we are standing a thousand kilometers beyond our border, we are standing east of Smolensk, we are standing before Leningrad, and we are standing at the Black Sea, and we are standing before the Crimea—the Russians are not standing at the Rhine. And if the Soviets had kept winning up to now, they must have not taken advantage of their victories properly. Instead they retreated a hundred or two hundred kilometers immediately after every victory—perhaps to lure us into the depths of their space.

Besides, the numbers speak for the greatness of this struggle. There are many among you who were in the World War, and you know what it means to take prisoners and, at the same time, to advance hundreds of kilometers.

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The number of prisoners has now risen to two and a half million Soviets. The number of guns, either wiped out or captured, that is, which are in our hands, stands at approximately twenty-two thousand. The number of tanks, either wiped out or captured, that is, which are in our hands, is over eighteen thousand. The number of planes which were either wiped out, destroyed, or downed is over fourteen thousand five hundred. And behind our troops lies a terrain which is twice as big as the German Reich was when I began to lead it in 1933, and which is four times as big as England.

The linear distance which the German soldiers have covered today stands at eight hundred to a thousand kilometers. That is linear distance! For marching, that means one-and-a-half times or twice the kilometers. As a base frontline, this is gigantic, especially when you confront an opponent which, I must say this here, consists not of human beings, but of animals, of beasts (*Bestien*).

What Bolshevism can do to man, you have seen. We can show the homeland photos of it, which are at our disposal. It is the cruelest thing that the brain of man can contrive. It is an opponent who, on the one hand, fights driven by his thirst for blood and, at the same time, by cowardice and fear of his commissars; it is a country that our soldiers are now getting to know after twenty-five years of Bolshevik existence. I know one thing: someone who has been there and who was somehow a Communist at heart, even if only in the idealistic sense, comes back cured of this view. You can rest assured of that.

I always correctly described this paradise of workers and peasants. After ending this campaign, five to six million soldiers will confirm that I spoke the truth. I will be able to call them as witnesses. They marched through these streets. They were not able to live in the miserable huts of this paradise because they did not enter them unless absolutely necessary. They saw the institutions of this paradise. It is nothing but a single arms factory existing at the expense of the living standards of the people, an arms factory against Europe. And against this cruel and bestial opponent, against this opponent with his gigantic armament, our soldiers secured mighty victories.

I am at a loss for words to explain their feats. What they are persistently demonstrating in courage and bravery with immeasurable effort cannot be imagined. They are all the same, whether it is a question of our panzer divisions or motorized units, whether we talk about our artillery or engineers, whether we take our pilots, dive bombers, or anti-aircraft gunners, or whether we think of our navy and the crews of our U-boats, whether we talk about our mountain troops in the north or about the men of our Waffen SS. I would like to stress here that above all this stand the accomplishments of the German infantryman—the German front-line soldier.

For, my friends, there are millions who, since the spring, have marched twenty-five hundred to three thousand kilometers on foot, numerous divisions which have covered fifteen hundred to two thousand kilometers. I can only say: if you speak of a Blitzkrieg here, then these soldiers deserve that their feats be described as lightning, because on the march they have never been outdone in history. Only perhaps by a few English regiments in retreat.

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There are a couple of historic lightning retreats (*Blitzrückzüge*) that have outdone these actions in terms of speed. But the distances in question were never so great, as they [the English] stayed somewhat closer to the coast in the first place. I do not wish to disparage an opponent here, but I do wish to do justice to the German soldier, who deserves it. His accomplishments are unsurpassable. And so are those of all organizations whose members are today workers and soldiers at the same time. For, in this area, almost everybody is a soldier today. Every laborer is a soldier, every railroad worker is a soldier, because military service must persistently be performed by everyone in this entire area. And it is a gigantic amount of work that is being done behind this front. And, by nature, this work is just as enormous as the accomplishments of the front.

Over twenty-five thousand kilometers of Russian railroad are operating again; over fifteen thousand kilometers of Russian rails have been reconverted to the German gauge. My Volksgenossen, do you know what that means?! That means that the greatest cross section of the German Reich of old—let us say from Stettin to the Bavarian mountains, which is a line of about a thousand kilometers—was laid out fifteen times next to one another in the east and was adjusted to the German gauge.

Perhaps the homeland cannot yet fully appreciate what this costs in terms of effort and sweat. Behind all this stand the battalions of the Labor Service, our organizations, above all, the Todt Organization, and the Berlin Speer organizations, and all the others who take care of them in turn.

Our Red Cross is devoted to the service of this whole gigantic front, as are our medical officers, medical personnel, and the Red Cross nurses. They all are truly sacrificing themselves. Behind the front, a new administration is already being set up so that, in case this war takes longer, these gigantic areas will benefit the German homeland and our allies. The benefit can be immense, and let no one doubt that we know how to organize these areas.

As I am briefly outlining the unique accomplishments of our soldiers and all those who fight today in the east or are active there, I would also like to convey the gratitude of the front to the homeland—our soldiers' thanks for the weapons which the homeland built, these outstanding and first-class weapons; and their thanks for the ammunition which, unlike that of the World War, is at their disposal in unlimited amounts.

Today, it is only a question of transport. Today, we have taken care in advance so that, in the midst of this war of matériel, I can order further production in many spheres to cease, because I know that there is no opponent whom we would not be able to defeat with the existing amounts of ammunition.

If, from time to time, you read something in the paper about the gigantic plans of other states, all that they are thinking of doing and all that they wish to undertake, and when you hear of sums going into billions, then, my Volksgenossen, remember what I say now.

1. A whole continent is also devoted to our struggle;

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2. we do not speak of capital, but of manpower, and this manpower we will deploy one hundred percent; and,

3. if we do not talk about it, then this does not mean that we are not doing anything. I know quite well that the others can do everything better than we can. They are building tanks that are invincible. They are faster than ours, they are better armored than ours, they have better guns than ours, and they do not need any gas. But, in battle up to now, we have always disabled them. And that is what counts! They are building miracle airplanes. They are always making miraculous things; everything is incomprehensible—technically incomprehensible. But still they do not have any machines that surpass ours. And the machines which we are driving, firing, or flying today are not the machines which we will be driving, firing, or flying next year. I believe that this will suffice for every German. Our inventors are taking care of all that, as are our German workers and also our female German workers.

Behind this front of sacrifice, death-defying courage, and risk of life stands the home front, a front which is formed in the city and in the country. Millions of German farmers, already largely replaced by old men, adolescents, or women: they are doing their duty to the full.

Millions and millions more German workers, they are working all the time; their accomplishments deserve admiration, especially those of the German women and the German girls, replacing the millions of men who are at the front today. We can truly say that, for the first time in history, a whole people is doing battle, part at the front, part at home.

I say this and, as an old National Socialist, a realization forces itself on me: we have met with two extremes. On the one side, there are the capitalist states. Through lies and fraud, they deny their people the most natural vital rights. They have an eye constantly to their financial interests and they are ready to sacrifice millions of men for them at any time. On the other side, we see the Communist extreme: a state which has brought untold misery to millions and has sacrificed the happiness of all others to its doctrine. In my eyes, there is only one obligation arising from this: to strive ever the more to attain our nationalist and socialist ideals. We have to realize one thing: when this war is over, then the German soldier, who comes from the farms, from the factories, and who truly represents the mass of our Volk, will have won.

The German homeland will have won, with its millions of workers and peasants. The creative men in offices and professions will have won. All the millions of Germans who are active will have won. And this state must then be oriented exclusively to these men.

When this war is over, I will return to the Volk as an even more zealous National Socialist than I was before.

And it will be the same for all those who were called on to lead. Because in this state, it is not the principle of so-called equality, which reigns supreme, but the principle of justice. Whoever proves his capabilities as a leader, politically, militarily, or economically, is of equal value to us. However, that man is just as valuable without whose cooperation all the work of a leader would remain empty and mere mental acrobatics. And that is what counts. The German Volk

October 9, 1941

today can be proud. It has the best political leaders, it has the best military leaders, it has the best engineers, economic leaders, and organizers. It also has the best workers and the best peasants.⁴⁴³ To forge a community out of all these people was a task we once undertook as National Socialists—a task which is clearer to us today than ever before.

I will return from this war again with the old party program, whose realization seems more important to me now than it did perhaps in the beginning. This realization brought me here briefly today.

There is no way of repaying the front for its sacrifices. But the accomplishments of the homeland will likewise withstand the test of history. It is necessary that the soldier at the front knows that everyone who has to stay behind will be taken care of at home by the homeland, and that it will take care of him to the best of its abilities. He has to know this, and this is how things must be, so that the homeland can later be mentioned in relationship to the enormous accomplishments of the front. Everybody knows what he must do at this time. Every woman, every man—they know what is rightly asked of them and what they are obliged to give.

If you are walking down the street and have any doubts whether you should give something again, then turn your gaze sideways. Perhaps you will see somebody who has sacrificed far more for Germany than you have. Only if the German Volk forms a community of sacrifice can we hope and expect that Providence will stand by us in the future, too.

The Lord God has never helped the lazy person. Nor does He help the coward. He will never help him who is not ready to help himself. Here the principle applies: Volk, help yourself, then the Lord God will not refuse you His assistance either.

Having returned to East Prussia, the Führer visited the commander in chief of the army, von Brauchitsch, at his headquarters, congratulating him on his sixtieth birthday.⁴⁴⁴

On October 6, Hitler exchanged telegrams regarding German students taking up labor duties in the armament industry. Hitler's reply to Reich Students leader Dr. Scheel read as follows:⁴⁴⁵

I thank you for your report. With satisfaction, I note the energetic deployment of labor from the German student body. I ask you to convey my thanks to all German students who, during their vacations, actively helped the war economy in the spirit of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft and who, thereby, gave the female workers in need of a rest the opportunity to take days off.

Adolf Hitler

On October 7, Hitler personally congratulated Himmler on his forty-first birthday.⁴⁴⁶

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The next day, he broadcast in a special report that “in the vicinity of Wyasma (Vyazma), several Soviet armies have been surrounded. They are headed for relentless destruction.”

On October 9, assuredly speaking with Hitler’s consent, Reich press chief Dietrich told representatives of the German press in Berlin the following: “The campaign in the east has been decided by the smashing of Army Group Timoshenko.”⁴⁴⁷

This statement greatly astonished the German public. What had happened? Had Stalin capitulated? Had German troops marched into Moscow? None of the above; there was only another battle of encirclement underway. Such battles had taken place repeatedly in the past⁴⁴⁸ without the campaign being decided because of them. After all, a proclamation in 1940 had read: “With this, the war in the west will end”—but England had not capitulated.⁴⁴⁹

Franco, however, was deceived by Dietrich’s declaration and sent Hitler the following congratulatory telegram:⁴⁵⁰

In my name and in that of the Spanish people, I send Your Excellency my enthusiastic congratulations on the last and final victory of the glorious German Wehrmacht over the enemy of civilization.

Hitler’s answer was more cautious:

I thank Your Excellency for the heartfelt congratulations on the success of the German arms. With grateful joy, I welcome the fact that Spanish volunteers are also fighting in this final disintegration of military Bolshevism.

In view of the “favorable” developments in the eastern theater of war, Hitler felt it was no longer necessary to take Murmansk in 1941. On October 10, he issued Directive No. 37:⁴⁵¹

The swift, favorable development of the situation in the eastern theater of war, together with the reports from the headquarters, Army of Norway, concerning the condition of the troops and the future operational possibilities in Finland, prompts me to issue the following orders:

1. Now that the bulk of Soviet Russia’s armed forces in the main theater of operations has been smashed or destroyed, there is no longer any compelling reason for conducting offensive operations to tie down Russian forces in Finland. Seizure of Murmansk or the Rybachi Peninsula or cutting through the Murmansk railroad in central Finland before winter sets in can now no longer be accomplished given the insufficient strength and striking power of the available forces and the advanced season.

The most urgent task remaining, therefore, is to hold the gains, to secure the Petsamo nickel mines against attacks on land, from the air, and from the

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coast, and to carry out all preparations—starting already in winter—for the final capture of Murmansk, of the Rybachi Peninsula, and the Murmansk railroad in the coming year.

The timetable will be as follows:

(a) Shift by the ground forces to the defensive in favorable positions economical of manpower, improvement of the winter billets, and changeover to winter warfare.

(b) Relief movements and bringing up new forces.

(c) During the winter, concentric attacks against the Murmansk railroad, specifically with Finnish forces, from the south, against Belomorsk-Kem and, if possible, also Loukhi; with German forces, from the Verman sector, against Kandalaksha.

(d) At the time most favorable for the purpose, seizure of the Rybachi Peninsula in its entirety, if possible, and attack against Murmansk.

These operations must be so timed as to permit at any given moment concentration of the bulk of attacking forces for the main efforts against a single point.

2. The next mission of headquarters, Army of Norway, while assuring defensive operations in positions sparing of manpower, is to dispose its units in such a manner as to permit the forces which have been in combat for prolonged periods to be reorganized and equipped for winter warfare or, as may be the case, relieved by newly arriving reinforcements and withdrawn. Specifically:

(1) In the Mountain Corps, the 2nd and the 3rd Mountain Divisions are to be relieved by the reinforced 6th Mountain Division. One mountain division is to be left in northern Finland, while the other is to be moved to the area around and south of Rovaniemi. Its return to the interior zone is scheduled to coincide with the arrival of the 5th Mountain Division (approximately January 1942).

Another newly constituted or reorganized mountain division will subsequently take the place of the mountain division left in northern Finland.

(b) The 36th Army Corps is to be reinforced by the 163rd Infantry Division as soon as it is ascertained that the division is no longer needed for commitment to a concentric operation between the Karelian army and Army Group North against the southern shore of Lake Ladoga.

Efforts are being made to arrange for relieving the personnel of the 169th and the 163rd Infantry Divisions in the course of the winter by divisions from Norway or from the homeland.

3. All relief movements, including those of the mountain divisions, are to be conducted in a manner whereby the bulk of the heavy weapons, equipment, horses and pack animals are left behind on the spot, and in consequence only the personnel with their light weapons are exchanged. This will save both time and transport space.

4. As regards the SS units, plans call for relief of the 9th SS Regiment, now attached to the 2nd Mountain Division, by an SS regiment made up of Norwegians and Finns, and for formation of a mountain brigade out of SS Battle Group North with the addition of an SS regiment from Austria.

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Execution of this measure will be coordinated by the high command of the Wehrmacht in line with the general plan for exchanges of staffs and troops.

5. Since the Finnish high command is planning a complete reorganization of the army, the German and Finnish forces under command of 3rd Finnish Corps are to be exchanged (6th Finnish Division for SS Battle Group North). When this has been done, it is proposed to place the front of 3rd Finnish Corps under the command of Field Marshal Mannerheim.

For the initial stage of the new operations, Field Marshal Mannerheim will be requested to reassign at least a few small Finnish units to the German group attacking Kandalaksha.

6. To the Luftwaffe the following immediate missions in the Finnish theater of operations are assigned, so far as the weather permits:

(a) To patrol the sea areas along the coasts of northern Norway and Finland in order to protect friendly and to combat enemy sea traffic;

(b) To secure the air defenses, especially of the Petsamo nickel mines, the ports of discharge, and the naval bases;

(c) To fly reconnaissance missions over the areas of future operations and to carry out sustained attacks against the enemy supply base at Murmansk and against supply movements to Murmansk by sea and by railroad;

(d) To make preparations for the employment of stronger forces in support of the forthcoming operations.

7. The navy shall have the mission of attacking enemy supply movements to Murmansk by sea and of doing its utmost to support friendly sea traffic in the Arctic Ocean.

In order to accomplish this, it is necessary as soon as possible to provide reinforcements for the light naval forces as well as to introduce motor torpedo boats.

Kirkenes is to be developed and equipped as an improvised base.

The safety of friendly coastal traffic requires the bringing up of additional coastal batteries. The relevant orders will be issued by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Kirkenes and Petsamo are each to be reinforced over and above the submitted program by a battery of 21-cm. guns, and a 28-cm. battery is to be constructed at Vardö. Plans are also to be prepared for construction of a battery of the heaviest caliber on the Rybachi Peninsula when it is captured.

8. The cooperation between headquarters, Army of Norway, the navy, and the Luftwaffe must be very close, especially during the coming months in order to check any attacks that might be launched against the front and the sea flank. To this end, in order to simplify mutual cooperation, the navy shall designate a navy commander, north (*Marineführer Nord*), and the Luftwaffe—upon withdrawal of Fifth Air Force headquarters to Norway—an aerial commander, north (*Fliegerführer Nord*).

9. The orders for executing these measures will be issued by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht. Through him the following will be submitted to me:

(a) From headquarters, Army of Norway:

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Timetable for the regrouping movements.

Proposals regarding changes in equipment with a view to enabling all troops to fight in the tundra and the virgin forests of eastern Karelia.

Operational proposals and requests for army headquarters troops.

Proposals for the exchange of staffs.

(b) From the Navy and the Luftwaffe.

Their intentions in detail.

12. To the extent that Directive No. 36 is superseded by this order, it is annulled.

Adolf Hitler

On October 13, Hitler sent Tiso the following congratulatory telegram:⁴⁵²

I send Your Excellency my heartfelt congratulations on your birthday. I am also thinking of the brave Slovak soldiers who, at the side of the German Wehrmacht, are helping to secure the victory over the destructive forces of Bolshevism.

Yours sincerely,

Adolf Hitler

On October 16, the Russian Foreign Ministry instructed the members of the Diplomatic Corps to leave Moscow for Kuibyshev (Samara).⁴⁵³

The military experts and a number of other experts from the three powers (Britain, the United States, and Russia) had conferred in Moscow from September 29 to October 2. The topic of the discussion had been the delivery of war materiel to the Soviet Union. Hitler felt that reports on the conference were a personal challenge to him and replied by organizing his own conferences.

On October 21, a voluminous communiqué informed the international public that a most significant German-Slovak conference had taken place at Hitler's headquarters:⁴⁵⁴

Following an invitation by the Führer, the Slovak state president, Dr. Tiso, and the Slovak prime minister, Dr. Tuka, visited the Führer headquarters. They were accompanied by Interior Minister Mach, Defense Minister General Catlos, as well as the Slovak envoy in Berlin, Cernak, and the German envoy in Pressburg [Bratislava], Ludin.

The political and military discussions at the Führer's headquarters were conducted in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between the two peoples and were marked by the brotherhood in arms, which has again been successful in the fight of the German and Slovak troops against their common Bolshevik enemy.

October 29, 1941

During their visit, the Slovak statesmen heeded an invitation by Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop. The defense minister General Catlos, the commander in chief of the army, General Cunderlic, and their military companions met for talks with the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, and his staff.

The last part of the communiqué described visits to Brauchitsch and Göring. One really could have thought that, after this visit of the Slovaks, the war had already been decided in Hitler's favor.

On October 24, Hitler sent state secretary Dr. Schlegelberger a congratulatory telegram on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁴⁵⁵ The next day, there was another conference at the Führer headquarters. This time, Ciano was Hitler's guest. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁵⁶

On Saturday morning [October 25], the Führer received the royal Italian foreign minister at his headquarters for talks, which were conducted in the spirit of the traditional friendship and the proven comradeship in arms of the two people. Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop also participated in the talks, upon whose invitation Count Ciano is presently visiting Germany for several days.

Ciano reported to Mussolini on the talks:⁴⁵⁷

In the past we have seen in turn the flowering and decline of a series of slogans which are born in the mind of the Leader and are repeated all the way down to the lowest-ranking of his collaborators. We first of all heard talk of the landing in Britain, then of the air attacks, then of the submarine war. Now the fashionable slogan is that of "European solidarity". Europe—the Führer said—besides being a geographical expression is a cultural and moral conception. In the war against Bolshevism the first signs of continental solidarity have shown themselves. . . . This is what all those near him repeat.

On the nineteenth anniversary of the march on Rome on October 28, Hitler sent King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini the following congratulatory telegrams:⁴⁵⁸

On today's commemoration of a most significant turn in the historical development of Italy, I think of Your Majesty with my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and a happy future for the allied Italian nation.

Adolf Hitler

On the anniversary of the march on Rome, I think of you, Duce, with my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and a happy future for Fascist Italy. To my best wishes are tied the best wishes of the German Volk for allied Italy in the struggle for victory in the service of a new Europe.

In comradely solidarity,

Adolf Hitler

November 6, 1941

On October 29, Hitler sent the Turkish state president Ismet İnönü a congratulatory telegram on the country's national holiday.⁴⁵⁹

German troops had still not reached Moscow by early November. In spite of the successful battles of encirclement at Vyazma and Briansk, Russian resistance did not weaken. Moreover, the seasonal mud made it difficult for the German motorized vehicles to move. The horse, which Hitler so despised,⁴⁶⁰ had to help out. The weather conditions, however, were not extraordinary at first, and winter did not begin earlier than usual.⁴⁶¹

On the Russian side, General Zhukov⁴⁶² had taken command of the central sector. In the summer, he had already defeated the German troops at Yelna (southeast of Smolensk). He was now preparing to deal them a decisive blow in front of Moscow.

On November 6, Ciano noted the following in his diary:⁴⁶³

Anne Marie Bismarck⁴⁶⁴ told Anfuso⁴⁶⁵ that when General Rintelen⁴⁶⁶ went to see the Führer on the eastern front he was approached by the German marshals and generals, and that a sort of meeting took place. During the meeting they begged him to find some way of making Hitler understand that the way the war is conducted in Russia is pure madness, that the German army is gradually wearing out, that it cannot hold on, and that, finally, he is leading Germany to the brink of ruin. It seems that this is the unanimous opinion of all the military leaders, but no one dares say so to Hitler. Naturally, Rintelen, too, was careful not to do so.

The German generals were not without blame for these "developments in Russia." They had eagerly placed themselves at Hitler's disposal for this undertaking. Furthermore, they had accepted his argument that the German army would be demoralized if it was not "kept busy." Now, however, things had become somewhat too busy for them, but they were afraid to speak up. Of course, this would have been as useless with Hitler as it had been with Napoleon: "The wine has been poured out, now it must be drunk!"⁴⁶⁷

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Even if the generals were silent, Hitler knew only too well what they were thinking and what the mood in Germany was like. Therefore, he felt not in the least inclined to speak publicly. In times of crisis, he preferred to remain silent or to issue a proclamation. But now, November 8, the commemoration of the Putsch of 1923, was at hand. He had never missed this celebration. And so he decided to go to Munich, above all, because he felt in need of a two-week vacation at the Berghof with Eva Braun.

Hitler's speech at the Löwenbräukeller was very ordinary.⁴⁶⁸ He repeated the arguments that he had used in his proclamation on June 22 and in his speech on October 3. He had nothing new to say, with the exception of calling Churchill an "insane drunkard" and a "whiskey-happy gentleman." What could he have said after he had spent all his energies on October 3, and his prophesies, none of which had come true, still rang in the ears of his audience?

In this speech, however, it was already evident that Hitler was about to change his mind on one subject. If his coup in Russia failed, and it did look as though it might, then he had no choice other than to threaten England with a massacre of the Jews in order to make it ready to accept peace with him. He felt that this choice held promise. While he had not yet given up all hope of dealing the Russians a decisive defeat within the next weeks, he did appear very much preoccupied with the Jews in his speech on November 8.

In the initial stages of the war, he had barely touched on the Jewish question. That was because all had gone well. It had not been until January 30, 1941, after the "peace campaign" and the "Battle of Britain" had failed, that he had begun to make massive threats.⁴⁶⁹ Now, he claimed that the Jews were responsible for the war, calling them "incendiaries of the world." He maintained that they had first used

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“Poland as a dummy,” later “France, Belgium, Holland, and Norway,” and, of course, England and the Soviet Union, which was “the greatest servant of Jewry.”

Hitler began with the following words:⁴⁷⁰

Party Comrades! German Volksgenossen!

I have come here again for a few hours, true to the old custom, in order to speak with you, my first followers and comrades-in-arms, and to honor the men who at the time made the greatest sacrifice that they could possibly make for our movement and for Germany. When I stood before you the last time, behind us lay a glorious year of great events.

Subsequently, Hitler recapitulated the campaign of “eighteen days,”⁴⁷¹ and the campaigns in Norway and in the west, as well as his various “peace proposals.” He continued:

The insane drunkard (*wahnsinniger Säufer*) who has been controlling England for years now immediately regarded this as a new sign of my weakness. At the time, I was portrayed as a man who sees a bleak future and, therefore, no longer dares to continue the struggle. But, I never imagined the future to be any different from what actually came to pass. And, besides all the glory, I anticipated the sacrifices, and I wanted to spare all sides these sacrifices.

First, I wanted to spare our own Volk the sacrifice. But, toward the rest of the world, I also felt that, as the victor, I could take responsibility for extending my hand for reconciliation. As I said before, this was not understood by those who never made a sacrifice in their own lives and had no close contact with the sacrifices of their own people.

So we had no other choice than to fasten on the helmet for good and to step out on that path which would free us for all time from the dangers threatening not only Germany, but all of Europe.

When I spoke to you here the last time, my old party comrades, I did so fully conscious of victory as hardly a mortal has been able to do before me. In spite of this, a concern weighed heavily on me. It was clear to me that, ultimately, behind this war was that incendiary who has always lived off the quarrels of nations: the international Jew. I would no longer have been a National Socialist had I ever distanced myself from this realization.

We followed his traces over many years. In this Reich, probably for the first time, we scientifically resolved this problem for all time, according to plan, and really understood the words of a great Jew who said that the racial question was the key to world history. Therefore, we knew quite well—above all, I knew—that the driving force behind these occurrences was the Jew. And that, as always in history, there were blockheads ready to stand up for him: partly spineless, paid characters, partly people who want to make deals and, at no time, flinch from having blood spilled for these deals. I have come to know these Jews as the incendiaries of the world.

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After all, in the previous years, you saw how they slowly poisoned the people via the press, radio, film, and theater. You saw how this poisoning continued. You saw how their finances, their money transactions, had to work in this sense. And, in the first days of the war, certain Englishmen—all of them shareholders in the armament industry—said it openly: “The war must last three years at least. It will not and must not end before three years.”—That is what they said. That was only natural, since their capital was tied up and they could not hope to secure an amortization in less than three years. Certainly, my party comrades, for us National Socialists, this almost defies comprehension.

But that is how things are in the democratic world. You can be prime minister or minister of war and, at the same time, own portfolios of countless shares in the armament industry. Interests are explained that way.

We once came to know this danger as the driving force in our domestic struggle. We had this black-red-golden coalition in front of us;⁴⁷² this mixture of hypocrisy and abuse of religion on the one hand, and financial interests on the other; and, finally, their truly Jewish-Marxist goals. We completely finished off this coalition at home in a hard struggle. Now, we stand facing this enemy abroad. He inspired this international coalition against the German Volk and the German Reich.

First, he used Poland as a dummy, and later pressed France, Belgium, Holland, and Norway to serve him. From the start, England was a driving force here. Understandably, the power which would one day confront us is most clearly ruled by this Jewish spirit: the Soviet Union. It happens to be the greatest servant of Jewry.

Time meanwhile has proved what we National Socialists maintained for many years: it is truly a state in which the whole national intelligentsia has been slaughtered, and where only spiritless, forcibly proletarianized subhumans remain. Above them, there is the gigantic organization of the Jewish commissars, that is, established slaveowners. Frequently people wondered whether, in the long run, nationalist tendencies would not be victorious there. But they completely forgot that the bearers of a conscious nationalist view no longer existed. That, in the end, the man who temporarily became the ruler of this state, is nothing other than an instrument in the hands of this almighty Jewry. If Stalin is on stage and steps in front of the curtain, then Kaganovich⁴⁷³ and all those Jews stand behind him, Jews who, in ten-thousandfold ramifications, control this mighty empire.

When I spoke to you here last year, I was already weighed down by this insight into a development that could no longer be misinterpreted.

Hitler repeated the arguments that supposedly had led him to proceed against Russia. Among other things, he claimed the following:

Finally, the moment came when the Russian concentration became evident in that—with the exception of a couple of divisions in Moscow, which were apparently held back as a lever against their own people, and a few divisions in the east—nothing was left that was not at the western front.

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Well, the German army would later find out how many Russian divisions were not yet at the western front. Hitler continued:

Today, I can say so for the first time: there was something else which also cautioned us:

In the year 1940, a number of so-called "secret sessions" of the British House of Commons took place in London. And during these secret sessions, the whisky-happy gentleman (*whiskeyseliger Herr*), Churchill, revealed his thoughts, his hopes, and finally his conviction that Russia was on its way to England. Mr. Cripps had given him absolute proof that it would take one to one-and-a-half years at the most until Russia would appear. One would have to endure another one to one-and-a-half more years at the most. That was the reason behind the incomprehensible courage of this gentleman at the time.⁴⁷⁴ We knew about this all the time. I have now drawn the consequences. First, we freed our southeastern flank. After all we know today, I can only say that we owe gratitude to Mussolini for attacking this festering sore as early as the year 1940. Within a few weeks, we managed to solve this problem for good, with the help of the European states at our side. By taking Crete and closing off the Dardanelles, we victoriously concluded this undertaking.

I have often talked about the accomplishments of our Wehrmacht. It proved gloriously successful in this campaign as well, the army as well as the Luftwaffe.

After that, I watched every movement of our great enemy in the east. Since April and May, I was constantly, I would say, at the observation post. Without pause, I watched every occurrence, determined at any moment—once I realized that the enemy was about to attack—to strike twenty-four hours earlier if necessary.⁴⁷⁵

In mid-June, the signs became more threatening. By the second half of June, no doubt was left that it was just a question of weeks, perhaps only days. And so I gave orders that we should take the offensive on June 22.

Believe me, my old party comrades, this was the most difficult decision of my life up to then. It was a decision which I knew would embroil us in a very difficult struggle. However, I hoped that our chances to win it would be the greater the quicker we defeated the others.

What was the situation at the time? The west was basically secured. To come straight to the point: there are so-called ingenious politicians in the camps of our enemies who now claim that I knew that we would not be attacked in the west and, therefore, I had the courage to go for it in the east. I can only tell these geniuses: they fail to appreciate my caution. I am so prepared in the west that they can take the offensive at any time.

If the English gentlemen want to start an offensive, whether in Norway, against our German coast, in Holland, in Belgium, or in France, we can only tell them: fall in—you will fall out more quickly than you came!

These coasts are in a different state today than they were one year ago. We have worked there with National Socialist thoroughness. The chief of the biggest part of this work—to name only one man—was our Todt.

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Naturally, work there continues. You know me from our time in the party. I have never known rest. If there are ten batteries somewhere, then five will be added. If there are fifteen, then five more will be added, and more still—our enemy himself is delivering the guns!⁴⁷⁶

We left sufficient forces everywhere in order to be ready at any time. The enemy did not come. Fine! I do not wish to spill blood. And even if they had come—as I said—they would be long gone by now. We were secure here.

We also cleaned up the Balkans. In North Africa, our mutual efforts made it possible to establish a stable order. Finland declared itself willing to join our side. The same with Romania. Bulgaria likewise understood the danger. Hungary recognized the great historic hour and arrived at a heroic decision. And so, on June 22, I believed that I could, in accordance with my conscience, confront this danger, even if with a lead of a few days only.

Now, this struggle, my old party comrades, really is a struggle not only for Germany, but also for all of Europe; a struggle of life and death!

You know our allies, beginning in the north: the brave little heroic people of Finland, which has proved its worth so outstandingly again. They were joined by Slovaks, Hungarians, Romanians, and, finally, allies from all over Europe: Italians, Spaniards, Croats, Dutch, Danish volunteers, even French and Belgian volunteers. I can truly say that, in the east, all of Europe is for the first time fighting in a common realization: just as against the Huns back then, we now fought against this Mongolian state of a second Genghis Khan. The goal of this struggle was the following:

1. the destruction of the enemy power, that is, the enemy's armed forces, and
2. the capture of the enemy's armament and food-production centers.

Now Hitler spoke about Leningrad:

Questions of prestige do not play any role with us. If somebody says today: "You are on the defensive at Leningrad," then I come and say: we were on the offensive in front of Leningrad just as long as this was necessary in order to encircle Leningrad. Now, we are on the defensive, and the other side has to try to break out. But he will starve in Leningrad! I will surely not sacrifice one more man than is absolutely necessary.

If there were somebody there today to relieve Leningrad, I would give orders to storm it, and we would take it by storm. Someone who has marched from the East Prussian border up to ten kilometers outside of Leningrad can also march those ten kilometers from outside Leningrad into the city.

But this is not necessary. The city is encircled. Nobody will enter it anymore. It will fall into our hands. And when they say, "only as a heap of ruins"—I am not interested in any city Leningrad, instead only in the destruction of the industrial center Leningrad. If it pleases the Russians to blow up their cities, then perhaps they are saving us a bit of work. Questions of prestige—let me repeat this—do not play a role with us.

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If, for example, someone asks: “Why aren’t we marching now?”—Because, at the moment, it is raining or snowing, or perhaps we are not totally finished with the railroads! The speed of this advance is not determined by those wonderful British strategists who determine the speed of their retreats. Instead, it is exclusively determined by us.

And, secondly, there is the occupation of the enemy’s armament and food-production centers. Here, too, we will proceed according to plan! Sometimes, it is enough to destroy one factory in order to bring many factories to a standstill.

Hitler again juggled with figures:

If I wanted to sum up the success of this campaign until now, then the number of prisoners now stands at approximately three point six million, that is, three million six hundred thousand prisoners. And please don’t tell me an English blockhead says that this has not been confirmed. If a German military office counts something, then it is correct! There is an essential difference between a German officer and a British stockbroker! It is totally correct, just as our numbers for French and English prisoners were correct!

The English know this quite well themselves because they always want to take care of their prisoners. Now, if I look at three point six million prisoners on the one side and I go by World War standards, then this means a corresponding number of casualties. It would be a bad testimonial for Mr. Stalin if his people were fighting less bravely now than they did in the World War. On the contrary, they fight in part out of fear and in part with bestial, fanatical madness. And, if I now assume that in Russia, as here with us, there are three to four wounded for every fatal casualty, then the result is an absolute loss of at least eight to ten million, without considering those only slightly wounded, who might be cured and put back into action. My party comrades, no army in the world can recover from this, not even the Russian.⁴⁷⁷

Now that Stalin is suddenly saying that we lost four-and-a-half million men, while Russia was missing only three hundred seventy-eight thousand men in action—this would have to be the prisoners—three hundred fifty thousand dead and one million wounded, then I can only ask: Why did the Russians retreat one-and-a-half thousand kilometers if they only had half the losses we had, especially considering the gigantic masses of their troops?

What this mighty man in the Kremlin says seems to me strikingly Jewish. Besides, the prisoners are slowly moving in the direction of Europe. Here, we will integrate them usefully in the production process, and we will see that they are not three hundred seventy-eight thousand, but really three point six million men.

The matériel booty we took in this period is immense. Right now, we have over fifteen thousand planes, over twenty-two thousand tanks, over twenty-seven thousand guns. It is truly an enormous amount of materiel. The entire industry of the world, including German industry, could only replace such

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amounts slowly. In any event, our democrats' industries will not replace it in the next few years!

And now I will speak of territorial matters. Until now, we have occupied one million six hundred seventy thousand square kilometers. That is an area three to four times as big as France and about five times as big as England [*sic*]. Sixty to seventy-five percent of all industries and all raw materials that Russia possesses are situated in this area. I hope that shortly we will be able to take a couple of further steps, slowly but surely, to cut them off cord after cord.

Now somebody says, "Yes, but you are wrong on the time."—These people know exactly what a conception of time I have! We defeated France in around six weeks; the occupied area is only a fraction of what we conquered in the east. Now somebody comes and says that we had expected this to be done in the east in a month-and-a-half. With all due respect to lightning warfare—you still have to march!

And what our infantry has accomplished in terms of marching is truly unique in world history. Naturally, if you go from Dunkirk to Ostend and then retreat from Ostend to Dunkirk again, this is much easier. I will admit that. However, if you walk all the way from the German border to Rostov or the Crimea, or Leningrad, then we are talking real distances, especially considering the roads in the "paradise of workers and peasants."

I have never used the word *Blitzkrieg* because it is a really stupid word.⁴⁷⁸ If it can be applied to any campaign at all, however, then to this one!

Never before has a gigantic empire been shattered and defeated in a shorter time than the Soviet Union has been this time. This could occur and succeed only thanks to the unheard-of, unique bravery and willingness to sacrifice of our German Wehrmacht, which takes upon itself unimaginable strains.

What all the German arms have accomplished here cannot be expressed by words. We can only bow deeply before our heroes.

I already said in Berlin that it does not matter whom we take: our panzer gunners, our engineers, our artillery, our reconnaissance troops, our pilots, our dive-bombers, our fighter or reconnaissance planes, or our navy—in the end, the result is always the same: The crown belongs to the German infantryman, the German front-line soldier!

He marches across endless expanses on rough trails, through morass, through swamps. He marches in the heat of the sun across the endless fields of the Ukraine, or in the rain, in snow and frost, and he defeats bunker after bunker. With his storm engineers, he tears up front after front. It is truly a heroic song that he is singing for himself.

Behind this front, there is a second front. It is the German homeland. And behind this German homeland, there is a third front. Its name is Europe. And when I am told, as so often lately, that the democrats are now arming, then I must say that I have also repeatedly mentioned that we are not doing nothing. I did not stop German armament in the years 1939–1940 and 1941. What we have achieved in this sphere up to now is something. And we continue to arm. I have merely concentrated armament in a few special spheres. When the

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gentlemen keep talking of figures—I do not speak of figures, but I will say one thing: They will be surprised with what we will line up one day.

My old party comrades, we have already experienced this at home. Every year we heard what the democrats were doing, what the Social Democrats were doing, what the Center or the Bavarian People's Party was doing, what—for all I care—the bourgeois or other groups were doing, even what the Communists were doing. But, we were also doing something. And, in the end, it was more than this entire coalition together: we knocked them to the ground!

They tell me: "Yes, but there is America with a hundred twenty-five million people."—The Reich territory together with the Reich protectorate and the General-Government also has a hundred twenty-five million people! The area that works directly for us today contains far more than two hundred fifty million people. The area in Europe that works indirectly for this struggle now already contains over three hundred fifty million! Insofar as the area in question is German, areas which we occupy, and areas in which we have taken over the administration—let no one doubt that we will manage to recruit these areas completely for this task. They can believe us!

It is not the German Volk of the World War that is doing the fighting today. It is a completely different German Volk! And it is the misfortune of our enemies that they have not understood this and that they run after these Jewish blockheads who declare time and again, "You just have to do exactly the same thing that you did once."—I do not think this even of our enemies, although I do not consider them too intelligent. I myself never do the same thing twice; instead, I always do something different. They should finally give up for good placing their hopes on the old thing!

Now, for instance, they say, "At this stage, a revolt will break out." Perhaps, listening to English broadcast, some fool might suddenly react. But not for long! We can deal with such matters! You should not delude yourselves; such attempts quickly collapse. Today, you are not confronting a bourgeois Germany with kid gloves, but a National Socialist one, and it has strong fists!

We are very polite and decent toward the civilian population wherever we occupy areas. Sometimes, perhaps, we are too decent, too obliging. We do not rape anyone over there, for many reasons. Nor are there any break-ins by German soldiers in order to steal and pillage. Something like that is punished more severely there than at home. We protect this population.

But if somebody believes he can resist the occupation, or upset it by a treacherous assassination, then we will strike as we did at home in the years when our enemies believed that they could terrorize us. In the end, we dealt with their terror. We created the organizations necessary for it. We will also deal with the terror of our present enemies!

And then comes the most stupid hope: namely, that an uprising, a revolution, will break out in Germany. The people who could start a revolution here are no longer here. They have been in England, in America, in Canada, and so on, for a long time already. However, the people who perhaps would want to start a revolution are so few and so unimportant that it is ridiculous to hope for their assistance. Should somebody seriously hope to

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disturb our front here—irrespective of where he is coming from, from which camp he is—then you know my method: I will watch him for a certain time.

That is his period of probation. But the time will come when I will strike like lightning to remove all that quickly. And then no disguise will be of any use, not even the disguise of religion. But, as I said, that will not be necessary with us, because, above all, this entire German Volk is today organized in one movement. Our enemies have simply not understood that it is a movement which reaches into every house, and which jealously watches so that November 1918 will never happen again. I have been a prophet so often in my life, and they always laughed at me, but I was always right in the end. I want to be one again: Never will November 1918 be repeated in Germany! It cannot repeat itself! Everything is conceivable but only one thing is not: that Germany will ever capitulate!

If our enemies say, “Well, then the war will last until the year 1942!”—The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the field will be a German one!⁴⁷⁹

It is useless to try to intimidate me! You know that I can remain silent on certain matters for months, even years. This does not mean that I am not considering it, that I am not aware of it. If today ever new threats against Germany are made, especially in America, then I have taken them into account in good time. I declared one year ago: Whatever ship brings war materiel, materiel to kill people, will be torpedoed!

If the American President Roosevelt—who was responsible for Poland’s entry into the war and who, as today we can support by documentary evidence, determined that France should enter the war—if he believes he can weary me by an order to fire,⁴⁸⁰ then I can make only one reply to this gentleman: Mr. President Roosevelt has ordered his ships to fire if they sight a German ship. And I have ordered German ships, if they sight American ones, not to fire, but to defend themselves if they are attacked. A German officer who does not defend himself will be court-martialed by me.

If, on the President’s order, an American ship fires, then it does this at its own risk. The German ship will defend itself, and our torpedoes will not miss.

I do not feel like wasting much time on these ridiculous falsifications, for example, that I had German experts manufacture a map. I can only tell Mr. Roosevelt: I have no experts at all.⁴⁸¹ For me, my head is good enough! I do not need a brain trust to assist me. If there truly needs to be a change somewhere, then it first has to take place in my brain and not in the brains of others, not even in the brains of experts. I am not a high-school student who draws maps on his school atlas. For all I care, South America is as far away as the moon. These are really stupid claims.

Or let us take the second falsification—that we wished to eliminate all the world’s religions. I am fifty-two years old now, and I have something better to do than to deal with this child’s play and stupidity. Besides that, it does not interest me how many kinds of religion there are in the world and how the people adhere to these religions. This interests only the American President

November 8, 1941

Roosevelt. In the German Reich, according to our view, each may live after his own fashion!

I have read that in the United States a preacher is not allowed to speak against the state and that soldiers are not allowed to attend such sermons. It is the same here with us. But there is a difference: namely, that the denominations in the German Reich receive nearly 900 million Reichsmark annually from the state, and not a penny in America! No priest has ever been persecuted in the German Reich because of his doctrine of faith unless, because of his doctrine of faith, he interfered with the doctrine of state. But this only a very few did. The great majority stands behind the German state in this struggle. It knows quite well that if this struggle is lost for the German Reich, religion would fare far worse in a Stalinist protectorate than it does in ours.

All attempts to influence the German Volk from abroad are childish and ridiculous. The German Volk has known the National Socialist regime for twenty years now as a party, for eight years as the leader of the state. And I believe that there has never been an era in German history in which such gigantic things have been achieved as within the eight years the German Reich has been led by the National Socialist movement. The best witnesses for the work of our movement will be the men who return from the front and who have been able to compare the effects of twenty-three years of Communist rule to ours.

They can judge what National Socialism has accomplished and what Europe would face if this other world won. They understand our great ambition: that in this struggle we finally want to free Europe of the danger posed by the east, and that, at the same time, we prevent the east, with its immeasurable fertility, its immeasurable riches in raw materials and ores, from being mobilized against Europe, and instead place it in the service of Europe.

This is truly a gigantic goal, which reaches far beyond the frontiers of our German Reich—gigantic not only in terms of accomplishments, but also gigantic in its consequences. The situation as it is now is madness—this Europe where in some areas nearly two hundred sixty people live on one square kilometer—and that is just the west!

I see all these things from a higher point of view, if I may say so. I differentiate between the French and their Jews, between the Belgians and their Jews, between the Dutch and their Jews. I know that countless people live there who are also the victims of this crazy European construction, according to which the genuinely richest part of Europe is constantly mobilized against that part of Europe where the people living there possess not even the most primitive standard of living. Our soldiers saw this: in a country where the soil is virtually brimming with fertility; in a country, where a fraction of the work could result in as many times the profit as it makes here; there people have barely enough to call a pot their own; they dwell in miserable huts, neglected, full of lice, and dirty.

A few days ago, I read that lice had been found on a German prisoner of war in the east. Mr. Stalin is circulating this. I assume that he wants to make believe that this prisoner of war brought the lice all the way from Munich or

November 8, 1941

Berlin to Russia. In the Soviet paradise, the most miserable type of slavery exists that the world has ever seen: millions of frightened, oppressed, neglected people, half-starved! Above them, there is the regime of commissars, ninety percent of whom are of Jewish descent, who control this whole slave state.

It will be a great relief for Europe not only if this danger disappears, but also if the fertility of this soil benefits all of Europe.

This is a gigantic task posed to us. However, I am so much a materialist that I regard it as far more important than worrying about what religions are predominant in what countries.

We have a goal. It spans this continent. Primarily, there is our Fatherland, then come all those who live in the same misery as we do. And I am convinced that this continent will not be second in the world, but that it will remain the first.

And if Mr. Willkie,⁴⁸² this man of honor, declares that there are only two possibilities: either Berlin will become the capital of the world or Washington, then I can only say: Berlin does not want to be the capital of the world, and Washington will never be the capital of the world. I believe that, in Europe at least, hundreds of medium-sized towns would protest against such a burdening of human civilization.

Basically, our great goal in the east is the final part of our program. In accordance with this sober program, we once began to place man's work and, thereby, man himself at the center of our actions, aspirations, and performance. Against the terms "gold" and "capital," we set the terms "man, Volksgenosse," and "work." Today, too, we set man and his work against these terms. With this, we embrace all those who are allied with us today and who suffer hardships as great as Germany does, and even greater in part: Italy. The Duce—I know he feels no differently about this struggle than we do: his country also is poor, overpopulated, always disadvantaged, and it does not know from where it will take its daily bread. He has sworn himself to me, and this union cannot be dissolved by any power on earth!

There are two revolutions which started out at different times, in different forms, but with the same goals. Together, they will reach these goals. A number of other European states have joined us. We can say that almost all of southeastern Europe is in our camp today. And the greater part of the remainder of Europe also stands at our front in sentiment, even if not in public.

So, today, we do not fight alone as National Socialists, but together with a gigantic European front. And at the end of this year, we can say that the gravest danger has already been parried by this European front.

When I spoke in Berlin the other day, we were just about to land one last gigantic blow. It succeeded beyond all measure.⁴⁸³ About seventy-five divisions were eliminated and destroyed in one blow.

And the leaders and executors of this struggle will not tire and will not slacken. The heroism of this front is immortal. As men who believe in Providence, we can assume that for such an immortal feat, there will be undying recompense!

November 14, 1941

We may not doubt that this period will determine the fate of Europe for the next thousand years.⁴⁸⁴ We can all be happy that we initiated this period. You, my friends from the old days, you can be proud that you followed me, whom Providence has predestined to stride forth on this path, at the time when I set out on my path in this city, as an unknown man.

We may step up to the graves of our old comrades with even greater pride in this year. In the past year, we felt somewhat burdened before them. We no longer fought against the Red front because fate had forced us to make a truce with it. I honestly upheld this truce. The other side relieved me of this duty. This year, I look with something almost like relief at the graves of our party comrades because I know that they once had the same goal: the struggle against this Marxist enemy of the world and his allies. At the time, they fell victim to the bullets of this front which stretches all the way from a stupid reaction to the zealous insanity of Bolshevism.

Especially in this year, we think of the fallen with particular emotion and particular grief. You will understand my feelings.

It is only for a few hours that I am in this city again from which I once set out. But I am so happy to see you here again, my old companions, my old comrades in arms. And you may believe me when I say that this year a great weight was taken from my heart. I do feel the sacrifice that we had to make: all our young and old friends, they who again had to pay with their own blood for Germany's salvation and perhaps will still have to pay.

Alas, it is the old, eternal argument and the old, eternal fight. It just did not end in the year 1918. We were swindled out of the victory at the time. We sacrificed two million dead at the time, we had seven-and-a-half million wounded, and, in spite of this, the insanity of an internal revolution cheated us out of the victory.

But it was only the beginning, the first part of this drama. The second part and the end are now being written. This time, we will take what we were swindled out of. Point for point, position for position, we will put it on the bill and cash it in.

The hour will come when we can step up to the graves of the fallen of the Great War and we can say: Comrades, you did not die in vain! What we once said in front of the Feldherrnhalle we will be able to pronounce with a thousandfold greater right in front of the graves of our World War soldiers: Comrades, you won after all!

On November 11, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to King Victor Emmanuel III on his birthday.⁴⁸⁵

On November 13, he expressed his sympathies to Pétain in a telegram on the death of War Minister Huntziger.⁴⁸⁶ The general, who had signed the French capitulation in 1940, had crashed on November 12 on a return flight from North Africa.

On November 14, Hitler signed a decree on the German Academy at his headquarters. It read as follows:⁴⁸⁷

November 17, 1941

I

The academy for the scientific investigation and cultivation of German national characteristics—the German Academy—shall be vested with the character of a corporation under public law and shall bear the name “German Academy.” Its seat will be in Munich.

II

1. The mission of the German Academy will be primarily the investigation and cultivation of the German language at home and its promotion and dissemination abroad.

2. In addition, the German Academy will participate in the investigation and cultivation of the German cultural heritage of past and present.

III.

1. A president will head the German Academy. I shall appoint and dismiss him. His office will be an honorary function.

2. The president will represent the German Academy legally and extralegally.

This “German Academy” was placed “under the supervision of the Reich propaganda minister,” which said much about its “scientific” character.

On November 17, Hitler named Alfred Rosenberg, who already served as his agent “for the central control of questions connected to the east-European area,”⁴⁸⁸ Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories. Characteristically enough, this decree was not even published in the Reich Law Gazette. Instead, it came into force due to an informal announcement in the press:⁴⁸⁹

The Führer has ordered the establishment of civil administrations in those parts of the eastern territories that German troops have occupied and in which fighting has ceased. The task of these civil administrations for the time being is the restitution of public order and public life.

On the Führer’s orders, these civil administrations are subordinated to a Reich minister. To this end, the Führer has named Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories. As his permanent representative, the Führer has appointed Gauleiter and Reich governor, Dr. Alfred Meyer.⁴⁹⁰

First, civil administrations have been set up in the area of the former free states of Lithuania, Latvia, and in parts of White Ruthenia. These areas together form the Reichskommissariat Ostland.

The Führer has appointed Gauleiter and Oberpräsident Hinrich Lohse⁴⁹¹ Reichskommissar for Ostland.

Civil administrations have also been set up in parts of the Ukraine. The Führer has appointed Gauleiter and Oberpräsident Erich Koch⁴⁹² Reichskommissar for the Ukraine.

November 20, 1941

This announcement made clear that Hitler was not about to restore the Baltic states or grant the Ukraine any autonomy. Advocates of autonomy had enthusiastically welcomed the entry of the German troops into Kiev. Hitler immediately ordered their arrest and imprisonment.

Never had he allowed locals to wield any power or pursue their own political agenda in a newly conquered country. Not even the Austrian National Socialists had been allowed to take power. Instead, he had vested crucial powers in Reich Germans from far away whom he knew to be unconditionally loyal to him.

He had proceeded in this manner in Poland, in Norway, and in Holland.⁴⁹³ In the east, too, he wanted to secure his own autocratic rule. Therefore, Gauleiter Erich Koch of East Prussia was not allowed to take over the neighboring Baltic states, but was instead sent to the Ukraine. Gauleiter Lohse of Schleswig-Holstein was assigned the Baltic states. And so both suddenly found themselves in foreign countries, far away from the Gaus of their homeland.

Hitler felt that he had proceeded quite cleverly in suppressing any independent sentiments in the subjugated areas. But less than three years later, these "Reichskommissariats,"⁴⁹⁴ which had been meant to last over a thousand years, had already disappeared from the map like apparitions.

On November 17, the inspector general of the Luftwaffe, Ernst Udet, committed suicide. The public was informed that he had crashed "test-flying a new plane." Hitler ordered a state funeral and named Fighter Squadron III after Udet.⁴⁹⁵

On November 19, in a meeting with Halder at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, Hitler said that he felt that the collapse of Russia and England was within reach:⁴⁹⁶

The Führer politically rates success in Russia, which he regards as an unheard-of achievement, very high. He believes that the loss of sources of essential raw materials (especially coal) has severely impaired the armament potential of the Russians. Their armament economy will not recover from that any time soon. In England, he assigns great importance to domestic political and social tensions.

On November 20, an exchange of telegrams marked the first anniversary of Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact. Hitler wrote Prime Minister von Bardossy:⁴⁹⁷

November 25, 1941

I thank Your Excellency for the best wishes transmitted to me by wire on the first anniversary of Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact. I share with you the first conviction that the Tripartite Pact will continue to be effective as the foundation for a just new order of the relations between the people of Europe and that, through this, it will become the guarantor of the prosperity of our states.

Adolf Hitler

On November 21, Hitler attended a memorial for Ernst Udet at the Reich Air Ministry in Berlin. Göring delivered the address. Afterwards, Hitler placed a wreath at the coffin.⁴⁹⁸

The next day, another mysterious crash was reported. This time, Colonel Mölders was the victim. On July 16, Hitler had awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds on his hundred first air victory. Supposedly, he had been aboard a courier airplane, which he was not flying himself, when he had crashed near Breslau.⁴⁹⁹ Hitler again ordered a state funeral.

On November 23, Hitler wired a congratulatory telegram to Professor Bier on his eightieth birthday.⁵⁰⁰

On November 25, Hitler sent a long, but inconsequential, handwritten letter to Reichsleiter Amann on his fiftieth birthday.⁵⁰¹

In addition, he sent the following telegram to the president of the "Reich University of Strasbourg":⁵⁰²

I thank you for your report on the opening of the University of Strasbourg. In commemoration of the great significance of the old University of Strasbourg for German intellectual life, I reciprocate your greetings with my best wishes for a similarly fruitful development of the new Reich University of Strasbourg.

Adolf Hitler

On November 25, on Hitler's orders, a "state act of world historic importance" took place in Berlin.⁵⁰³ The Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936 was to be refurbished. Because of the Pact of Steel of 1939 and the Tripartite Pact of 1940, it had somewhat fallen into oblivion. Now, the Anti-Comintern Pact was designed to tie to Hitler those states that had refused to join the Tripartite Pact and to enter into a military alliance with Germany, for example, Denmark and Finland. The pact was renewed for a five-year period.

Ciano, who like Serrano Suñer had come to Berlin to attend this event "of world historic importance," gave a vivid account in his diary

November 27, 1941

of what a pitiful figure the Danish foreign minister Scavenius made, who felt decidedly uncomfortable in this “Anti-Comintern circle.”⁵⁰⁴

On the same day, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to the heads of state of the countries allied in the Anti-Comintern Pact, as well as to the Duce and the Romanian head of state.⁵⁰⁵ In addition, he sent a telegram of condolence on the death of the Chilean president.⁵⁰⁶

The festivities in Berlin continued on November 26. The next day, Hitler personally attended the celebrations. The following communiqué was published on this occasion:⁵⁰⁷

On Thursday [November 27], the Führer received, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the European statesmen from the powers allied in the anti-Bolshevik front, who are presently staying in the Reich capital: the Slovak prime minister, Professor Tuka; the royal Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister, von Bardossy; the royal Romanian deputy prime minister, Mihai Antonescu;⁵⁰⁸ the royal Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano; the royal Bulgarian minister of the exterior, Popov; the royal Dutch foreign minister, Scavenius; the Spanish foreign minister, Serrano Suñer; the Finnish minister of foreign affairs, Witting; the Croatian foreign minister, Lorcovic; as well as the plenipotentiary of the imperial Japanese government, Ambassador Oshima, and the plenipotentiary of the government of the Empire of Manchukuo, Envoy Lue-i-Wen.

At noon Thursday, the Führer entertained as his guests the statesmen present in Berlin and the heads of the missions of the Anti-Comintern powers in Berlin. From the German side attended the following: the Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, Hermann Göring; the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop; Grand Admiral Raeder, the Field Marshals Keitel and Milch, the Reich ministers Dr. Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Dr. Lammers; the Reichsleiters Bouhler, Bormann, Dr. Dietrich, Reichsführer SS Himmler, the SA chief of staff Lutze, state minister, Dr. Meissner, and, in addition, the state secretary of the foreign ministry, von Weizsäcker; the under state secretaries Woermann and Gaus, as well as the heads of the German missions in the countries associated with the Anti-Comintern Pact.

It had been a long time since Hitler had last participated in such a “meeting of diplomats,” and he thoroughly enjoyed the now rare opportunity. It didn’t bother him to be at the center of attention that, in spite of their resounding titles, many of the present “statesmen” were completely unimportant and of questionable character.

On November 27, Hitler named Reich students leader, Dr. Scheel, Gauleiter of Salzburg and Salzburg’s former Gauleiter, Dr. Rainer, Gauleiter of Carinthia.⁵⁰⁹

November 28, 1941

At 11:45 a.m. on November 28, Hitler attended the state service in honor of Colonel Mölders at the Reich Ministry of Aviation. He also placed a wreath on his coffin.⁵¹⁰

Hitler had enjoyed the “meeting of the diplomats” the previous day so much that he asked the statesmen to individual audiences at the Reich Chancellery. Some of them he received that same afternoon, as well as in the course of November 28.⁵¹¹

It was about time for Hitler to return to the “front,” that is, to his headquarters in East Prussia. Things were not going well in the east. On November 17, the central sector of the front had taken the offensive in the direction of Moscow again, after months of virtually standing still. The troops, already wearied by months of fighting, advanced only slowly, meeting with ever more determined resistance by the Russians.⁵¹²

The troops of the southern sector had made better headway. They had reached the River Don and, on November 21, fast-moving units of the army and Waffen SS had taken Rostov, the “gateway to the Caucasus.” On November 26, the situation changed completely. Suddenly, Timoshenko’s troops attacked with unexpected strength and forced the Germans out of Rostov. Worse still, they drove the German units, including the Waffen SS, back eighty kilometers to the Mius River and almost all the way back to Taganrog. And the pressure which the enemy exerted did not appear to diminish.

When Hitler arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on November 30, the news seemed catastrophic. Was it possible? Soldiers of the National Socialist Greater German Reich in retreat? Hitler ordered them to halt immediately and to resume the advance. He wired the following orders to Rundstedt, the commander in chief of the Army Group South: “Stay where you are. No more retreats!”⁵¹³

The German front would not budge simply because of a few “primitive Bolsheviks!” He would ruthlessly crack down on people, dismiss them, reduce them in rank, have them shot, and so on.

Hitler’s apparently complete ignorance of tactics—namely, to hold on to a point once taken at all costs, no matter how unimportant it might be—began to show for the first time on this day. He later repeatedly resorted to these tactics.

From his point of view, these tactics were not as senseless as they appeared. They reflected his mentality. He had proved himself a liar

November 30, 1941

many times before. He had solemnly declared in front of the world public the following:

“Nothing is impossible for the German soldier!”⁵¹⁴

“A place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!”⁵¹⁵

“What we once possess, we will never again surrender! Where our banners are driven into the earth, there stands before them a living wall of Germans!”⁵¹⁶

“Wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain.”⁵¹⁷

Given such principles and prophecies, there could naturally be no talk of withdrawing even a little. Hitler had become a prisoner of his own bombastic phrases. There was another consideration as well: to yield to the enemy’s pressure and to clear out of an area would mean revealing the monstrous atrocities committed on Hitler’s orders by the German conquerors: the murder of the Russian commissars; the massacre of the civilian population, especially the Jews; the shooting of defenseless prisoners of war without prior trial; and so forth.⁵¹⁸ However, if resistance was maintained down to the last bullet and no stone was left unturned, then it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the enemy to investigate these matters.

A third factor in these considerations was Hitler’s “perseverance” theory. In his opinion, what mattered was who would lead “the last battalion on the field” and that it would “be a German one!”⁵¹⁹ Whether you sacrificed all other battalions beforehand was inconsequential, as long as one “last battalion” remained which could be led to the battlefield. Only if Hitler himself survived all the privation, suffering, and sacrifice of blood, only then “Providence,” this German god in the clouds, would crown him. Heedlessly, Hitler sacrificed millions of Germans on all fronts to this “perseverance” theory.

There were, however—and this happened more and more frequently later on in the war—situations in which Hitler had to consent to retreats, so-called “reduced fronts” or “backing up disengagement,” the abandoning of cities (for example, Rome and Florence). He took care, however, to create the impression that this was being done voluntarily in the service of some higher strategy. But he did live long enough to see how a harsh reality daily disproved his claim that “a place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier.”

On November 30, 1941, Hitler had a conference with Brauchitsch at the Führer headquarters. Halder noted the following:⁵²⁰

December 2, 1941

It seems to have been a highly unpleasant, one-sided discussion, in which the Führer bandied about accusations and insults.

On the same day, Rundstedt's reply to Hitler's orders arrived. He said that it was "insanity to try to hold the position" and offered his resignation. Hitler wired back: "I grant your request. Lay down your command."⁵²¹

On December 1, another conference with Brauchitsch took place at the Führer headquarters.⁵²² Hitler was determined to replace Rundstedt immediately with Field Marshal von Reichenau who, as mentioned before, was one of the few high-ranking officers in the Reichswehr with National Socialist inclinations. His army stood in the eastern Ukraine. With his assistance, Hitler hoped that mastering the momentary crisis would be child's play. He ordered his plane to be ready the next morning. He himself would look after matters at the southern sector.

Before doing so, however, he issued Directive No. 38. The situation in the Mediterranean had also become critical. On November 20, the English had started a new offensive against Libya. Supply convoys never reached the Africa Corps; instead they were sunk while on the way. Improvisation was called for again! The directive of December 2 read as follows:⁵²³

1. As a basis for securing and extending our position in the Mediterranean and in order to establish the strength of the Axis powers in the central Mediterranean, I herewith, after consulting with the Duce, order the transfer to southern Italy and North Africa of contingents of the Luftwaffe units released in the east, in the strength of one air corps, together with the necessary air-defense elements.

Apart from its immediate effect upon the conduct of operations in the Mediterranean and in North Africa, the object sought by this movement is to exert a potent influence on the entire course of future developments in the Mediterranean theater.

2. I assign command over all the forces to be committed to the execution of this mission to Field Marshal Kesselring, whom I designate at the same time as commander in chief, south [*Oberbefehlshaber Süd*].

His missions are as follows:

To gain air and sea supremacy in the area between southern Italy and North Africa, to establish secure links with Libya and Cyrenaica, and then especially to neutralize Malta, to cooperate with the German and allied forces committed in North Africa, to interdict enemy traffic through the Mediterranean and British supply movements to Tobruk and Malta, in close cooperation with the German and Italian naval forces available for that purpose.

December 2, 1941

3. The commander in chief, south, is subordinate to the Duce and receives through the *Comando Supremo* the Duce's general directives on overall operational matters. In all matters immediately pertaining to the Luftwaffe, the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe will communicate with the commander in chief, south, directly, keeping the high command of the Wehrmacht informed when questions of basic importance are involved.

4. The commander in chief, south, will have under his command the following:

All committed Luftwaffe forces in the Mediterranean and in North Africa; The Italian air force and anti-aircraft units made available by the Italian armed forces for the execution of his missions.

5. The German naval forces employed in the central Mediterranean remain under control of the commander in chief of the navy.

The commander in chief, south, is authorized, in execution of the missions assigned to him, to issue directives to the German admiral with the high command of the Italian navy and also, if the need arises, to the Navy Group, South (for the eastern Mediterranean). Orders for action are to be issued by the navy headquarters in agreement with the commander in chief, south.

The wishes of the commander in chief, south, for coordination of joint action with the allied naval forces are to be addressed exclusively to the German admiral with the high command of the Italian Navy.

6. The missions of the Wehrmacht commander, southeast, and of the German general with the headquarters of the Italian armed forces remain unchanged.

Adolf Hitler

On December 2, the Führer flew aboard his four-engined Condor plane from Rastenburg to the rearward operational area of Army Group South.⁵²⁴ Besides Hitler's chief pilot, Captain Hans Baur, the following men were also aboard: Chief Adjutant Schmundt, manservant Linge, and Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Theodor Morell. The weather was cold and wintery.

During a stopover in Kiev, Hitler spent about forty-five minutes on the telephone with Army Group South, trying to speak to Sepp Dietrich, who commanded the Waffen SS in the southern sector. He wanted Dietrich to meet him at the airport near Mariupol (Zhdanov) on the Sea of Azov. Hitler was not going to travel to a general's headquarters without SS guards and a secure vehicle. The flight continued on to Poltava, where the men changed planes to a faster, but chillier Heinkel 'He 111.' In addition, Hitler picked Field Marshal von Reichenau up there, who followed in a second 'He 111' plane.

Quite frozen, they arrived in Mariupol, where Hitler changed into Sepp Dietrich's car. They drove to the Army Group's headquarters in

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the vicinity of Taganrog, where Hitler gave further instructions on the change in the chain of command.

The next day, the traveling party, including Reichenau, set out from Mariupol again. On the way, Hitler could not resist mocking the former army commander. He said to his servant Linge: "This Rundstedt was not cut out for the east. In the west, he was very good—especially when French red wine was concerned."

But Hitler's good mood was not to last. The weather became so bad that it was impossible to fly back to Rastenburg that day. The party had to spend the night at Poltava.

At the same Poltava in the Ukraine, the presumptuous King Charles XII of Sweden had once met his fate. Tsar Peter the Great dealt the Swedish forces a deadly blow in the Battle of Poltava on July 18, 1709. This forced Charles to take refuge in Turkey and finished Sweden's hegemony.⁵²⁵ No doubt, Hitler was not aware of this coincidence. But he was also headed toward disaster, the well-deserved, inevitable destiny of all conquerors, and this process was now approaching its point of culmination. Even if Hitler yet failed to realize this fully, his forced stay at Poltava became one of the worst nights of his life.

Cut off from the outside world, without any means of communication, locked up in an old ramshackle, bug-ridden castle, hundreds of kilometers away from the Führer headquarters and the Reich Chancellery, he suffered the torments of hell, thinking of what might have happened there in the meanwhile. His guilty conscience caught up with him: since 1939, all his forecasts had failed, many of his "basic beliefs" had proved mistaken, and he still had not had the decency "at the very least [to] forego the public performance of any further political function," as he himself had once demanded.⁵²⁶

What if some general or Unterführer used his absence to usurp power and declared him dismissed because of proven incompetence, or called on the Reichstag? He did not fear the generals that much, as their training taught them obedience. In his view, the Obergruppenführers of the SA and SS represented a far greater danger. They had revolted along with him, so they did not respect the state and perhaps sometime they would stop respecting the Führer! Once, Hitler told his manservant: "Linge, I am glad that you are sitting behind me instead of an Obergruppenführer who could shoot me in the back with a pistol."⁵²⁷

The night at Poltava came to an end, but Hitler promised himself and Linge "never again to go so far away from his headquarters, never

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again to seek direct contact with the armies at the front by traveling himself.⁵²⁸

On December 4, Hitler arrived at Rastenburg after an anxious return flight. He was prepared for the worst news of rebellions. But everything was calm at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Nobody in the Reich had attempted to rebel!

Things had gone less well at the central sector of the eastern front. The German armies, whose greatest efforts had brought them within sixty kilometers of Moscow, had literally got stuck north, west, and south of the Soviet capital. It had begun to snow. Temperatures had dropped below freezing. The German panzers had frozen, their guns no longer fired, and there were no supplies.

After all, it was December, and they were in the middle of Russia! It is ridiculous to maintain that the beginning of winter in 1941 was an unforeseeable natural disaster.⁵²⁹ The German troops had to camp outside, in front of Moscow, and many suffered severe frostbite. They did not even have winter coats, nor did they have special padded uniforms. And Hitler alone was to be blamed for this! He had always spoken of the “primitive” Bolsheviks who would immediately collapse under the brutal German blows. He had maintained that this campaign would last no longer than that in France, that is, six to eight weeks at the most. Why bother about winter clothes? And then, after many things had already gone wrong, it was he who declared in his proclamation on October 2 that “that last gigantic blow” would “crush this enemy before the beginning of winter!”⁵³⁰

He had said on October 3 that the German soldiers would be in front of Moscow by October 4 or 5, and that this enemy was “already broken” and that he would “never rise again.”⁵³¹

The German soldiers lay in the snow on the vast Russian plain, weary, hungry, and cold, under fire from Russian artillery. Now, the terrible realization of Hitler’s prophecies dawned on them. Meanwhile, the Führer and supreme commander sat in his cozy headquarters in East Prussia and sent out diplomatic telegrams.

On December 4, he congratulated Franco on his birthday.⁵³²

The next day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to the Finnish state president Ryti on the conquest of Hangö.⁵³³

On December 6, he sent another congratulatory telegram to Ryti. It read as follows:⁵³⁴

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On the anniversary of the Finnish declaration of independence, I send you and the Finnish people my sincere best wishes. The heroic, defensive war which Finland is fighting in true brotherhood-in-arms with Germany in order finally to gain security for itself will be crowned by victory.

Adolf Hitler

It is open to question whether or not this telegram compensated for the fact that England had just declared war on Finland, as it had earlier declared war on Hungary and Romania.

Still on December 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Field Marshal von Mackensen on his ninety-second birthday.⁵³⁵

On December 7, Hitler dictated the so-called "Night and Fog Decree," which provided for the penalizing of offences against the German occupying power in the conquered territories. The offenders were to be either killed or secretly deported to Germany. The decree read as follows:⁵³⁶

In the occupied territories, with the beginning of the Russian campaign, Communist elements and other anti-German circles have intensified their attacks against the Reich and the occupying power. The scope and the danger of these subversive activities force us, for reasons of deterrence, to take most severe measures against the offenders. For the time being, the following guidelines shall be observed:

I

In the occupied territories, offences by non-German civilians that are directed against the Reich or the occupying power and that threaten their security and ability to strike, in principle always call for capital punishment.

II

In principle, offences under Section I are to be tried in the occupied territories only if it is probable that death sentences will be passed on the offenders, or at least the principal offenders, and that trial and execution can speedily be carried out. If not, offenders, or at least the principal offenders, will be brought to Germany.

III

Offenders who are brought to Germany will be tried by court-martial if special military interests make this necessary. In response to inquiries by German and foreign offices regarding these offenders, it should be said that they have been arrested and that the nature of the trial does not allow one to give further information.

IV

The commanders in the occupied territories and the justices bear personal responsibility for the implementation of this decree within the framework of their jurisdiction.

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V

The chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht determines in which occupied territories this decree will be applied. He is authorized to issue explanations, supplements, and to implement regulations. The Reich minister of justice decrees the implementing regulations for his jurisdiction.

Hitler thought that he could master the rising unrest and outrage everywhere by such draconian measures. In reality, this decree merely documented his declining power. After all, the assassination attempts and acts of sabotage had become possible because Germany's luck was running out at the front, and the German forces were increasingly less able to control the huge occupied territories.

On December 6, the Russian general Zhukov began a large offensive to relieve Moscow with a hundred fresh divisions. Among them were five hundred thousand well-equipped, warmly dressed Siberian soldiers and seventy thousand mounted troops⁵³⁷ who suddenly threw themselves at the exhausted Germans. The German soldiers suffered heavy losses and were forced back more and more each day. Army Group Center experienced a serious crisis.

Hitler's headquarters felt as if the end of the world was near. Keitel had a pistol in front of him, playing with the thought of ending it all. Jodl had to remind him that it was his duty to hold out with Hitler.⁵³⁸

Brauchitsch again offered his resignation on December 7. Instead of immediately saying that Brauchitsch "had to fulfill [his] obligations and do [his] duty just as any other soldier,"⁵³⁹ as he had on November 23, 1939, Hitler postponed his answer this time.

No matter how precarious a situation was, Hitler never neglected to use it in order to expand his own powers. The crisis that the army was going through in front of Moscow came at a most opportune time, so he felt. It allowed him to further curtail the generals' freedom of action and to make himself commander in chief of the army.

Nevertheless, these considerations did not captivate him to the extent that he overlooked the serious danger which this new and unexpected development posed to the army in front of Moscow and to his regime. On the night of December 7, he sat pensive at the Wolfsschanze headquarters and stared ahead.

Then news of the Japanese bombing of the American naval base at Pearl Harbor on Hawaii arrived. Without an official declaration of war, Japanese bomber formations had attacked on a Sunday—just as Hitler

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would have done. Now, that was news to his liking!⁵⁴⁰ He slapped his thighs, jumped up as if electrified, and cried: "Finally!"

Hitler had neither foreseen nor anticipated this Japanese action. Just as *he* usually did with *his* allies, the Japanese had left him in the dark regarding their intentions. Hitler had never encouraged them to attack the United States; instead, he had advocated proceeding against England, for example, by attacking Singapore. Moreover, the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940, between Germany, Italy, and Japan had been intended to prevent involving the United States in the war.⁵⁴¹

In the past months, Hitler had attempted to induce the Japanese to move against Russia.⁵⁴² He had hoped that this would provide relief for the German troops, but the Japanese had declined. Instead, they had now opened hostilities against the United States; unlike Hitler, the Japanese knew that England and the United States formed one entity.

Formally, the Japanese-American conflict did not oblige Hitler to declare war on the United States according to the stipulations of the Tripartite Pact, since the United States was not yet involved in the European theater of war as a belligerent power. However, as Hitler told the worried Ribbentrop, in the long run things could "not continue without a German-American war."⁵⁴³

This was true, of course, but it was still odd that the Tripartite Pact would result in Germany itself declaring war on America first! On the other hand, the American declaration of war on Germany would probably have been a question of days anyway, now that the attack on Pearl Harbor finally motivated the American people to take part in a conflict that was far away from their minds previously. The declaration of war on Germany by Chiang Kai-shek's China, which was transmitted on December 9, also made this clear.

For Hitler, the Japanese attack came just at the right time. It diverted attention from his own failures and from the catastrophic situation in the east. He regarded it as a turning point, as if Providence were beckoning him with her finger, and resolved to press on with full force and deliver a formal victory speech before the Reichstag.

Later, he would frequently stress that Japan's entry into the war could not have come at a more "opportune time." The mood of the Germans, who had felt "at a real low point because of the Russian winter," had been greatly improved by the Japanese intervention.⁵⁴⁴ Hitler worried that Roosevelt might possibly beat him to a declaration of war.⁵⁴⁵ He wanted to be the one to open hostilities.

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On December 8, after this “fateful turn of events,” Hitler was in such a good mood that he allowed for a few “collapsed fronts” in the center and north sectors of the eastern front. He issued Directive No. 39, which was relatively reasonable. It read as follows:⁵⁴⁶

The surprisingly early arrival⁵⁴⁷ of severe winter weather in the east and the supply difficulties resulting therefrom call for the immediate cessation of all major offensive operations and a shift to the defensive.

The conduct of this defensive will be determined by the objective to which it is directed, namely the following:

(a) To retain such areas as are of great importance to the enemy with respect to his operations and armament production.

(b) To make recuperation and rehabilitation possible for the Wehrmacht forces committed in the east.

(c) To bring about by the abovementioned measures the prerequisites for resuming major offensive operations in 1942.

Specifically, I order the following:

I. Army:

1. The bulk of the army in the east will as soon as possible shift to the defensive in positions sparing of manpower and designated by the commander in chief of the army, and then initiate rehabilitation of the units, while the tank and other motorized divisions in particular are to be withdrawn from the front line.

2. Wherever the front is moved back in the absence of enemy pressure, provision must first be made for a rear position affording better living conditions and better defensive facilities to the troops than the positions previously held.

Abandonment of important lateral communications to the enemy may put in jeopardy other front sectors not as yet consolidated. Where this occurs, timing of the withdrawal from particular sectors must take account of the overall situation.

3. The perimeter of the front must be calculated to facilitate billeting of the troops and to permit organization of a simplified supply system that would also function during the thaw.

Switch and rear positions must be laid out and constructed as operations, and the following special missions must be accomplished:

(a) Sevastopol is to be seized as soon as possible; employment of the bulk of the Eleventh Army (less the contingents required for coastal defense) will be decided after conclusion of fighting in that area.

(b) Army Group South in spite of all difficulties must endeavor to achieve the conditions that, given favorable weather conditions, would permit launching an offensive to seize the lower Don-Donetsk line while it is still winter. That would provide favorable conditions for the spring offensive aimed against the Caucasus.

(c) Army Group North is to shorten its eastern and southeastern front north of Lake Ilmen without relinquishing the road and railroad line from

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Tikhvin to Volkhov and Kolchanovo [Koltschanawo] to the enemy, an essential condition for resolving the situation south of Lake Ladoga as soon as reinforcements arrive. Only through this can the final isolation of Leningrad and establishment of contact with the Finnish Karelian army be assured.

(d) Should it be found that the enemy has withdrawn the bulk of his forces from the coastal strip south of Kronshtadt Bay and no longer intends to put up any serious defense there, the shore in that area must be seized to economize forces.

II. Luftwaffe:

1. The mission of the Luftwaffe will be to disrupt rehabilitation of the Russian armed forces as much as possible by raids against the armament and training centers, especially Leningrad, Moscow, Shcherbakov, Gor'ki, Voronezh, Rostov, Stalingrad, Krasnodar, and so forth. Of particular importance is the continuing disruption of the lines of communication by which the enemy lives, and the utilization of which imperils our own front sectors. In addition to combating the enemy air force, all-out support must be given to the [German] army in the defense against enemy attacks on the ground and from the air.

2. The organizational plans, conforming with the army-group boundaries submitted to me and the strength of the Luftwaffe contingents scheduled to remain in the east, have my approval. Wherever the situation permits upon conclusion of the army operations, individual units may be withdrawn for rehabilitation and training.

3. In order to repulse any winter offensive effectively and to allow for our planned winter operations (see I, 4), a ground organization must be maintained to permit prompt shifting of forces and advancing reinforcements from withdrawn units. To this end, the rehabilitation areas will be organized as close as possible to the eastern front.

4. Continuous, complete, and far-reaching air reconnaissance is especially important for early detection and observation of regrouping movements of the enemy. The army and the Luftwaffe shall supplement each other in this task through allocation of resources and missions.

5. I shall continue to reserve the right to authorize withdrawal from the front near Moscow of contingents still earmarked for commitment in the area of the commander in chief, south.

6. Local forces must provide for the air defense of their own billeting and supply areas, and also for securing their important rear communications. In order to take effective countermeasures when concentrations of the enemy's attacking air forces have been identified, arrangements will be made that will permit prompt formation of concentrations of our own fighter forces for interception.

III. The navy will take steps to ensure that the sea route to Helsinki, which will be less hazardous after the seizure of Hangö and Osmussar [Ostrov], will be available on a large scale for commercial navigation and supply movements for our forces in Finland.

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The number of small vessels to be constructed at home and in the allied or occupied countries for supply operations (especially across the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea) must still be substantially increased, setting aside all not absolutely vital demands and security considerations.

IV. Personnel replacements for the Wehrmacht in 1942 must be assured, even in the event that casualties should run high. Since the 1922 age class [that is, those German men born in 1922, and hence liable as twenty-year-olds for service in the German army in 1942] alone will be insufficient, drastic measures are called for.

I therefore order the following:

1. All personnel now on Wehrmacht assignment at home or on special missions (for example, Wehrmacht mission to Romania) that can be released be made available for the fighting front through a sweeping retrenchment program.

Soldiers of younger age classes now in the Zone of the Interior or in rear services will for the same purpose be exchanged for older frontline soldiers.

2. Regarding the exchange between the eastern and western theaters of war, the following rules will apply:

Fully employable divisions of the second and third wave stationed in the west will be exchanged for exceptionally combat-worn divisions in the east. A temporary weakening in France, during the winter only, is acceptable.

Combat-experienced officers, noncommissioned officers and men from eastern divisions slated for disbanding may be assigned to such western divisions.

Whether additional western divisions which cannot be employed as units in the east will be disbanded and used for replenishing tried eastern divisions will be decided by me when I have before me the complete plan of the army for its reorganization and disposition.

The combat efficiency of the army in the west must in any event be kept up to the level of assuring protection of the coasts and execution of Operation Attila.

3. Young workers with service exemptions must to the greatest possible extent be gradually replaced by prisoners and Russian civilian workers, who are to be put to work in groups. Special directives to that end will be issued by the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On December 8, Hitler received the Bulgarian chief of staff Lukash at the Führer headquarters. In addition, he met with the Spanish general Moscarde, who had defended the Alcazar in the Spanish Civil War.⁵⁴⁸ Both men had visited sections of the eastern front.

Hitler returned to Berlin the next morning. On the same day, he received the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem at the Reich Chancellery "for a discussion of great importance." The political weight of this emigrated charlatan was close to zero and, no doubt, Hitler realized this.

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Nevertheless, it flattered the fragments of his vanity to be visited by any foreigner at all who did not come from Germany's satellite states. The following communiqué was published:⁵⁴⁹

In the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Sayid Amin al Husseini, for a heartfelt discussion of great importance for the future of the Arab countries.

Hitler began delivering his speech to the Reichstag at 3:00 p.m. on December 11. In the course of the speech, he declared war on America. But first, he rendered a "triumphant account" of the course of the war up to this point. He did not hesitate to include the obviously failing campaign in Russia in this overview of victories.⁵⁵⁰ He acted as though the initial Japanese successes in the Pacific were due to his influence. After all, he had always pointed to Roosevelt as the "main culprit" of the war, and the Japanese had evidently understood this. Undoubtedly, the verbal attack on the American President represented the climax of his speech. Hitler believed that his endless speech would be followed with great interest, but he was mistaken. Even the German public was quite indifferent to his gabble. The only sentence that really interested most people was: "Therefore, today I had the American Chargé d'Affaires hand over the passports." These words made clear that a state of war existed between Germany and America from then on. And what this meant, most people remembered from the First World War. That the German head of government spared America the necessity of declaring war was undoubtedly an "accomplishment" of which only Hitler could be proud, no matter how much members of his clique in the Reichstag applauded. Hitler's speech read as follows:⁵⁵¹

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

A year filled with world historic events is drawing to a close; a year of great decisions stands before us. In these grave times, I speak to you, Deputies of the Reichstag, as the representatives of the German nation. But, beyond this, the whole German Volk should take note of this review and of the decisions that the present and the future force on us.

After another rejection of my peace proposal by the present British prime minister and the clique that supports or controls him, it became clear by the autumn of 1940 that this war, contrary to all reason and necessity, had to be fought to the end with arms. You know me, my party comrades. I have always been against halfhearted or weak decisions. If Providence wished that the German Volk could not be spared this fight, then I would be grateful to it for entrusting me with the waging of a historic struggle which will decisively

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fashion not only our Germany history for the next thousand years, but also the history of Europe—even the history of the entire world.

The German Volk and its soldiers today fight not only for themselves and their own time, but also for coming generations—even the most distant ones. The Creator entrusted us with a historic revision of unique scope, which we now are obligated to see through. The armistice in the west, which had become possible immediately after the end of fighting in Norway, forced the German leadership first to militarily secure the conquered territories of political, strategic, and economic significance.

In this way, the power of resistance of the territories conquered at the time has changed. A belt of bases and fortifications of great proportions stretches from Kirkenes to the Spanish border.

Countless airfields have been built. In the north, sometimes they had to be blasted into prehistorical granite. Naval bases were furnished with shelters in such numbers and of such strength that they cannot practically be harmed either from the sea or from the air. For their defense, there are more than one-and-a-half thousand new batteries whose positions had to be reconnoitered, planned, and built. A network of streets and railroads was designed in such a manner that the link between the Spanish border and Petsamo today is secured, irrespective of the sea. Engineering and construction battalions of the navy, the army, and the Luftwaffe, in connection with the Todt Organization, have created installations here that are not inferior to the West Wall in any way. We continue to work persistently on reinforcing them. It is my imperturbable resolve to make this European front unassailable for every enemy. This defensive work, which continued throughout the last winter, was supplemented by an offensive conduct of the war insofar as this was possible, given the seasonal conditions. German surface craft and submarine naval forces continue to wage their constant war of destruction against the British Navy and Merchant Marine and against those in its service. By flying reconnaissance and attacks, the German Luftwaffe lent support to the destruction of enemy tonnage. In countless retaliation attacks, it gave the English a better idea of the “lovely war,” whose mastermind has been primarily its present prime minister.

In this struggle, in the middle of last year, Germany received the support above all of its Italian allies. For many months, the weight of a large part of the British power lay on the shoulders of the allied Italian state. Only because of an enormous superiority in heavy tanks, the English succeeded in bringing about a temporary crisis in North Africa.

As early as on March 24 of last year, a small group of German-Italian units, led by Rommel, started a counterattack. Ajdabiyah fell on April 2. Benghazi was reached on April 4. Our common units moved into Darnah on April 8. Tobruk was surrounded on April 11. Bardiyah was occupied on April 12. The accomplishments of the German Africa Corps were all the more outstanding because this theater of war was completely foreign and [its climate was] unlike the German climate. Just as in Spain once, Germans and Italians again fought the same enemy together, [this time] in North Africa.

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While, with the blood of German and Italian soldiers, these daring measures again secured the North African front of our two allied countries, a dreadful danger cast its long, ominous shadows on Europe.

Bowing to bitter necessity, I decided in the autumn of 1939 at least to attempt the elimination of the acute German-Russian tensions in order to create the prerequisites for a general peace. Psychologically, this was difficult because of the overall attitude of the German Volk and especially the party toward Bolshevism. Technically, however, this was easy because Germany had always had and pursued only economic interests in those areas that England declared were threatened by us and which it assaulted with pacts of assistance.

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag, I may remind you that, in the early summer and midsummer of 1939, England again offered its assistance to numerous states and countries, claiming that Germany intended to invade them and rob them of their freedom. The German Reich and its government could, with a clear conscience, assure them that these were mere allegations which did not in any way correspond to the truth.

In addition, there was the sober military realization that, in the event of a war forced on the German Volk by British diplomacy, fighting on two fronts would at any rate lead to very heavy sacrifices. Moreover, once the Baltic states, Romania, and others, were inclined to accept the British pacts of assistance and thereby showed that they also believed in such a threat, it was not only the right of the German Reich government, but also a duty, on its own responsibility, to delineate German interests.

To the great regret of the German Reich, these countries shortly realized that the only factor that could constitute a strong guarantee against the threat from the east was Germany. They were lost, since their own policy had severed their ties to the German Reich, and since they had entrusted themselves to the assistance of that power whose notorious egotism throughout the centuries has never afforded anyone any assistance, but instead has always asked for the help of others.

Nevertheless, the fate of these countries evoked strong sympathy from the German Volk.⁵⁵² The sentiments that the winter war of the Finns forced on us were a mixture of bitterness and admiration. As a military people, our hearts went out to them in admiration of their heroism and self-sacrifice. We felt bitter because, in view of the enemy threatening us in the west and danger in the east, we were unable to help militarily.

As soon as it became clear to us that Russia practically derived the right, from the delineation of Germany's political spheres of interest, to kill off the nations living outside of them, further relations served only as a means to an end and were contrary to reason and sentiment.

As early as the year 1940, we realized more and more each month that the plans of the men in the Kremlin aimed at the domination of Europe and, thereby, its destruction. At a time when Germany had only a few divisions in the area bordering on Russia, I already explained to the nation the concentration of Russian military power in the east. Only a blind man could have failed to see that this concentration was of such unique dimensions that it

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would have an impact on world history. And this was not to defend something that was not threatened, but to attack something that appeared unable to defend itself. Even if the lightning⁵⁵³ end of the campaign in the west prevented the ruling powers in Moscow from counting on an immediate exhaustion of the German Reich, it did not destroy their plans. Instead, it merely postponed the date of the attack. They felt that the summer of 1941 was a most opportune moment to strike. A new Mongol invasion would sweep across Europe.

At the same time, Mr. Churchill promised a change in the British fight against Germany. Today, he cowardly seeks to deny that, in the secret session of the House of Commons in the year 1940, he pointed to the Soviet entry into the war as a crucial factor in the successful continuation and ending of the war. This entry would take place at the latest in the year 1941 and would also enable England to take the offensive.

Then Hitler gave an overview of the supposed development of Europe and again claimed that England had been “cultivated by splinters of the Germanic nation.”

There was a time when Europe was that Greek island into which Nordic tribes penetrated in order to light the flame for the first time that has since slowly but steadily begun to enlighten the world of man. And as these Greeks parried the invasion of the Persian conquerors, they were not only defending their own homeland, which was Greece, but also that idea that today is called Europe.

And then Europe moved from Hellas to Rome.

Greek spirit and Greek civilization united with Roman thinking and Roman statesmanship. An empire was created which even today is not equaled in significance and fertility, not to mention surpassed. As the Roman legions defended Italy against the African assault of Carthage in three difficult wars and finally secured the victory, again it was not Rome that they were fighting for, but the Roman-Greek world—the Europe of the day.

The next invasion of this new human civilization’s native soil issued from the expanses of the east. A dreadful storm of uncivilized hordes poured out of inner Asia deep into the heart of today’s European continent, burning, pillaging, murdering, like a true scourge of God.

In the Battle on the Catalaunian Field,⁵⁵⁴ Romans and Teutons joined together for the first time to defend that civilization in a struggle of unforeseeable significance. Starting with the Greeks, this civilization first cast its spell on the Romans and now finally on the Germanic people.

Europe grew. Hellas and Rome developed into the Occident. For many centuries, its defense was the task not only of the Romans, but also in particular of the Germanic people. The term Europe experienced a spatial expansion. The degree to which the Occident, enlightened by Greek civilization and inspired by the mighty heritage of the Roman Empire, expanded its space through Germanic colonization, irrespective of whether a German emperor fended off invasions from the east at the Unstrut or on the Lechfeld, or whether

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Africa was forced to retreat from Spain in long battles, it was always the struggle of the developing Europe against a profoundly alien, surrounding world. While Rome had earned undying merit in the creation and defense of this continent, the Germanic people now took over the defense and protection of a family of nations. Irrespective of how each nation's political designs and ambitions differed and diverged, as a whole, this family of nations formed one unit in terms of blood and culture, while its various parts either equaled or complemented one another.

And not only did the settlement of other parts of the world start out from this continent, so did a spiritual and cultural fertilization, as any man who is willing to search for the truth, instead of denying it is aware.

Therefore, England did not cultivate this continent, but splinters of the Germanic people of our continent moved to this island as Anglo-Saxons and Normans, and made possible a development that is certainly unique. And likewise, America did not discover Europe, but the other way around. And everything that America did not get from Europe may seem admirable to a Jewish mixed race. But Europe sees it as a sign of the decline of art and civilized living, as the heritage of Jewish and Negro blood.

My Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

I have to make these detailed statements because the struggle, which in the first months of this year slowly began to emerge as inevitable and which primarily the leadership of the German Reich is called on to lead this time, goes far beyond the interests of our own Volk and country. It was not Rome that the Greeks [*sic!*] once defended against Carthage. It was not the Occident that the Romans and the Germanic people defended against the Huns. It was not Germany that the German emperors defended against the Mongols. It was not Spain that the Spanish heroes defended against Africa. Instead, it was Europe that all of them defended. In the same way today, Germany does not fight for itself, but for the continent that belongs to all.

Therefore, it is fortunate that this realization has imprinted itself so profoundly into the subconscious of most European people that, either through comments or the flow of volunteers, they participate in this struggle.

When the German and Italian armies deployed on April 6 of this year for the attack against Yugoslavia and Greece, it was the prelude to the great struggle in which we are still involved at the present. The revolt which led to the overthrow of the former prince regent and his government in Belgrade decided the further course of events in this part of Europe. While England was prominently involved in this putsch, the leading role was played by the Soviet Union. Mr. Stalin believed that he could obtain, via a revolutionary movement, against our will what I had refused Mr. Molotov on the occasion of his visit to Berlin. Without paying heed to the concluded treaties, the Bolshevik rulers expanded their goals. The friendship pact with the new revolutionary regime revealed like lightning the closeness of the danger.

What the German Wehrmacht accomplished in this campaign was honored by the German Reichstag on May 4, 1941. What I was regrettably unable to express at the time was the realization that we were heading at breakneck speed

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toward a confrontation with a state that did not intervene at the time of the campaign in the Balkans only because its concentration of troops had not yet been completed and because it had not been able to utilize the airfields because of the thaw which sets in during this season and turns the runways muddy.

My Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

As soon as I became aware, in the year 1940, through information received from the English House of Commons and observations of Russian troop movements along our borders, that there was the possibility of a danger developing to the east of the Reich, I immediately ordered the activation of numerous new panzer, motorized, and infantry divisions. The prerequisites for this were amply fulfilled as regards both personnel and materiel. I can assure you, my Deputies, and the entire German Volk of one thing: even if they do understandably talk about armament a lot in the democracies, we nevertheless work far more in National Socialist Germany. It was this way in the past, and it is no different today. Every year will find us with more and, above all, with improved weapons where decisions are made.

In spite of seeing the necessity of under no circumstances offering the enemy the possibility of delivering the first strike at our heart, the decision was nonetheless very difficult in this case. If the authors of articles in our democratic newspapers today claim that, realizing the strength of the Bolshevik enemy, I decided to attack, then they misjudge both the situation and my mind. I was not looking for a war. On the contrary, I did everything to avoid it. However, I would have been derelict in my duties and irresponsible, had I failed to act on the possible consequences in spite of realizing the inevitability of the clash of arms. Since I regarded the Soviet Union as a deadly danger not only to the German Reich but also to all of Europe, I was determined, if possible, to give the sign to attack a few days before this confrontation broke out. Today, we have truly crushing and authentic material⁵⁵⁵ to prove that Russia intended to attack. Likewise, we are aware of the time chosen for the attack. In view of the great danger, the full extent of which we realize perhaps only today, I can only thank the Lord for enlightening me at the right moment and giving me the strength to do what had to be done. Not only millions of German soldiers owe their life to Him, but so does all of Europe.

Because—I can say this today—had this wave of more than twenty thousand [Soviet] tanks, hundreds of divisions, tens of thousands of guns, accompanied by more than ten thousand planes, unexpectedly started to move across the Reich, then Europe would have been lost. Fate has chosen a number of nations to risk their blood in order to prevent this blow, or rather to parry it. Had Finland not been immediately determined to take up arms a second time, then the easy middle-class way of life in the other Nordic states would quickly have come to an end.

Had the German Reich not confronted this enemy with its soldiers and arms, then a wave would have swept over Europe that would have taken care of the ridiculous British idea of the balance of power in Europe in all its banality and stupid tradition—once and for all.

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Had not Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians also taken on the defense of this European world, then the Bolshevik hordes, like Attila's gangs of Huns, would have roared across the Danubian lands and then today Tartars and Mongols would stand at the Ionian Sea, forcing a revision of the treaty of Montreux. Had not Italy, Spain, and Croatia sent their divisions, then the resistance of the European front would not have developed, which, as the proclamation of a new Europe, has won over all other nations. With this anticipation, they came as volunteers from northern and western Europe: Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, Flemish, Belgians, even Frenchmen. They gave the struggle of the powers allied to the Axis the character of a European crusade, in the true sense of the word.⁵⁵⁶

It is not yet the right time to speak about the planning and conduct of this campaign. Alas, I believe that I can now already point out, in a few sentences, what has been accomplished in this mightiest struggle of all time, in which the impressions are all too often blurry and fade in our memories because of the vastness of the space and the multitude and power of the events.

Again "in a few sentences," Hitler now gave a highly detailed account of the events in question:

On June 22, the attack began at daybreak. With irresistible daring, the border fortifications were broken down, fortifications which had been intended to protect against surprise from the Russian concentration against us. Grodno fell as early as June 22. After the conquest of Brest-Litovsk on June 23, the citadel was overwhelmed, and Vilnius and Kaunas [Kovno] were taken. On June 26, Daugavpils fell.

On July 10, the first two great battles of encirclement at Belostok (Bialyostok) and Minsk were concluded. A total of three hundred twenty-four thousand prisoners, thirty-three hundred and thirty-two tanks, eighteen hundred and nine guns fell into our hands. By July 13, there already was a breakthrough at almost all the decisive points of the Stalin Line. On July 16, Smolensk fell after heavy fighting, while, on July 19, German and Romanian units forced the crossing of the Dniester.

On August 6, the battle of Smolensk ended in many pockets. Again three hundred ten thousand Russians marched into German captivity, while thirty-two hundred and five tanks and thirty-one hundred twenty guns were partly destroyed, partly taken as booty. And three days later, a further Russian army group met its fate. On August 9, a hundred three thousand Soviets were taken prisoner in the battle of Uman, three hundred seventeen tanks and eleven hundred guns were either destroyed or captured.

On August 15, Nikolayev fell. On the 21st, Kherson was taken. On the same day, the battle near Gomel ended; eighty-four thousand prisoners, a hundred forty-four tanks, and eight hundred forty-eight guns were captured or destroyed.

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On August 21, Russian positions between the Ilmen and Chudskoye lakes were broken up, while, on August 26, the bridgehead across the Dnieper around Dnepropetrovsk fell into our hands.

On the 28th of the same month, German troops moved into Reval [Tallinn] and Baltic Port [*sic*] after heavy fighting, while the Finns took Vyborg on August 30. With the conquest of Schlüsselburg on September 8, Petersburg [Leningrad] was also sealed off to the south for good.

On September 16, we succeeded in establishing bridgeheads across the Dnieper. As early as September 18, Poltava fell into the hands of our soldiers. On September 19, German units stormed the citadel of Kiev. And, on September 22, the conquest of Oesel [Saaremaa] was crowned by the taking of the capital.

It was only now that the bigger operations began to bear fruit in unexpected successes. On September 27, the battle at Kiev was concluded. Six hundred sixty-five thousand prisoners began to move westward in endless columns; eight hundred eighty-four tanks and thirty-one hundred seventy-eight guns remained behind in the pockets as booty. As early as October 2, a breakthrough battle began at the center of the eastern front, while, on October 11, the battle at the Sea of Azov ended in victory. Again, a hundred seven thousand prisoners, two hundred twelve tanks, and six hundred seventy-two guns were counted. On October 16, after a hard battle, German and Romanian units entered Odessa. On October 18, the breakthrough battle at the center of the front, which had begun on October 2, ended in a new success, unique in world history. The result was six hundred sixty-three thousand prisoners, twelve hundred forty-two tanks, and fifty-four hundred fifty-two guns destroyed or captured. On October 21, the conquest of Dagö (Hiiumaa) was completed. On October 24, the industrial center Kharkov was taken. On October 28, after hard fighting, a gateway to the Crimea was forced open. As early as November 2, the capital Simferopol was stormed. On November 16, the Crimean Peninsula was cut through at Kerch. On December 1, the total number of captured Soviets stood at three million eight hundred six thousand eight hundred sixty-five. The number of destroyed or captured tanks was twenty-one thousand three hundred ninety-one, the number of guns thirty-two thousand five hundred forty-one, and the number of planes fourteen thousand three hundred twenty-two.

In the same period, twenty-one hundred ninety-one British planes were downed. The navy sank four million one hundred seventy thousand six hundred eleven GRT (gross register tons), while the Luftwaffe sank two million three hundred forty-six thousand one hundred eighty GRT. Altogether, six million five hundred sixteen thousand seven hundred ninety-one GRT were destroyed.

My Deputies! My German Volk! These are sober facts and perhaps dry figures. May they never fade from the history and, above all, from the conscience and memory of our own German Volk. For behind these figures are hidden the accomplishments, the sacrifices, the privations, the heroism, and the

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readiness to die of millions of the best men of our own Volk and of the allied states.

All this had to be fought for at the risk of life and limb, and with efforts of which the homeland has hardly any idea.

Marching endless distances, tortured by heat and thirst, often driven to despair by muddy roads, at the mercy of the rigors of the climate from the White to the Black Sea, from the scorching heat of the days of July and August to the winter storms of November and December, tormented by insects, suffering from the dirt and the bugs, freezing in the snow and ice: that is how the Germans fought, and the Finns, the Italians, the Slovaks, the Hungarians and Romanians, the Croats, the volunteers from the northern and western European countries; all the soldiers of the eastern front.

I do not want to name any branch of the service today, I do not want to praise any leader: they all gave their best. And yet, insight and justice compel me to state one thing: of all our German soldiers, our unique infantry bears the greatest burden of the battle in this struggle, today as well as in former times.

From June 22 to December 1, the German Army lost in this heroic struggle: a hundred fifty-eight thousand seven hundred seventy-three dead, five hundred sixty-three thousand eighty-two wounded, and thirty-one thousand one hundred ninety-one missing in action. The Luftwaffe: thirty-two hundred thirty-one dead, eighty-four hundred fifty-three wounded, and two thousand twenty-eight missing in action. The Navy: three hundred ten dead, two hundred thirty-two wounded, and a hundred fifteen missing in action. Therefore, the Wehrmacht together had one hundred sixty-two thousand three hundred fourteen dead, five hundred seventy-one thousand seven hundred sixty-seven wounded, and thirty-three thousand three hundred thirty-four missing in action.⁵⁵⁷

That is a little more than twice the number of dead and wounded in the battle of the Somme in the World War, and a little less than half the number of missing at the time, and yet they are the fathers and sons of our German Volk.⁵⁵⁸

And now let me make my case before the outside world, which is represented by a man who, while other nations and soldiers are fighting in the snow and ice, tactfully chats by the fireside⁵⁵⁹ and therefore, is the principal in this war. When, in the year 1939, the situation of the nationalities in the former Polish state seemed to become increasingly unbearable, I first attempted to eliminate the intolerable circumstances by means of a fair settlement. For some time, it appeared as though the Polish government itself was seriously considering accepting a reasonable solution. I may add here that all these proposals contained no demands by Germany for anything that had not formerly been in Germany's possession. On the contrary, we renounced many things that had belonged to Germany before the World War.

You will remember the dramatic events of this time: the persistently increasing sacrifices by the German ethnic group. My Deputies, you are in the best position to judge the severity of this sacrifice of blood by comparing it to the sacrifices of the present war. For the campaign in the east up to now has

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cost the entire German Wehrmacht about a hundred sixty thousand dead, while, in the midst of peace, over sixty-two thousand ethnic Germans were killed within a few months at the time, some of them killed after the cruelest tortures.⁵⁶⁰ That the German Reich had the right to complain about this state of affairs at its border and to urge its elimination, and, in general, to attend to its security, can hardly be denied at a time when other countries seek elements of their security even on foreign continents. The problems that were to be corrected were insignificant in terms of territory. Essentially, it was a question of Danzig and connecting the severed province East Prussia to the rest of the Reich. By contrast, the cruel persecution of the Germans especially in Poland weighed heavier. The other minorities there also endured a no less terrible fate.

As the attitude of Poland became ever more stubborn during the days of August, thanks to the *carte blanche* provided by the English guarantee, the German Reich government felt compelled, for the last time, to make proposals, based on which it was willing to enter into negotiations with Poland and of which it orally informed the English ambassador at the time.

Allow me to retrieve these proposals from oblivion today and to remind you of them.

Going into great detail, Hitler now repeated the proposals he had made on the settlement of the problem of Danzig and the Corridor in order to use them as an "alibi." He went on:

Meanwhile, insight into the papers at the foreign office in Warsaw later provided all of us with a surprising explanation: A man with devilish recklessness employed his entire influence in order to strengthen Poland in its resistance and to eliminate any possibility of an understanding.

The reports that the Polish envoy in Washington at the time, Count Potocki, sent his government in Warsaw are documents that make frightfully clear how much a single man and the forces driving him bear responsibility for the Second World War.

The question poses itself, for what reason was this man so fanatically hostile toward a country that up to now has never in its history harmed either America or this man? Insofar as this regards Germany's attitude to America, the following can be said:

1. Germany is perhaps the only great power that has never possessed colonies on the north and south American continents or has become politically active there in any other respect, with the exception of the emigration of millions of Germans and their work, from which the American continent, especially the United States, has only benefited.

2. The German Reich has never in the entire history of the development and existence of the United States assumed a politically adverse or even hostile attitude to it. On the contrary, through the blood of many of its sons, it has helped to defend the United States.

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3. The German Reich has never participated in a war against the United States while, in the year 1917, it was invaded by the United States for reasons that have been revealed completely by a committee that the current President Roosevelt had himself formed in order to examine this question.

It was this investigative committee for the examination of the reasons behind the American entry into the war that clearly stated that the American entry into the war in 1917 was due to the capitalist interests of a few small groups, and that Germany had no intention of coming into conflict with America.

Beyond this, there is likewise no antagonism between the German and the American people, either territorial or political in nature, that could somehow interfere with the interests or the existence of the United States. There has always been a difference in the form of government. However, this cannot be regarded as the cause of animosity in the life of nations, as long as one form of government does not try, outside its natural sphere, to intervene in others.

America is a republic led by a president with great authoritarian powers. Germany was once a monarchy with limited authority, later a democracy without any authority at all, and today it is a republic with great authority. There is an ocean between the two states. The differences between capitalist America and Bolshevik Russia, if there is any truth to these terms at all, must be considerably greater than the differences between an America led by a president and a Germany led by a Führer.⁵⁶¹

However, it is a fact that the two historic conflicts between Germany and the United States, while inspired by the same force, were fanned by two men in the United States of America, namely, President Wilson and President Franklin Roosevelt. History itself passed a verdict on Wilson. His name remains tied to the vilest breach of promise of all time. The consequences of this breach of promise disrupted the life not only of the vanquished, but also of the victors. The Diktat of Versailles, which was made possible only by this breach of promise, tore states apart, destroyed cultures, and ruined the economy.

Today, we know that an association of interested financiers stood behind Wilson. They used the paralytic professor in order to lead America into a war which they hoped would be good business for them. The German Volk had to pay for that with the collapse of its political and economic life.

For what reason is it that, after these bitter experiences, another president of the United States sees as his only mission allowing wars to develop and, above all, increasing the animosity against Germany to the point of war breaking out?

National Socialism came to power in Germany in the same year in which Roosevelt was elected president of the United States. It is now important to examine those elements that have to be regarded as the cause of the present development. First, the personal aspects:

I understand only too well that the philosophy of life and the attitude of President Roosevelt and my own are worlds apart.

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Roosevelt comes from a family rolling in money. From the start, he belonged to that class of men for whom birth and descent pave the way and secure success in life in the democracies.

I myself was the child of a small poor family. With unspeakable effort, I had to make my way through work and diligence.

When the World War came, Roosevelt experienced it from where he was in the shadow of Wilson, from the point of view of the profiteer. Therefore, he only knows the pleasant consequences of the confrontation of people and states, reserved for the man who makes deals where others bleed to death.

During this time, I lived my own life on the other, completely opposite, side. I did not belong to the men who make history or deals. I belonged to those who followed orders.

As a common soldier, I labored to do my duty in front of the enemy during these four years. I returned from the war just as poor as I had left for it in the autumn of 1914. I shared the fate of millions of others. Mr. Roosevelt shared the fate of the so-called upper ten thousand. While, after the war, Mr. Roosevelt tried his hand at financial speculations in order to benefit personally from the inflation, that is, the diligence of others, I was still lying in the military hospital like hundreds of thousands of other men.

And while Mr. Roosevelt finally set out to pursue the career of a normal politician, who is experienced in business, has economic backing, and is protected by his birth, I fought as a nameless and unknown man for the resurrection of my Volk, a people which had just suffered the greatest injustice in its history.

The course of the two lives! When Franklin Roosevelt became the head of the United States, he was the candidate of a thoroughly capitalist party, which used him. When I became the chancellor of the German Reich, I was the Führer of a popular movement which I myself had created.

The forces that drove Mr. Roosevelt were forces that I fought, for the fate of my Volk and my sacred inner beliefs. The "brain trust" that the new American president had to rely on consisted of members of the same people that we once fought in Germany as a parasitic phenomenon of mankind, and which we had begun to remove from public life.

But still we had something in common: Franklin Roosevelt took over a state with an economy dilapidated due to democratic influences, and I headed a Reich likewise facing complete ruin thanks to democracy.

The United States had thirteen million unemployed, while Germany had seven million, along with another seven million part-time workers. In both states, public finances were in ruins and the decline of economic life in general appeared inevitable.

At this moment, a development set in in the United States and in the German Reich that will make it easy for posterity to pass a final judgment on the correctness of the theories. While the German Reich, under its National Socialist leadership, experienced an enormous improvement of life within a few years, as regards the economy, culture, art, and so on, President Roosevelt did not manage to bring about even the smallest improvements in his own country.

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However, how much easier must this work have been in the United States, where barely fifteen persons live on one square kilometer compared to the one hundred forty in Germany. If it was not possible to bring about a flourishing of the economy in this country, then this was either due to the lack of will on the part of the ruling leadership or the total incompetence of the responsible persons.

Within barely five years, the economic problems in Germany were solved and unemployment eliminated. During this time, President Roosevelt increased the national debt of his country to enormous proportions, devalued the dollar, continued to ruin the economy, and maintained unemployment.

That was not surprising, if you consider that the spirits which this man had called on to support him, or rather who had called on him, belonged to those elements which, as Jews, always have an interest in ruin and never in order.

While we fought speculation in National Socialist Germany, it experienced an astounding boom during the Roosevelt era. The New Deal legislation of this man was wrong. Therefore, it was the greatest setback that a single man ever suffered. There is no doubt that, in peacetime, a continuation of this economic policy would have meant the fall of this president sooner or later, in spite of his dialectical talents.

In European states, he would surely have met his end before the supreme court, because of the willful waste of national wealth. In front of a civil court, he would hardly have escaped being found guilty of bad business practices and he would have ended up in jail.

Many distinguished Americans agree with this assessment or, rather, realization. A threatening opposition hangs over the head of this man. It made him realize that only a diversion of the public's attention from domestic to foreign policy could save him. In this respect, it is interesting to study the reports from Washington by the Polish Envoy Potocki. He points out time and again that Roosevelt was quite aware of the danger of a collapse of his entire economic house of cards and that, in any event, he therefore needed a foreign policy diversion.

He was reinforced in this by the circle of Jews surrounding him, steeped in the greed of the Old Testament, who saw the United States as an instrument for preparing a second Purim⁵⁶² for the increasingly anti-Semitic European nations. It was the sheer, satanic malice of the Jews who gathered about this man but for whom this man also reached out. And so the influence of the president increasingly became felt in the creation of new conflicts and in the deepening of existing conflicts, and, in any case, in the prevention of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. For many years, this man has had only one wish: that a dispute might arise somewhere in the world—in Europe, if possible—which would allow him to bring about an intertwining of political interests, based on the obligations of the American economy to one of the disputants, and which would be suited to drawing America slowly into such a conflict. In this way, he might be able to divert attention from his confused economic policy at home to events abroad.

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This made his procedure against the German Reich become especially brusque. From the year 1937 on, there has been a series of speeches—among them an especially vile one in Chicago on October 5, 1937—in which, according to plan, this man began to agitate the American public against Germany. He threatened the establishment of a type of quarantine against the so-called authoritarian states.

In the course of this continuously augmented campaign of hatred and agitation by President Roosevelt, he recalled the American ambassador in Berlin to Washington, following renewed insulting declarations. Ever since, both states have been represented only by a *chargé d'affaires*.⁵⁶³

From November 1938 on, he consciously began to sabotage, according to plan, all possibilities for a policy of European pacification. Externally, he hypocritically pretended to have an interest in peace, while threatening every state ready to pursue a policy of peaceful settlement with the freezing of loans, other economic acts of retaliation, the cancelation of credits, and so on. Here the reports of the Polish ambassadors in Washington, London, Paris, and Brussels give shocking insights.

In January 1939, this man began to reinforce his campaign of hatred. In front of Congress, he threatened to take all steps short of war against the authoritarian states.

While he always maintains that other states are seeking to interfere in American affairs and insists on adherence to the Monroe Doctrine, he began, from March 1939 on, meddling in intra-European affairs, which are none of the business of the president of the United States. First, he does not understand these problems. Second, even if he understood them and the historical course of events, he would likewise have no right to concern himself with the Central European area, just as the German head of state has no right to judge the situation in a state of the United States of America or to comment on it.

Yes, Mr. Roosevelt went further still. Contrary to all the provisions of international law, he declared that he would not recognize governments that were not to his liking, that he would not accept any new order, would not dismiss missions from long-dissolved states, which he instead put in place as legal regimes. Finally, he went so far as to conclude treaties with such envoys, which gave him the right to occupy foreign territories.

This was followed, on April 15, 1939, by Roosevelt's famous appeal to me and the Duce.⁵⁶⁴ It represented a mixture of political and geographic ignorance on the one hand, coupled with the arrogance of a member of certain circles of millionaires on the other. It demanded that we give declarations and conclude treaties of nonaggression with any named states, to a great extent states that were not free, because the allies of Mr. Roosevelt had either annexed them or transformed them into protectorates. You remember, my Deputies, that I gave this impertinent gentleman a response that was as polite as it was definite, and which stopped the torrent of words from this worthy warmonger for a few months at least.

He was replaced by his dear wife.⁵⁶⁵ She did not want to live with her sons in a world like the one we have today. Understandably so, because this is a

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world of work, and not a world of fraud and manipulation. After a short convalescence, the husband of this woman got an amendment of the law on neutrality passed on November 4, 1939, which lifted the ban on weapon export and led to a unilateral supply of arms to Germany's enemies.

As in East Asia with China, he then began by means of an economic net to establish a community of interests which would become effective sooner or later. In the same month, he recognized a bunch of Polish emigrants as the so-called government-in-exile, whose political foundation consisted in a few million Polish gold coins that they had brought from Warsaw. On April 9, the story continues. He ordered the freezing of Norwegian and Danish funds, under the mendacious pretext of preventing German access to them, although he knew that, for example, Germany does not pay attention to the Danish government's administration of property, not to mention control it.

In addition to the various governments-in-exile, the Norwegian one received recognition, too. As early as May 15, 1940, the Dutch and the Belgian emigré governments were added to this. Likewise, Dutch and Belgian funds were frozen. The true sentiments of this man were revealed in a telegram to the French Premier Reynaud on June 15. He informed him that the American government would double its assistance to France, provided that France continued the war against Germany. In order to emphasize this desire for a prolongation of the war, he declared that the American government would not recognize the results of the conquest, that is, the reclaiming of the areas Germany was once robbed of.

I need not assure you that it does not matter to any German government whether the President of the United States recognizes a border in Europe or not, and that it will not matter in the future either.

I cite this case only to make clear the nature of this man's planned campaign to simulate peace while eternally agitating for war. Because now he begins to fear that, if peace is achieved in Europe, the millions wasted on his armament will shortly be recognized as pure fraud, for nobody will attack America unless the Americans provoke the attack!

On June 17, 1940, the president of the United States decreed French funds frozen in order, as he put it, to prevent German access to them. In fact, with the help of an American cruiser, the gold was removed from Casablanca to America.

From July 1940 on, Roosevelt's measures increasingly aimed for war, ranging from American citizens joining the Royal Air Force to English crews being trained in the United States. And, in August 1940, the United States and Canada established a military program together. In order to make the formation of an American-Canadian committee for defense appear plausible to even the biggest blockheads, he invented a crisis from time to time. Then, he acted as though America were threatened by an attack. And he got his followers—they are truly pitiful—to believe this by interrupting his travels and rushing back to Washington in order to underline the gravity of the situation.

In September 1940, he drew still closer to war. He transferred fifty destroyers from the American fleet to the English fleet, in return for which,

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however, he took over military bases in the British possessions in northern and central America. Only posterity will be able to determine one thing clearly: whether he, along with all this hatred against socialist Germany, intended to take over the British empire in its hour of disintegration as safely and with as few risks as possible?

Now that England was no longer able to pay cash for American deliveries, he forced the Lend-Lease Act on the American people. As the president, he now had the power to lend and lease in support of those countries whose defense appeared to him—Roosevelt—to be vital to the defense of America. Again in March 1940, since Germany could not be moved under any circumstances to react to his persistent insults, he went yet a step further.

As early as December 19, 1939, American cruisers inside the security zone drove the German steamer *Columbus* into the hands of British warships. Because of this, it had to be scuttled. On the same day, United States forces played a part in the attempt to capture the German steamer *Arauca*. On January 27, 1940, the United States cruiser *Trenton* informed enemy naval forces, in violation of international law, of the movements of the German merchant steamers *Arauca*, *La Plata*, and *Wangoni*. On June 27, 1940, again in complete violation of international law, he ordered a restriction of the freedom of movement of foreign merchant ships in American ports.

In November 1940, he had the German steamers *Phrygia*, *Darwald*, and *Rhein* pursued by United States warships until these steamers were scuttled to avoid falling into the enemy's hands. On April 13, 1941, the opening of the Red Sea to traffic followed, which enabled United States ships to supply British armies in the Near East. In the meantime, American public authorities had confiscated German ships in the month of March. Citizens of the German Reich were treated in a disgraceful manner and, in violation of international law, certain places of residence were assigned to them, travel restrictions imposed on them, and so on.

Likewise in violation of all stipulations of international law, two German officers who had escaped Canadian captivity were arrested and extradited to Canada. On March 27, the same president, who is opposed to all aggression, welcomed that clique of putschists under Simovich and his comrades who usurped power through aggression in Belgrade by overthrowing the legitimate government. Many months before, this President Roosevelt had sent Colonel Donovan, a completely inferior individual, to the Balkans to attempt on his behalf to bring about a rebellion in Sofia and Belgrade directed against Germany and Italy.

In April, he promised assistance based on the Lend-Lease Act to Yugoslavia and Greece. In late April, this man recognized Yugoslav and Greek emigrants as governments-in-exile and, again in violation of international law, he froze Yugoslav and Greek funds. From mid-April on, surveillance of the western Atlantic was extended to include United States patrols and reports to the English.

On April 26, Roosevelt delivered twenty motor torpedo-boats and, at the same time, repair work on British warships continued in United States ports.

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On May 12, in violation of international law, Norwegian steamers, sailing under English flag, were armed and repaired. On June 4, American troop carriers arrived in Greenland for the construction of airfields. On June 9, there was a first English report that, on the orders of President Roosevelt, a United States warship had fired depth charges at a German U-boat off Greenland.

On June 14, again in violation of international law, German funds in the United States were frozen. On June 17, under mendacious pretexts, President Roosevelt demanded the recall of German consuls and the closing of German consulates. He further demanded the shutting down of the German press agency Transocean, the German library of information, and the German Reichsbahn center. From July 6 to 7, on the orders of Roosevelt, American forces occupied Iceland, which lay inside the German combat zone. Thereby, he hoped for certain results:

1. to force war on Germany,
2. to render German submarine warfare as useless as it had been in the years 1915-1916.

At the same time, he sent an American promise of assistance to the Soviet Union. On July 10, Secretary of the Navy Knox⁵⁶⁶ suddenly announced that the United States had orders to fire on the Axis powers. On September 4, based on this order and together with English planes, the United States destroyer *Greer* operated against German submarines in the Atlantic. Five days later, a German submarine noticed United States destroyers serving as escort vessels in an English convoy. On September 11, Roosevelt finally delivered the speech in which he confirmed and reissued the order to fire on ships of the Axis.⁵⁶⁷ On September 29, the United States Coast Guard attacked a German U-boat east of Greenland with depth charges. On October 17, the United States destroyer *Kearny*, in convoy for England, again attacked a German submarine with depth charges. Finally on November 6, in violation of international law, United States forces captured the German steamer *Odenwald*, towed it into an American harbor, and arrested the crew.

I shall pass over as trivial the insulting attacks and affronts by this so-called president against my person. That he calls me a gangster is of all the less consequence, as this term did not originate in Europe, perhaps because it lacks appropriate subjects here, but instead originated in the United States of America.

Apart from this, I cannot be insulted by Mr. Roosevelt, because I think that he is mentally ill, just as I thought Woodrow Wilson once was. We are aware that this man and his Jewish following fight Japan by the same means. I do not need to discuss them here. Here, too, the same methods were employed. First, this man agitates for war, then falsifies the causes, makes arbitrary declarations, later disgustingly hides behind a cloud of Christian hypocrisy. Slowly but surely, he leads mankind toward war. As an old Freemason, he cannot do so without calling God as a witness for the integrity of his actions.

I think that all of you felt relieved that now finally one state has protested, as the first, against this historically unique and brazen abuse of truth and law. This man asked for it and, therefore, he should not be surprised by it. It fills all

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of us—the German Volk and, I think, all decent people of the world—with profound satisfaction that the Japanese government, after negotiating with this falsifier for years, has finally had enough of being derided in so dishonorable a manner.

We know what force stands behind Roosevelt. It is the eternal Jew. He thinks that the time has come to force on us something that made us shudder in the Soviet Union. We know the Jewish paradise on earth. Millions of German soldiers gained personal insights into a country where this international Jew has destroyed man and property. Perhaps, the president of the United States himself has failed to understand this. This speaks for his mental limitations.

But we know what the goal of his struggle is: even if we were not allied to Japan, we would realize that it is the intention of the Jews and their Franklin Roosevelt to destroy one state after another. Today's German Reich has, however, nothing in common with the former Germany. For our part, we shall now do what this troublemaker has tried to get us to do for years. Not only because we are Japan's ally, but also because the present leaders of Germany and Italy understand that, in this historic time, the existence or nonexistence of nations is being determined, perhaps forever. It is clear to us what this other world plans to do with us. They made the former democratic Germany starve, and they would exterminate the National Socialist Germany of today.

If Mr. Churchill or Mr. Roosevelt now declare that they wish to establish a new social order later, then this is tantamount to a bald hairdresser recommending his unflinching hair restorer. These gentlemen, who live in socially retarded states, should have taken care of their unemployed instead of agitating for war. There is enough need and misery in their countries to keep them occupied with the distribution of foodstuffs. As far as the German Volk is concerned, it does not want handouts from Mr. Churchill or Mr. Roosevelt—it wants its rights. And it will secure these rights to life, even if a thousand Churchills conspire against it. This Volk has a history of nearly two thousand years. Thanks to the National Socialist movement, it has never been as united and unified as it is today and as it will be in the future. Perhaps never before has it been so clear-sighted and rarely so aware of its honor.

I have therefore had passports sent to the American Chargé d' Affaires and had the following announced to him:⁵⁶⁸

In the pursuit of the continuous expansion of the policy by President Roosevelt to establish a dictatorship of unlimited world rule, the United States of America, together with England, has not shied away from employing every means to dispute the foundations for the natural preservation of the German, the Italian, and the Japanese people's life. Because of this, the governments of England and of the United States of America have opposed any justified revision to bring about a better new world order, not only for the present but also for the future.

Since the beginning of the war, the American President Roosevelt has committed more and more crimes against international law. Lawless attacks on ships and other property of German and Italian citizens have been accompanied

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by threats to—yes, and even arbitrary deprivation of—their personal liberty by means of internment, and so on. The attacks by President Roosevelt of the United States have escalated in other respects as well and have led him to order the navy, contrary to the rules of international law, to attack immediately ships of German and Italian nationality, to fire on them, and to sink them. American cabinet secretaries have participated in this in a criminal manner by destroying German U-boats through their campaigns of agitation. German and Italian merchant ships have been attacked by American cruisers, captured, and their peaceable crews imprisoned. Furthermore, without any effort by the American government to deny it publicly, a plan by President Roosevelt was published in America, indicating that he wanted to attack Germany and Italy in Europe by military means, at the latest in the year 1943.

Because of this, Germany and Italy's sincere and patient efforts to prevent an expansion of the war and to maintain relations with the United States in spite of the unbearable provocations by President Roosevelt over the years have been frustrated.

In response to this, Germany and Italy have finally felt obliged to fight together, side by side with Japan, against the United States and England, true to the stipulations of the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940, in the struggle for the defense—and thereby the preservation of the freedom and independence—of their people and empires. The three powers have therefore concluded the following agreement, which was signed today in Berlin:

In the unshakable determination not to lay down their arms until the common war against the United States of America and England has been brought to a victorious end, the German, the Italian, and the Japanese governments have agreed on the following:

Article I

Germany, Italy, and Japan will together fight this war, a war that was forced on them by the United States of America and England, and bring it to a victorious end by deploying all instruments of power at their disposal.

Article II

Germany, Italy, and Japan pledge themselves not to conclude a separate armistice or peace with the United States of America and England without obtaining full mutual consent.

Article III

Germany, Italy, and Japan will continue to cooperate closely, even after the victorious conclusion of the war, as a sign of bringing about a just new order in the spirit of the Tripartite Pact concluded on September 27, 1940.

Article IV

This agreement comes into force upon signature. It will remain in force for the term of the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940. The high contracting parties shall reach an understanding on the nature of the cooperation provided for in Article III of this agreement in a timely fashion prior to the expiration of this term.

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Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

Ever since the rejection of my last peace proposal in July 1940, we have been aware that this war has to be fought to the bitter end. That the Anglo-American, Jewish-capitalist world formed a front with Bolshevism does not come as a surprise to us National Socialists. At home, we found them in the same union, and we succeeded in our struggle at home by defeating our enemies after a sixteen-year-long struggle for power.

When I decided twenty-three years ago to enter politics in order to reverse the decline of the nation, I was a nameless, unknown soldier. Many of you know how difficult the first years of this struggle were. The way from a small movement of seven men to the taking over of responsible government on January 30, 1933, was so miraculous that Providence itself must have made it possible through its blessings.

Today, I head the strongest army in the world, the mightiest air force, and a proud navy. Behind me, I am conscious of the sworn community of the party, which made me great and which became great through me.

The enemies that I confront have been known to be our enemies for over twenty years. Alas, the road that lies ahead of me cannot be compared to the one lying behind me. The German Volk realizes the decisiveness of the hour for its existence. Under the most difficult circumstances, millions of soldiers are obediently and loyally doing their duty.

Peasants, workers, German women and girls work by the sweat of their brows in the factories and offices, in the fields and in farmland, to secure bread for the homeland and weapons for the front. The strong people allied to us suffer the same misery and face the same enemies.

The American President and his plutocratic clique have called us a people of have-nots. That is right! And these have-nots want to live. In any event, they will not allow the owners to rob them of the little that they have to live on. My party comrades, you know my relentless resolve to conclude a struggle victoriously once it has begun. You know my intention not to shy away from anything in such a fight and to break all the resistance that has to be broken.

In my speech on September 1, 1939, I assured you that, in this struggle, neither the force of arms nor time will defeat Germany. I want to assure my enemies that neither will the force of arms nor time defeat us, but neither inner doubts make us falter in the fulfillment of our duty. When we consider the sacrifices of our soldiers, how they risk their lives, then the sacrifices of the homeland become completely insignificant and unimportant. When we think of the numbers of those who, generations before us, fell for the existence and greatness of the German Volk, then we become all the more aware of the greatness of the duty imposed on us.

Whoever seeks to forsake this duty has no right to expect treatment as a Volksgenosse in our midst.

Just as we were mercilessly harsh in our struggle for power, we will be merciless and harsh in our struggle for the preservation of our Volk. Thousands of our best men will fall in its course, the fathers and the sons of our Volk. Therefore, no one can expect to live who thinks that he can depreciate the

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front's sacrifices at home. Irrespective of the form of disguise for this attempt to disrupt this German front, to undermine this Volk's willingness to resist, to weaken the authority of this regime, to sabotage the efforts of the homeland, the offender will fall! There will be only one difference: the soldier honorably makes this sacrifice at the front, while the other, who wishes to depreciate this honorable sacrifice, dies in shame.

Our enemies should not deceive themselves. In the two thousand years of the history known to us, our German Volk has never been more unified and united than it is today. The Lord of the Worlds has done so many great things for us in the last years that we bow in gratitude before Providence, which has permitted us to be members of such a great Volk. We thank Him that, in view of past and future generations of the German Volk, we were also allowed to enter our names honorably in the undying book of German history.

The reaction of the audience to this speech could again be described as "applause on cues, but thin."⁵⁶⁹ Even Göring's customary "pledge of loyalty" seemed hollow. With Hess missing from the bench for the first time, the faces of the other members of the government appeared solemn and pensive.

Naturally, Hitler felt that he had to celebrate the great day on which he declared war on America and entered into a military alliance with Japan by sending out a number of telegrams, for example, to the Italian king, the Duce, the Japanese emperor, and the Japanese prime minister.⁵⁷⁰

To King Victor Emmanuel III:

On the signature of the treaty through which the Axis powers have allied themselves with the Japanese Empire for the combined conduct of the war and for cooperation in the securing of a just new order, I send Your Majesty my sincere regards and, at the same time, heartfelt best wishes for the struggle continuing with the now closely allied arms of the three powers.

To the Duce:

On today's conclusion of the treaty through which the Axis powers and Japan have decided on a united brotherhood-in-arms, I send you, Duce, my heartfelt regards. I know that you agree with me in the conviction that this act represents a guarantee of the combined victory of the three powers.

To the Japanese emperor:

On this significant day, on which the Axis powers have allied themselves with the Japanese Empire in the combined waging of war for a joint victory, I send Your Majesty my sincere regards along with my congratulations on the great victories of the Japanese armed forces up to now, as well as my and the German Volk's best wishes for a victory of Japanese arms.

December 15, 1941

To the Japanese prime minister, Lieutenant General Tojo:

On the occasion of today's conclusion of the agreement between the Axis powers and the Japanese Empire, through which the three powers have allied themselves for a joint struggle, a joint victory, and a joint development in the future, I send Your Excellency my heartfelt congratulations on the highly significant successes of the Japanese arms already achieved and tie to this my warmest wishes for the future course of the now jointly led struggle.

While Hitler had taken the initiative in declaring war on the United States, he soon found on his desk a number of declarations of war from states that maintained relations with the United States. On December 11, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic declared war on Germany. A day later, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and San Salvador followed suit, as did Nicaragua on December 13, the government-in-exile of Czechoslovakia on December 16, and Panama on December 18. In the course of the next three years, nearly all remaining neutral countries in the world followed their example. On the other hand, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, and Italy declared war on the United States.

For the time being, Hitler continued to be triumphant. On December 12, he received the leader of the Dutch Fascists, Mussert, at the Reich Chancellery. Seyss-Inquart accompanied the guest.⁵⁷¹

Also on December 12, Hitler conferred with Raeder on what would be the appropriate action for the navy to take against the new enemy, the United States.⁵⁷² They decided to move six large U-boats to the American East Coast. But the cheap entertainment of firing at American cities, where windows had not yet been blacked out, would soon cease!

At noon on December 13, Hitler received the Japanese ambassador, General Oshima, at the Reich Chancellery. In the course of the "special audience," Hitler presented him with the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold in recognition of his contribution to the Tripartite Pact.⁵⁷³

That night in Berlin, Reich Minister Kerrl died "suddenly as the result of a heart attack." Hitler ordered a state funeral as usual.⁵⁷⁴

In Vienna on December 14, a memorial service was held for the deceased Field Marshal Böhm-Ermolli. Keitel placed a wreath on behalf of the Führer.⁵⁷⁵

On December 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the former Finnish state president, von Svinhufvud, on his eightieth birthday.⁵⁷⁶

December 17, 1941

On December 16, the state ceremony in honor of Hanns Kerrl took place in the Marble Hall of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler had preferred going to his headquarters to attending. Göring had to deliver the address and lay a “wreath from the Führer.”⁵⁷⁷

On December 17, Brauchitsch presented another letter of resignation. Hitler relieved him on December 19, because of a “heart condition.”

Throughout the world, generals who fail to win battles are normally sent off by their supreme commanders. It was clear that especially a warlord like Hitler would not act otherwise. The Führer concerned himself solely with victories; he was really not the man to look to his own person in investigating the causes for failures and defeats. Rundstedt had been the first man whom he had brought down. Guderian and many others would follow.⁵⁷⁸

However, in Brauchitsch’s case, Hitler pursued another goal, too. He personally wanted to replace him so that the military command would be completely his own, from top to bottom. He had long been vexed by the fact that there was a commander in chief of the army whose name was not Adolf Hitler.

He told Halder:⁵⁷⁹

Anyone can do that little bit of operational planning. The mission of the commander in chief of the army is to educate the army in the spirit of National Socialism.⁵⁸⁰ I do not know any army general who would be able to fulfill this mission in accordance with my wishes. Therefore, I have decided to take over the high command of the army myself.

As mentioned before, this was the typical manner in which Hitler went about solving a crisis, namely, by either dissolving the post or taking it over himself: in 1930, it was the supreme commander of the SA (Oberster SA Führer, OSAF—the Pfeffer crisis); in 1932, it was the head of political organization (Reichsorganisationsleiter—the Strasser crisis); in 1938, it was the Reich war minister (the Blomberg crisis); in 1941, it was the office of “Deputy Führer” (the Hess crisis); and now, he took over the post of commander in chief of the army (the Brauchitsch crisis).

He did not shy away in the least from describing publicly the change in the chain of command as a “logical consequence,” even though this had a disastrous effect on German and international public opinion. The measure not only created the impression that the German armies on the eastern front were in a critical position, but also convinced the general public that the army itself was undergoing a severe internal crisis.

December 19, 1941

Hitler's proclamation on the change in the high command contained a general section in which he reported on his own activities, so to speak, and another section that consisted of a proclamation to the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS. The announcement read as follows:⁵⁸¹

Führer Headquarters, December 19, 1941

When the Führer personally took over the supreme command of the entire Wehrmacht on February 4, 1938, he did so out of concern about the military confrontation over the freedom of the German Volk, which already threatened us at that time.⁵⁸² The *raison d'état* authoritatively demanded the concentration of all forces in one hand. Only in this manner was it possible to prepare for a successful resistance. We knew that it would lead to a "total war" and far more so than the one forced on the German Volk by the same enemies in the World War from 1914-1918. Besides this, the awareness of an inner calling and his own will to take on the responsibility influenced the statesman Adolf Hitler in making the decision to become his own military commander.

In the course of this war, the correctness of this realization has been confirmed again and again, but it was not until the campaign in the east that the war took on proportions that boggled all imagination. The vastness of the theater of war, the close intertwining of the operational conduct of the war on land with the goals pursued by politics and the war economy, as well as the numerical size of the army in comparison to the other branches of the Wehrmacht, urged the Führer, following his intuition, to reserve for his person all crucial decisions in this sphere in order to exercise the strongest influence possible. As a logical⁵⁸³ consequence of his decision of February 4, 1938, and in full appreciation of the accomplishments of the former commander in chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, the Führer therefore decided on December 19, 1941, to unite in his hand the leadership of the entire Wehrmacht with the high command of the army. On this occasion, he has issued the following appeal to the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS:

Soldiers of the Army and the Waffen SS!

The struggle for the freedom of our Volk, to secure the basis for its existence in the future, and for the elimination of the possibility of an invasion every twenty or twenty-five years, which has basically always been there due to the same Jewish-capitalist interests, is now heading for a climax—a turning point.

The German Reich and Italy, as well as the states allied to us, have been equally fortunate in finding a new friend and comrade in arms in the world power Japan. It was to be strangled under the same pretexts and with the same consequences as we were. With the lightning destruction of the American fleet in the Pacific as well as of the British forces in Singapore, and the Japanese armed forces' occupation of English and American bases in East Asia, this war now enters a new and, for us, advantageous phase.

Thus, we also face decisions of global importance now. Because of the impact of the sudden onset of winter, the armies in the east, following their

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undying and historic successes against the most dangerous enemy of all time, must now halt movement and deploy in a front of positions. Until spring, it is their mission to hold zealously and doggedly and to defend what they have secured in battle with immeasurable heroism and difficult sacrifices. Nothing more is expected of the new eastern front than German soldiers accomplished twenty-five years ago in four war winters in Russia.⁵⁸⁴ Every German soldier must set an example for our loyal allies.

In addition, new units are being established as last winter and, above all, new and improved weapons are being supplied. The defense of the front in the west is being reinforced from Kirkenes to the Spanish border. The difficulties in organizing a linkup of this front, which today spans a whole continent and reaches to North Africa, must be overcome—we will succeed in this, too. Preparations to resume the offensive as soon as spring is here, which will last until the final defeat of the enemy in the east, must be made right now. Other decisive war measures are soon to be taken. These tasks necessitate the Wehrmacht and the homeland to make the greatest efforts and to be deployed jointly. However, the principal vehicle of the Wehrmacht's battle is the army.

Under these circumstances, I have therefore decided today, as the supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht, to take charge of the army myself.

Soldiers! I know war from the four years of mighty struggle in the west in 1914–1918. As a common soldier, I experienced the horrors of nearly all great battles of matériel myself. I was wounded twice and almost went blind. Thus, I am no stranger to your torments, your burdens, and your concerns.⁵⁸⁵ Alas, even after four years of war, never for a second did I doubt the resurrection of my Volk. With my zealous will as a common German soldier, I succeeded in uniting the German nation after more than fifteen years of work and in freeing it from the death sentence of Versailles.

My soldiers! So, you will understand that my heart belongs to you, and that my will and my work unerringly serve the greatness of my and your Volk. However, my mind and my strength of purpose know only the destruction of the enemy, that is, the victorious conclusion of this war.

My soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS! I will do for you all I can in terms of care and leadership. I know what you can and will do for me: you will follow me loyally and obediently until the final salvation of the Reich and our German Volk. The Lord will not refuse His brave soldiers the victory!

Adolf Hitler

This announcement certainly was not written very adroitly.⁵⁸⁶

Compared to the vain and bombastic proclamations that Hitler usually issued, this awkward appeal suggested that the German army high command was facing a catastrophe, and, in fact, it did contribute to making the situation of the German army at the eastern front appear worse than it actually was. However, Hitler's main intent was to rationalize his taking command of the army and to point to a

December 23, 1941

supposedly imminent “turning point” in the war, namely how “fortunate” Japan’s entry into the war was for Germany.

Hitler’s appeal of December 20, for a “collecting of winter clothing” for the eastern front, had a similar disastrous effect. It read as follows:⁵⁸⁷

German Volk!

While the German homeland is not directly threatened by the enemy, with the exception of air raids, millions of our soldiers, after a year of the most difficult fighting, confront a numerically and materially far superior enemy at the front. Victories, as never before witnessed in world history, have been secured in battle thanks to the conduct and bravery of officers and men.

The greatest front of all time holds its own and fights from the polar regions to the Black Sea, from the snowfields of Finland to the mountains of the Balkans. And it will do so until the hour of the final destruction of this most dangerous enemy has come again.

If the German Volk wishes to give something to its soldiers at Christmas, then it should give the warmest⁵⁸⁸ clothing that it can do without during the war. In peacetime, all this can easily be replaced.

In spite of all the winter equipment prepared by the leadership of the Wehrmacht and its individual branches, every soldier deserves so much more! The homeland can help here! This will show the soldier at the eastern front that the Volksgemeinschaft for which he is fighting is not an empty phrase in National Socialist Germany.

Adolf Hitler

This appeal conclusively proved that the German soldiers had only insufficient winter equipment. This was not surprising. After all, on October 2, Hitler had announced that he would deal with the enemy in “that last gigantic blow that will crush this enemy before the onset of winter!”⁵⁸⁹ And now this collection of woolen clothing was supposed to help out, in spite of coming too late for this winter, anyway.

In addition to his appeal to the German Volk, Hitler decreed the death sentence for offenders who had stolen any of the winter clothes.⁵⁹⁰ The ordinance for the “protection of the collection of winter clothes for the front” read as follows:

Führer Headquarters, December 23, 1941

The collection of winter clothes for the front represents a sacrifice made by the German Volk for its soldiers. I therefore order the following:

Whoever gets rich on the collected items or items designated for the collection by an authorized person, or whoever otherwise diverts these items from their purpose, will receive the death penalty. This ordinance comes into force upon its announcement on the radio. This ordinance is effective in the

December 26, 1941

Greater German Reich, the General-Government, and in the territories occupied by German troops.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

Even though Hitler was alone responsible for the catastrophic situation at the eastern front, he nevertheless tried to blame indirectly the sacked Brauchitsch by issuing these appeals.

A highlight in these efforts was the following “order of principle,” which Hitler issued out of concern for the “unconditional love of truth” in the Wehrmacht:⁵⁹¹

Führer Headquarters, December 26, 1941

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Order of principle on the system of reporting in the Wehrmacht

1. Every report—irrespective of its nature—is a means of leadership and can initiate decisive resolutions.

2. Every report must therefore be based on the principle of unconditional love of truth and conscientiousness.

3. Every report must be composed in such a manner that the senior officer is provided with a clear picture of the situation or an unequivocal reply to the posed question.

4. Exaggeration and palliation are dangerous. It does honor to every soldier to report truthfully on unfulfilled demands and on his own mistakes.

5. Every superior has the duty to investigate dubious reports and to use his influence, with relentless sternness, to enforce adherence to the above principles. Conversely, subordinates must know that reports will be requested only where necessary.

Adolf Hitler

This proved in black on white that the Wehrmacht had begun to “exaggerate” things and to gloss over unpleasant realities! The good Führer was not receiving “truthful” reports. No one had told him about “unfulfilled demands” and their “own mistakes.” Therefore, it was not surprising if the Führer lost control of the situation and everything which he had in his wisdom planned went wrong. This Brauchitsch must have been quite a nasty fellow. A good thing that the Führer took things into his own hands now.

Hitler truly did not shrink from anything in trying to make himself look good and to disavow others.⁵⁹² However, it had been Hitler who had forbidden any unfavorable reports on the very first day of the war, on September 1, 1939.⁵⁹³

That is how the year 1941 ended, for which Hitler had prophesied “the completion of the greatest victory in world history.”



L Himmler and Heydrich in Munich

Photo: Publisher's archives

THE YEAR 1942

Major Events in Summary

On New Year's Day, Hitler was more cautious in making a forecast for the year 1942 than in previous years. Two years ago, he proclaimed: "May the year 1940 bring us the decision."¹ Then, he had prophesied: "The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history."² Now, he modestly turned to the Almighty: "Let us ask the Lord to allow the year 1942 to bring a decision for the salvation of our Volk and the allied nations."³

For the time being, Hitler wanted to obtain a stabilization of the situation on the eastern front. Russia was on the offensive there, especially in the central sector, where it had forced German troops back by up to a hundred kilometers. In retrospect, many commentators have praised Hitler's genius for preventing a complete debacle there at this time.⁴ In particular, the Führer himself was greatly impressed by the ingenuity of his policy and believed that he had outdone Napoleon in this respect.⁵

However, a comparison of the situation faced by Napoleon's Grande Armée of 1812 with that of the German armies in the winter of 1941–1942 is out of place. There was little similarity, aside from its having been cold in Russia in both instances. Napoleon's Grande Armée was marching in a long column, moving rapidly from east to west in order to reach its supply bases at Smolensk and Vilnius. At times, this army on the march was threatened on its flanks by Russian attacks and, as at the Berezina River, its retreat was hindered by natural barriers.

By contrast, the German troops in 1941–1942 formed a more or less connected front from north to south. The more they retreated westward, the shorter their supply lines became, while the Russians, in pursuing them, extended *their* lines of supply further and further. At this point, they were not yet able to transform their victories into larger envelopments. Their military potential was still partly in the developmental stage. The battle-hardened German troops, however, clung to their positions, irrespective of losses, in accordance with

Hitler's orders. Only when absolutely necessary did they retreat, one step at a time.

To regard Hitler's tactics as ingenious is truly inappropriate. It cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers, who fell or froze to death.⁶ And what was achieved by this? The collapse of the Third Reich was postponed for the time being, but the war was nonetheless lost. In the course of the next three years, millions of German soldiers would either perish or fall into an arduous captivity.

The ruthlessness in sacrificing hundreds of thousands of their own men was one characteristic shared by the warlords of the two Russian campaigns (in 1812 and 1941), while both Napoleon and Hitler paid heed only to their personal safety and comfort.⁷

Hitler's offensive plans for 1942 remained limited in nature. He realized that he would never again be able to risk a push for Moscow, no more than he would be able to threaten England with a landing, as he had in 1940. On the other hand, he believed that a push in the direction of Stalingrad in southern Russia was still possible, as well as one in the direction of the oil fields at Maikop and Grozny and the Caucasus. He planned to pierce southern Russia in order to reach Turkey. This would secure his right flank and enable him to pose a threat to Iran. Perhaps this would then move the English to consider peace.

In the north, he planned a personal visit to Finland, where he would urge Marshal Mannerheim⁸ to move more energetically against Leningrad, which would finally make a linking up with the Finns possible on land.

In the Mediterranean, Hitler wanted to paralyze Malta, but not to conquer it. He would allow Rommel to drive the British back to Egypt, but not to treat them too harshly, as Hitler did not wish to alienate his future "allies" too much.

From a political point of view, Hitler placed great stock in threatening a massacre of the Jews. His forecasts on the imminent collapse of England and Russia had not come true. Who was to blame for this? Surely not he, because his theories of 1919 were right after all! No, the Jews were to blame! Their secret Jewish world government had apparently backed up England and Russia. It had not allowed these states to collapse.

In Hitler's opinion, this left only one alternative: to threaten the annihilation of all Jews within the German sphere of influence. This

would scare the secret Jewish world government so much that it would urge the governments in London, Washington, and Moscow to acquiesce to Hitler's demands in order to save a few million Jews.

The threatened massacre of the Jews was the last trump that Hitler believed he held. On January 30, 1941, he had already alluded to it.⁹ On January 30, 1942, he made additional massive threats.¹⁰ His gamble was completely utopian, since the secret Jewish world government existed only in the minds of Adolf Hitler, Erich and Mathilde Ludendorff, Julius Streicher, and other similarly profound "philosophers."¹¹ The Jews simply had no influence on the political and military decisions of importance made in England, America, and Russia.

If the leaders of these states would regret that Hitler killed the several million Jews at his mercy, they were nevertheless unwilling to change their stance on the elimination of Hitler's regime because of the Jews. Churchill made this clear on June 22, 1941:¹²

"We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing."

Nothing! Not even the threatened massacre of the Jews!

However, Hitler did not believe the "senile" English.¹³ And so, in the year 1942, he felt compelled to go ahead with his monstrous threat. He had millions of Jews—men, women, children, and the elderly—killed, shot, massacred, gassed in the cremation chambers. Nevertheless, he was still unable to profit politically from this unprecedented crime.

In the military field, Hitler also suffered defeat after defeat in the last quarter of 1942. On the night of October 23, the British Eighth Army under General Montgomery¹⁴ launched an offensive at El Alamein, which ultimately led to the complete elimination of the German Africa Corps and the Italian armies. On November 8, American troops under General Eisenhower¹⁵ landed in North Africa and quickly gained possession of Morocco and Algeria. Hitler was forced to send troops to southern France, lest he risk the occupation of this part of Europe by Anglo-American forces.

On November 19 and 20, the Russian generals Vatutin, Rokossovski, and Yeremenko launched a large-scale offensive that led to the encirclement of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

While Hitler suffered painful political defeats abroad in the year 1942, he was able to increase his power at home. Having taken over command of the army in December 1941, he concluded that the time

The Year 1942

had finally come to remove the judges, whom he hated and despised, from their privileged positions and to proclaim himself “Supreme Law Lord.” On April 26, 1942, he put through a resolution of the Greater German Reichstag that granted him the right to dismiss from office judges, civil servants, and officers as he saw fit “without being bound by existing regulations.”

January 1, 1942

Report and Commentary

1

Addressed to the “German Volk, National Socialists, Party Comrades,” Hitler’s New Year’s Proclamation in 1942 was quite lengthy. He reiterated the events leading up to the war, his various “peace proposals,” and so on. He also spoke of his struggle against unemployment and Marxism. He went on as follows:¹⁶

At the end of this year, there is no need for me to enumerate all the events that have overwhelmed us with their spellbinding, unique greatness. When, on June 22, nearly all of Europe stood up, it proved its awareness of the unprecedented magnitude of the danger, the like of which has never before threatened our continent!

Once this coalition had decided on war against Germany, I believed that I owed it to my conscience, the security of the Reich, the preservation of our Volk, and, in a broader sense, to the future of all of Europe, not to lose another hour and, by acting swiftly, to spare the Volk those sacrifices that this inevitable struggle would otherwise have exacted of us to a far greater extent.

The German Volk will believe me when I say that I would have chosen peace over war. Because for me, peace meant a multitude of delightful assignments.¹⁷ What I was able to do for the German Volk in the few years from 1933 to 1939, thanks to Providence and the support of numerous excellent assistants, in terms of culture, education, as well as economic recovery, and, above all, in the social organization of our lives, this can surely one day be compared with what my enemies have done and achieved in the same period.

In the long years of struggle for power, I often regretted that the realization of my plans was spoiled by incidents that were not only relatively unimportant, but also, above all, completely insignificant. I regret this war not only because of the sacrifices that it demands of my German Volk and of other people, but also because of the time it takes away from those who intend to carry out a great social and civilizing work and who want to complete it. After all, what Mr. Roosevelt is capable of achieving, he has proved. What Mr. Churchill has achieved, nobody knows. I can only feel profound regret at what this war will prevent me and the entire National Socialist movement from doing for many years. It is a shame that a person cannot do anything about true bunglers and

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lazy fellows stealing the valuable time that he wanted to dedicate to cultural, social, and economic projects for his Volk.

The same applies to Fascist Italy. There, too, one man has perpetuated his name for all time through a civilizing and national revolution of worldwide dimensions. In the same way it cannot be compared to the democratic-political bungling of the idlers and dividend profiteers, who, in the Anglo-American countries, for instance, spend the wealth accumulated by their fathers or acquire new wealth through shady deals. It is precisely because this young Europe is involved in the resolution of truly great questions that it will not allow the representatives of a group of powers who tactfully call themselves the "have" states to rob them of everything that makes life worth living, namely, the value of one's own people, their freedom, and their social and general human existence. Therefore, we understand that Japan, weary of the everlasting blackmail and impudent threats, has chosen to defend itself against the most infamous warmongers of all time. Now a mighty front of nation-states, reaching from the Channel to East Asia, has taken up the struggle against the international Jewish-capitalist and Bolshevik conspiracy.

The first year of this struggle now lies behind us. It was the year of the greatest victories in the history of man. The accomplishments of the German soldiers and of the soldiers of the allied nations are unique and immortal. The millennia to come will speak of these battles and victories. They will admire them as the greatest self-preserving acts ever undertaken by honorable nations. How great the sacrifices have been, the privations, and the death-defying courage which made these victories possible can truly be appreciated only by a man who has himself served as a soldier and fighter for his Volk—either in this war or in the First World War.

Never will the homeland be able to repay its sons for what they did for it. It only knows the consequences of these victories, that is, the preservation of the security of the nation in spite of the air attacks, its present existence, and the future of its children. It has no idea of what dreadful misfortune would have afflicted Germany, and all of Europe, had Jewish Bolshevism, as the ally of Churchill and Roosevelt, secured the victory. After all, Churchill and Roosevelt turned Europe over to Stalin! And I am speaking now with faith in a higher justice. The Bolshevik monster at whose mercy they wanted to leave the European nations will one day corrupt them and their own people. The Jew will not exterminate the European people, he will instead become the victim of his own plot. Great Britain and the United States of America will not be able to use Bolshevism in destroying Europe. Sooner or later, their own people will become the victims of this plague. With the reckless sacrifice of the blood of the Soviet slaves, the fighting in eastern Europe still goes on, moving up and down the front, only to come finally to a halt. In East Asia, however, it has just begun. While the two blasphemers pray for their deals, the nations are shaking off their shackles.

The coming year will make great demands on us, but the front and the homeland will meet all requirements! As a National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, the homeland will make every sacrifice. If necessary, it will

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make the supreme sacrifice. In the homeland, men and women will work to feed our Volk and to secure and strengthen its armament. At the front, the hour will come when we will step up to finish what we have begun.

At the turn of the year, we can only ask the Almighty to give the German Volk and its soldiers the strength to hold their ground, through hard work and with a brave heart, all that is needed to preserve our freedom and our future.

If together we loyally do our duty, then we will meet the fate that Providence has determined for us. He who fights for the life of his Volk, for its daily bread, and for its future, will win! He who seeks in his Jewish hatred to destroy the people in this war will fall!

Let us ask the Lord to allow the year 1942 to bring about a decision for the salvation of our Volk and the allied nations.

Adolf Hitler

In addition, as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht and as the new commander in chief of the army, Hitler issued an order of the day to the soldiers. He claimed that they had “saved all of Europe.” The order read as follows:¹⁸

Soldiers!

As after the campaign in Poland, I decided also in July 1940, in spite of bitter experiences, to extend my hand for peace to the enemies who had declared war on us on September 3, 1939. My hand was rejected, and my offer was interpreted as a sign of weakness.

The men who had already agitated for the First World War before 1914 felt certain that a new coalition would finally defeat the German Volk and its allied states in the year 1941. They would dissolve them and, at the same time, eliminate them. So we had no choice but to fasten on our helmets and to think about the continuation of the struggle.

The reason that these international warmongers decided not to conclude peace under any circumstances was, besides their economic-capitalist interests, the conviction that they would finally be able to destroy the Reich by means of the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Europe, an entry which had secretly been prepared for the summer of 1941.

Now the year 1941 lies behind us! It was a year of most difficult decisions and extremely bloody battles. However, it will enter history as the year of the greatest victories of all time.

The sons of all German Gaus gloriously fought side by side with the soldiers of our allies in the Balkans, on Crete, in Africa, in the Mediterranean, and in the Atlantic. Since June 22, my Soldiers, you have held your ground in the eastern theater of war, from the regions of the far north to the borders of the Black Sea. You fought battles, the scope and harshness of which taxed you severely, but which, in their successes, are the most glorious military feats in history.

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Through you, my Soldiers, the struggle for existence, which has so often been forced on our Volk, has been crowned by victories far surpassing anything known in the past.

Your bravery, your death-defying courage, your willingness to sacrifice, saved not only our German homeland but, beyond this, all of Europe. We shudder at the sight of the fate that it was spared. Women and children and all other working persons in the homeland can never thank you enough for what you have done for them, my Soldiers of the eastern front.

Ever since June 22, you have seen with your own eyes the type of “paradise” into which the joint conspiracy of Jewish capitalists and Jewish Bolsheviks wished to transform our Germany.

My Soldiers!

As the Führer, the spokesman for millions of members of our Volk, and the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, I thank with all my heart all the brave men for the heroism that they so often demonstrated. I greet you, the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS, especially those on the eastern front, in proud joy of command over that Wehrmacht branch that always and everywhere bears the heaviest burden in battle, and does so here, too.

The entire German homeland looks up to its Wehrmacht with infinite faith. It would like to help every single one of you, as best it can.

All of us, front and Volk together, hold in reverence the comrades who had to seal their love and loyalty for Germany with their deaths. We also think of our fallen allies who fought in our ranks for their countries and for all of Europe.

Soldiers of the Eastern Front!

In countless battles in the year 1941, you not only removed from the Finnish, German, Slovak, Hungarian, and Romanian borders the enemy who was ready to launch an attack, but you also drove him back over a thousand kilometers into his own land. In attempting to bring about a turn of events in the winter of 1941–1942 and to move against us once more, he must and will fail! Yes, on the contrary, in the year 1942, after all the preparations that have been made, we will engage this enemy of mankind anew and do battle with him for as long as it takes to break the destructive will of the Jewish-capitalist and Bolshevik world. Germany will not and cannot be dragged into a new war for its existence or nonexistence by the same criminals every twenty-five years! Europe cannot and will not tear itself to pieces forever, just so that a bunch of Anglo-American and Jewish conspirators can find satisfaction for their business machinations in the dissatisfaction of the people.

It is our hope that the blood that is spilled in this war will be the last in Europe for generations. May the Lord help us with this in the coming year!

Adolf Hitler

At the turn of the year, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini a long letter. Ciano described it as follows:¹⁹

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It is a long summary of how things have gone in Russia; mostly excuses, not explanations. The tone is courteous and vaguely subdued with regard to Italy. Very different from the tone used last year about this time when we had our Albanian problem.

On January 2, an announcement stated that an exchange of telegrams on New Year's Day had taken place between Hitler and "numerous heads of state and government abroad, especially in the allied countries."²⁰ The texts were not published. In general, the tone of the German press in that January was subdued. Hitler appeared to busy himself with the awarding of medals at the Führer headquarters. The press reported on this in great detail. Also the "SS Obergruppenführer, general of the Waffen SS, and commander of the *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (now a panzer corps)," Sepp Dietrich was awarded the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.²¹

On January 8, the state funeral ordered by Hitler for the leader of the war economy and chairman of the Bochum Association, Dr. Walter Borber, took place in Bochum. Reich Economics Minister Frick conveyed the "Führer's last greetings."²²

On January 10, the president of the International Olympic Committee, Count Baillet-Latour, was buried in Brussels. Ritter von Halt laid "a wreath from the Führer."²³

There was no mention in the press on January 12 of the telegram that Hitler customarily sent to Göring on his birthday.

In the winter of 1941–1942, transportation on the eastern front had undoubtedly become a problem. In order to resolve it, on paper at least, Hitler appointed an old acquaintance at Mercedes-Benz, Jakob Werlin, inspector general for motor. The decree reads follows:²⁴

Führer Headquarters, January 16, 1942

It has proved necessary for me to be informed of all transportation questions that are crucial to the conduct of the war to a greater extent than previously—quicker, in more detail, and in a more direct manner—in order to be able to issue the orders necessitated by the war situation immediately or to have them issued. I therefore appoint SS Standartenführer Direktor Jakob Werlin as my inspector general for transportation. The inspector general is directly subordinate to me. He receives directives only from me.

The inspector general is authorized, on the territory of the Greater German Reich, the General-Government, the occupied territories, and in the area of operations to conduct all inspections and to make all decisions that appear to be necessary to him, at all military and civilian offices of the state, offices of the party, and specialized private enterprises. The mentioned offices

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and enterprises are obliged to permit the inspector general to conduct all desired inspections, to facilitate this for him in every respect, to give him the requested information, and place at his disposal all required documents and papers.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

On January 17, another sensational death became public. Field Marshal von Reichenau, who had been a well-known sportsman, died, at the age of fifty-seven, “as the result of a stroke in the course of his transportation to the homeland.”²⁵ While Reichenau had been an old National Socialist, the old National Socialists in particular had lately become more critical of Hitler. In any event, Hitler ordered a state funeral for him. As the “Führer of the German nation,” he ordered Göring to substitute for him. In his capacity as “commander in chief of the army,” he requested the recently replaced von Rundstedt to act in his stead. The following order of the day was issued to the army:²⁶

Soldiers!

On January 17, the commander in chief of an army group, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, died of a stroke.

As in his life he was the standard-bearer of the ideas of a new era, so, as Field Marshal in the war, he stood at the head of his team. Often, he stood at the forward focal point of the battle. The Storm Badges on his chest made him especially close to you, my Frontline Soldiers!

The drive of this electrifying born leader gave new luster to the immortal virtues of soldiery by putting them into the context of the new era and employing its means.

Field Marshal von Reichenau was the first leader of a panzer army in history. I entrusted it to him in the Polish campaign. He led it to victory. With enthusiasm, his men followed him. In his person they saw a combination of true soldiership and National Socialist ideals. In the strong belief in the final victory of our Volk, he now passes into eternity.

Before this life, which he dedicated to his soldiers, his Volk, and the future of Germany, the army lowers the Reich war flag. It honors its glorious field marshal and brave fighter. His name will live on forever in the history of the German Volk and its Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On January 18, the public again heard about Brauchitsch. He had had to undergo surgery that “in spite of heart problems had been successful.” He was “on the way to recovery,” although “after being cured, he will have to undergo extensive treatment.” In the meantime, “the Führer conveyed his best wishes for a speedy recovery to the field marshal.”²⁷

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At this time, Hitler received Field Marshal von Bock. On January 21-22, the German press published a picture showing both men strolling along a path through the woods at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The caption pointed out that the field marshal had returned from a “convalescent leave” and was about to “take over a new sector at the eastern front.” In other words, Bock no longer commanded Army Group Center.²⁸

On January 20, Hitler awarded Rommel the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords. What was surprising and unique was the reason for which Rommel received the award, namely his “defensive victory” in Africa. Hitler’s telegram to Rommel read as follows:²⁹

Thanks to your outstanding action in cooperation with our allies, you have again shattered Anglo-American intentions by a defensive victory over a far superior opponent. In grateful appreciation of your success and the heroic struggle of the German and Italian troops under your command, I award you, as the sixth officer of the German Wehrmacht, the addition of the Oak Leaf with Swords to the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

On January 22, another state funeral took place, one which Hitler had ordered for the chairman of the German Potash Syndicate, Dr. August Diem. Funk conveyed Hitler’s greetings at the state ceremony at the Technical High School in Berlin-Charlottenburg.³⁰

On January 28, Hitler received Colonel Galland in the presence of Keitel and Milch at the Führer headquarters. He presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds. As successor to Mölders, Galland had been appointed inspector of fighter pilots.³¹

On January 29, the OKW report announced that German and Italian troops had retaken Benghazi and that Hitler had promoted Rommel to the rank of colonel general.

Of course, it was very encouraging to receive this news on the anniversary of January 30. Hitler, who had left East Prussia aboard his special train on the evening of January 28, arrived in Berlin about noon on January 29. In great detail, he discussed Churchill with Goebbels.³² He wanted to get in the right mood for his speech on the anniversary of the seizure of power.

On January 30, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini, Ciano, King Boris, Franco, Antonescu, Tiso, and Pavelich. He sent the following messages to the Italian King and to the Duce:³³

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I thank Your Majesty for the friendly greetings conveyed to me on the anniversary of the seizure of power. I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt best wishes for the prosperity of the allied Italian people, as well as for your personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

I thank you, Duce, for the friendly greetings that you conveyed to me by telegram on the anniversary of the National Socialist seizure of power. In the secure knowledge that our joint work for the freedom of Europe will be crowned by victory, I reciprocate with my sincere best wishes for Italy's prosperous future, your personal welfare, and the success of your historic work.

Adolf Hitler

At noon, Hitler received a delegation of Italian Fascist leaders at the Reich Chancellery. Goebbels described the address that Hitler delivered on this occasion, in the following manner:³⁴

Hitler is in an extraordinarily good mood. He speaks to the Italian Gauleiters in a vigorous and convincing tone. Awe-inspiring is his absolute and firm confidence in victory, which he expresses so clearly and irrefutably that it makes a profound impression on the Italian gentlemen. They are enthusiastic about the Führer's fascinating personality, especially his vigor and his self-assured manner. Most of the Italian gentlemen have never before seen the Führer, and the impression that he made on them is consequently all the more profound.

For the afternoon, Goebbels had arranged a "mass rally" at the Sportpalast in Berlin. The audience consisted of laborers from armament factories in Berlin, nurses from military hospitals, and wounded or convalescing soldiers.

Hitler began his address with the following words:³⁵

My German Volksgenossen! Comrades!

These days, every man may speak to that forum which he feels is most appropriate. One speaks in front of a parliament whose existence, composition, and development we are amply aware of. I believe that, on this day, I should return to where I come from, namely, the Volk! All those who sit before me now are also deputies, the only difference being that they do not collect parliamentary allowances.

Hitler's words were revealing. There had been times when he had enjoyed speaking to the Reichstag deputies, as "the highest appointed forum of the nation," especially on occasions like the anniversary of the seizure of power.³⁶ Now, of course, he hated the deputies—not because

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they received “parliamentary allowances”—but because they had the theoretical power to depose him.

A “party narrative” took up a large part of Hitler’s speaking time.³⁷ He launched an attack on “British untruthfulness” in the First World War, the “vile revolt in 1918,” the “paralytic” Wilson, and, of course, his domestic “struggle against the entire world.” He spoke of the “blows of fortune” he had survived back then. He said that he belonged to the “strong” in life, and, therefore, he was perfectly capable of surviving any “blows of fortune” that he might now suffer, for example, in the east. Hitler declared the following:

And I believe that this was probably decisive for the party: any weakling can manage victories, but only the strong can manage blows of fortune. Providence gives the final and the supreme reward only to those who can handle blows of fortune. At the time, I suffered the first severe blow on a larger scale in the movement. It was overcome a few years later. The men who were close to me at the time know how much work and strength of nerve this cost us.

But I have also preserved this boundless faith, in my person as well, that nothing, no matter what, would ever be able to throw me out of the saddle, would shake me up anymore. Whoever thinks he can frighten me somehow or surprise me is wrong. I have always taken to heart the words of a great German philosopher: “A blow that does not knock a strong man over, only makes him stronger!”³⁸

Finally, Hitler had finished the “party narrative” and turned to the topic of Churchill. For one, he vented his anger at this adversary by calling him a “garrulous drunkard” (*Schwätzer und Trunkenbold*), a “damned liar” (*verlogenes Subjekt*), a “first-rank lazy fellow” (*Faulpelz ersten Ranges*), and “one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals in world history” (*eine der erbärmlichsten Herostratennaturen*³⁹ *der Weltgeschichte*). He then entitled Roosevelt Churchill’s “accomplice in the White House” and a “poor fool” (*armseliger Irrer*). Once again, he complained that he always had to deal with “zeroes.”⁴⁰ He said that the English “have simply been ossifying for too long.”

Before I went to war, I had started a gigantic program of cultural, economic, and social work. I had begun it and, in part, I had already finished it. Everywhere, new plans were being made, new projects being developed by me and my assistants.

By contrast, when I look at my enemies, what have they actually accomplished? It was easy for them to push for war, since they had nothing to show for peace. They had not accomplished anything that might speak for them. This garrulous drunkard Churchill, what has he created that is of lasting

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worth, this damned liar, this first-class lazy fellow? If this war had not come, then centuries would have spoken of our age and also of my person, as the creators of great works of peace. However, if Mr. Churchill had not managed this war, who would ever have spoken of him? This way, he will live on, as the destroyer of an empire. We are not destroying it, he is. He is one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals in world history, incapable of creating anything positive, or accomplishing anything. He is capable only of destroying. I do not even want to speak about his accomplice in the White House, who is only a poor fool.

However, the more we worked, the more we put Germany back in order, the greater the hatred became. To this was brought the narrow-minded hatred of social classes abroad, lest it be possible, under certain circumstances, to apply the German social example there. I often listened to foreigners telling me, "but National Socialist ideas cannot be realized in our countries." I replied: I do not demand this. On the contrary, I am not here to worry about the happiness of other people. Rather, I feel responsible only for my own Volk. I will not add to my sleepless nights by taking on the burdens of worrying about foreigners. And, in spite of this, they say, "no, the example is already enough, it is the example that corrupts morals." In this case, morals meant bad habits or vices. They say, "you sail on your KdF ships; we cannot allow them to land here; that would corrupt our laborers." Now, why would that corrupt their laborers? I cannot see why. The German laborer has worked more than ever before; why should he not have a rest? Is it not a joke when today the man in the White House says, "we have a program for the world, and this program for the world will give man freedom and the right to work." Mr. Roosevelt—open your eyes! We have already done this in Germany a long time ago. Or when he says that the sick ought to be taken care of. Please leave the garden of our party program—this is National Socialist teaching and not yours, Sir! This is heresy for a democrat.

Or when he says, "we want laborers to have a vacation." It is a little late to want this, since we have already put this into practice. And we would be much further along now if Mr. Roosevelt had not interfered. Or when he says, "we want to increase prosperity for the masses of laborers, too." All these things are in our program! He might have seen them through, if he had not started the war. After all, we did all this before the war. No, these capitalist hyenas do not have the slightest intention of doing this. They see us as a suspicious example. And now, in order to lure their own people, they have to get in on our party program and fish out a few sentences, these poor bunglers. And even that they do imperfectly.

We had a world unanimously against us here. Of course, not only on the right, but also on the left. Those on the left feared: "What are we going to do, if this experiment succeeds and he actually makes it and eliminates the housing problem? What if he manages to introduce an educational system based on which a talented boy, no matter who his parents are, can attain God knows what position? And, he is capable of doing it, he is already making a Reich protector out of a former farmhand. What if he really introduces an old-age

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pension scheme covering the whole Volk? What if he truly secures a right to vacations for the whole Volk, since he is already building ships? And he is bringing all this up to an ordered and secured standard of living. What are we going to do? We live by the absence of this. We live by this and, therefore, we must fight National Socialism.”

What the others have accomplished—that, our comrades were best able to see in Russia. We have been in power for nine years now. Bolshevism has been there since 1917, that is, almost twenty-five years. Everyone can judge for himself by comparing this Russia with Germany. The things we did in these nine years. What does the German Volk look like, and what have they accomplished over there? I do not even want to mention the capitalist states. They do not take care of their unemployed, because no American millionaire will ever come into the area where they live, and no unemployed man will ever go to the area where the millionaires live. While hunger marches to Washington and to the White House are organized, they are usually dispersed en route by the police by means of rubber truncheons and tear gas. Such things do not exist in authoritarian Germany. We deal with such problems without such things—rubber truncheons and tear gas.

In other words, we were truly confronted by a unanimous and hostile world. It was only natural that this hostility would increase with the seizure of power. I tried to initiate a certain foreign policy. You know about it from our time of struggle. I wanted to enter into relations with three countries: England, Italy, and Japan.⁴¹

It was completely pointless attempting to come to an understanding with England. The men there appeared unable to rid themselves of their prejudice, their insane ideology, and their stubbornness. They saw Germany as the enemy. These men were not aware that the world had considerably changed since the days of their great Queen Victoria. They did not realize that, in the end, it was not Germany which threatened their empire and that, if their empire was to be sustained, England would have to tie itself to Europe. On the contrary, they fought with Europe at every opportunity. Above all, one man did this, a man whom I have already mentioned a few times: Churchill. Any attempt to get him to consider an understanding ran aground at his saying, “I want war.” It was impossible to talk with this man and the clique surrounding him, for example, Duff Cooper, and so on. It is sad to name them; they are only zeroes. It does not matter. They are like unbreakable eggs: wherever they fall, they will remain for a while. As often as you like, you can throw them somewhere, even the English can, as for example Wavell.⁴² They have simply been ossifying for too long. For centuries, they have been our old, irreconcilable enemies, and I am not talking about the Jews now. They feared that we might thwart their plans or their lives. They hate us just as we must hate them because of this.

Now that Hitler had voiced his anger and frustration with the English, he turned to the Jews. He announced their extermination in Europe, now that “all attempts to reach an understanding with the

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English proved futile.” If England and international Jewry wished to prevent this annihilation, then they would have to make peace with him at last. Otherwise, Jewry, as “the most evil enemy of the world of all time will at least be finished with for the next millennium.” Hitler declared as follows:

We are fully aware that this war can end either in the extermination of the Aryan people or in the disappearance of Jewry from Europe. I said as much before the German Reichstag on September 1, 1939.⁴³ I wish to avoid making hasty prophesies, but this war will not end as the Jews imagine, namely, in the extermination of the European-Aryan people; instead, the result of this war will be the annihilation of Jewry. For the first time, the old, truly Jewish rule of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” will obtain.

And the more the fighting expands, the more anti-Semitism will spread—let that be said to world Jewry. Anti-Semitism will be fed in every prisoner-of-war camp, in every family enlightened to the reason why, in the end, it has to make this sacrifice. And the hour will come when the most evil enemy of the world of all time will at least be finished with for the next millennium.

To my profound regret, all attempts to reach an understanding with the English proved futile, no matter what I did, no matter how often I held out my hand, no matter what I offered them.

I was all the more happy when I was able to obtain that relationship with the second state, which we had once striven for. Actually, it is not surprising. Today, it would be surprising had things come differently. It is not merely a coincidence—I said this to a delegation today⁴⁴—if two people suffer almost identical fates in the course of barely a hundred years. Germany and Italy: in the last century, they fight for their rebirth as a state and its unification, then, for the first time, both states join together. Then, they part company, and their luck runs out. At nearly the same time in both states, a revolution takes place, a revolution whose ideas are as similar as can possibly be imagined for two people. Both revolutions run a nearly identical course. Everywhere severe setbacks, but victory in the end. The program of both revolutions is social and national rebirth. Both staunchly see this program through. Both elicit the hatred of the surrounding world. Both revolutions represent nations whose soil does not yield them their daily bread, in spite of all diligence. Contrary to their will, both nations are one day confronted by the same enemies, by the same international coalition. This begins as early as 1935, as England suddenly turns against Italy for no reason whatsoever. Italy has not taken anything away from England. But England does not want Italy to have its independence. The same goes for us, since England does not want Germany to have its independence. What are we taking away from England, what from France, what from America? Nothing at all! How many times did I offer them peace?! What else should I be offering them? They are men who say, like Churchill, “I want war.” With them, there is a certain clique. And behind these corrupt, drunk creatures, there are the paying forces of international Jewry. On the other side, there is

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an old Freemason who believes that through a war he can win time for stabilizing his bankrupt economy again. And so, both states again confront the same enemies for the very same reasons. And they are forced to fight together, to lead the same struggle, which ties them in life and in death.

And there is a fourth element: in both cases, there are two men who come from the people, who have kindled the revolutions and have uplifted their states. In the few free hours I have had these last weeks, I read a lot about the Fascist revolution in Italy. It seemed to me as though I had before me the history of my own party: everything so similar, so much the same. The same struggle, the same enemies, the same opponents, the same arguments—it really is a miracle. And now, we fight in the same theaters of war: Germans in Africa, Italians in the east. We fight together, and nobody should deceive himself: This struggle will be seen through to our joint victory!

And finally, a third state joined us. For many years, I have wanted to have good relations with this state—Japan—as you know from *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler then claimed that the “three great have-nots” (Germany, Italy, and Japan) had “everything to win,” and that he was ready “to bear full responsibility.”

And so, the three great have-nots are now united. We will see who will be stronger in this struggle: those who have nothing to lose and everything to win, or those who have everything to lose and who cannot win anything. What does England want to win? What does America want to win? They have so much that they do not know what to do with all they own. They need to feed only a few people per square kilometer. They do not have all those worries that trouble us. For us, a single bad harvest is a national disaster. They have the whole world at their disposal. For decades now, they have robbed us, exploited us, bled us white, and still they have not eliminated their own economic misery. They have more raw materials than they could possibly need, and still they have not managed to find a reasonable solution to their problems. We will see on whom Providence will bestow the victor’s laurels in this struggle: on the man who has everything and wants to take even the last bit from the man who has almost nothing, or on the man, who defends the last bit he owns. And when a British archbishop prays to the Lord that He might strike Germany and Europe with Bolshevism as a punishment—then I can only say, it will not come to Germany. But whether or not He will strike England, that is another question.

Then this old sinner and blasphemer can try to avert this danger through his prayer. We never did anything to England, France, or America. In spite of this, a declaration of war followed in the year 1939. And now, it has expanded.

But now you must try to understand my point of view, which is based on my development. I once said something that nobody understood abroad. I said: if war is inevitable, then I prefer to wage it myself. Not because I thirst for sinister glory. On the contrary, I would prefer to do without this type of glory, which is no glory in my eyes. If Providence preserves my life, my pride will be

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the great works of peace which I still intend to create. On the other hand, since Providence has decreed this battle to be fought out in accordance with its impenetrable will, I believe that I can only ask Providence to entrust me with the burden of this struggle with which it burdens only me. I will bear it and I will not shy away from responsibility. In the hour of want, I will take it upon myself. I wish to bear the entire responsibility, just as I have borne it up to now.⁴⁵ I exercise the greatest authority among this Volk. It knows me. It knows of all the plans I had in all the years before the war. Everywhere there is evidence of the beginning of this work and, in some instances, documents of its completion. I know that this Volk trusts me. I am so happy to know this. The German Volk may rest assured of one thing: as long as I live, there will never be another year 1918, because I will never abandon my cause.

I am happy that so many allies have now joined our soldiers: Italy in the south, Finland in the north. Between them, there are all those nations that have also sent their sons east: whether they are Romanians or Hungarians, Slovaks, Croatians, Spaniards, Belgians—yes, even French—they all participate in this struggle. In addition, there are the volunteers of our Germanic states from the north and from the west. Today, it has already become a war of Europe. And, finally, in the east, there is a new ally: Japan, which has already cured one gentleman of his ridiculous plans.

I will say very little on the war itself. History says it plain enough: in 1939, the elimination of Poland, in 1940, Norway, France, and England, the Netherlands, and Belgium, and, in 1941, first the Balkans and, finally, the state which a chatty Mr. Cripps told us a few days ago had been preparing for the confrontation with Germany for years. I understood this the moment I realized that they were putting one over on us. The second I was informed that Churchill had already referred to this new ally in secret sessions, the situation became clear to me. And when the hour came for Molotov to say farewell here in Berlin under the impression that his demands had failed, it was quite certain that there would be a confrontation.

I am grateful to Fate for putting me at the head of the Reich, and for granting me the time to deal the first blow fourteen days or three weeks before this.⁴⁶ If there has to be a fight, then, in my opinion, the first [blow] may be the decisive one. And we saw this in East Asia, too. We can only congratulate Japan that, instead of allowing these damned liars to provoke it any longer, it struck without hesitation.

Since June 22, our soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS have been fighting a war in the east that will enter history as the heroic epic of our Volk.

At sea, our naval forces and our U-boats will foil the intentions of President Roosevelt. He intended, by ever new declarations on American territorial waters, slowly to drive the German U-boats from the ocean through simple acts on paper. He wanted to force them into a small area that could have been protected by British naval forces.

That, my Volksgenossen, was the reason for the declining number of sinkings. It was not the poor quality or the declining numbers of U-boats. On the contrary, their number has enormously increased. It was not the lack of

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courage of our crews, nor the impossibility of an attack. It was solely this procedure of restricting our freedom of action by way of declaration.

You will understand that it cost me great effort to decide whether to put an end to this fraud and falsehood, or whether, for the sake of peace, to accept one restriction after another. Japan's attack put an end to our misery. Now they [the Americans] will have to sail in convoy on the oceans, and they will find out how our U-boats work. Whatever plans they may have and whatever these look like, we are ready from north to south, from the coast [*sic*] to the east.⁴⁷

They should realize one thing: they will meet with a Germany different from the Germany of old. They will meet with a Frederican Germany. We stand firm, and where we stand, we will not give up a foot of ground without a fight. And even if we do, we will immediately counterattack the enemy. We are happy to know since yesterday⁴⁸ that, at the moment they [the English] all thought that they had beaten him, our Colonel General Rommel, along with his brave Italian and German panzer and motorized units, immediately turned and drove them back. And they will witness this for as long and as often as it takes for this war to end in our victory.

In addition to these forces, there is a third one: the Luftwaffe. Its glory is unfading. The things they have accomplished in the course of the operations in the arctic cold of the north, in the east, or in the heat of the desert, or in the west, it is the same everywhere: a heroism that simply cannot properly be rewarded by medals.

These three forces comprise everything that belongs to them. I cannot single out a particular branch. Nevertheless, there is one force that I must mention in particular: it is our infantry.

Behind these forces, there is a traffic infrastructure with tens of thousands of drivers and railroad workers. They all work hard. They will master the most difficult tasks. After all, it is obvious that it was not easy to shift from a forward strategy to a defensive one in the east. The Russians did not force us to go on the defensive, but the temperatures of thirty-eight, forty, forty-one, and, in part, forty-five degrees below zero. No unit can fight in this cold if it is not used to it, no more than it can fight in the heat of the desert during the warm months. The moment we were forced to make this adjustment, I regarded it as my duty to take responsibility for it on my shoulders. In so doing, I wanted to become even closer to my soldiers. And, at this point, insofar as they can hear me today at this icy front, I want to assure them: I know what you are accomplishing, but I also know that we have the worst part behind us.

Today, it is the thirtieth of January. The winter was the great hope of our eastern opponent. It will not fulfill his hope. Within four months, we have moved almost up to Moscow and Leningrad. Four months of winter in the north are now over. In single spots, the enemy advanced a few kilometers. He sacrificed hecatombs of blood and human life for this. Perhaps this does not matter to him. However, in a few weeks, winter will be over in the south, and spring will slowly move northward. The ice will melt, and the hour will come when the ground will be hard and firm again. Then the German front-line soldier will again be able to operate his equipment on this ground. The

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homeland will send new weapons. And then, we will beat the enemy and avenge all those who fell victim only to the frost. Let me tell you, the soldier at the front has not lost his feeling of superiority over the Russians at all. It would be an insult to compare him with them. What is decisive is that we succeeded in making this shift from the offensive to the defensive, and I can say: it was a success! The fronts—they stand. And in those instances where Russians did break through and thought that they would be able to occupy small towns, there are no more small towns. There is only a heap of ruins. What does this matter compared with what we do occupy, what we put in good order, and what we will put in order, either in the spring or afterwards?

After all, behind this front, there stands today a worthy German homeland. A few days ago, realizing that all our preparations were still insufficient for the defense against the Far East, I directed an appeal to the German Volk. I now want to say my thanks to this Volk. This appeal also represented a vote. While the others talk of democracy, this is real democracy!

Just how real has been shown by these last days. I know what many poor people have given, but this time there were many, many for whom it was difficult or for whom it would have been impossible before to give away their valuable furs. But today, they did give them, realizing that even the least important front-line soldier is worth more than their most valuable furs. I have seen to it that things did not go as they did in the World War, when the homeland delivered the copper and one copper-delivery company paid a 2,260% dividend, or when the homeland delivered leather and a leather-processing company paid a 2,700% dividend.⁴⁹ In the Third Reich, whoever tries to enrich himself during the war dies. Because nobody knows whether there is not a poor little front-line soldier up front whose hand could have been saved by a pair of gloves, or who could have been protected against the frost by a warm coat which somebody at home deprives him of. I will look after the interests of the soldiers here. And, I know that the entire German Volk is behind me on this!

So I can assure you of one thing on this January 30. I do not know how this year will end. Nobody can say whether the war will end in its course. But I do know one thing: wherever the enemy makes an appearance, we will beat him, just as we have up to now! It will again be a year of great victories.

And just as I always carried the flag in earlier days, I now hold it high all the more. How different my position is today!

My German Volksgenossen! My Soldiers!

We have a glorious history behind us. And one does enjoy making comparisons to this history. In the course of this history, German heroes often fought in spite of a seemingly hopeless inferiority. However, we must not draw comparisons to the Frederician age, for instance. We have no right to do so. We have the strongest army in the world. We have the strongest air force in the world. By contrast, Frederick the Great had to fight against a nearly overwhelmingly superior force. When he fought the first Silesian War, two million seven hundred thousand Prussians confronted a state of at least fifteen

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million. When, seven years later, he was forced to wage the third one, three million seven hundred thousand or three million eight hundred thousand Prussians confronted around fifty or fifty-four million others. A man with an iron will held high his banner, in spite of all setbacks, and never despaired of his people. Every time that he felt like despairing, he pulled himself together again and took the flag anew into his strong hand.

What do we want to say about ourselves today? We confront an enemy who might right now enjoy a numerical superiority over us. However, this will change in the spring again. We will defeat him again. Because then our time will come again. And it will be like this everywhere. But, above all, we have allies today. It is not as in the World War anymore. We cannot assess what Japan alone is accomplishing in the east.

For us, there is no other way than to struggle and to succeed. It may be difficult or it may be easy—but never will it be more difficult than the struggles of our ancestors. We should not expect it to be easy.

In so doing, we have a better comprehension of the sacrifices that our soldiers are making. Having been a soldier once myself, [I say that] nobody comprehends this better than I do. Today, I still think of myself as the first front-line soldier of the Reich.⁵⁰ At the time when I was only a soldier, I did my duty. Today, I do it as unwaveringly. On the other hand, I understand the suffering of my comrades; I know how they feel. Therefore, I cannot and will not indulge in windy rhetoric. After all, they would not understand this. I can only tell them one thing: my comrades, the homeland knows what you have to go through.

The homeland knows what it means to lie in snow and ice—at thirty-five, thirty-eight, forty, forty-two degrees below zero—in order to defend Germany. But, because the homeland knows this, it will do all it can. It wants to work, and it will work! And I have to appeal to you myself: German Volksgenossen at home, work, make weapons, make ammunition, make new weapons, make new ammunition! You will save the lives of many comrades up front. Build means of transportation and work on them so that all this can actually get up front.

Then the front will stand. It will do its duty. Then the German nation can rest assured that the prayer of that satanic priest who wished Europe to be punished by Bolshevism will not come true. A different prayer will come true.

Lord, give us strength so that we can preserve our freedom, our Volk, our children, and our grandchildren. And we will do so not only for our German Volk, but for all the people of Europe. Because this is not a war that we wage only for the German Volk. Rather, it is a struggle for all of Europe and for all of civilized mankind.

After Hitler's speech, Goebbels felt that he "stood on firm ground again."⁵¹

Germany's allies, however, needed more than a speech in view of the poor news from the eastern front. In January, Hitler had already sent

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Ribbentrop and Keitel to Hungary.⁵² Göring spent January 27 to February 4 in Italy and Rome [*sic*], trying to calm the Duce and the Italian generals. Hitler had invited Antonescu to the Führer headquarters for early February.⁵³

On February 1, Reichskommissar Terboven appointed Vidkun Quisling as prime minister of Norway and conveyed to him the Führer's congratulations.⁵⁴

On February 4, a state funeral took place in Munich. Hitler had ordered it in honor of state secretary and Major General Georg Hofmann, an SA Obergruppenführer who had died suddenly on February 1, after a "heart attack." Reich Governor von Epp laid "a wreath from the Führer."⁵⁵

On February 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday.⁵⁶

On February 8 and 9, the following news of a death surprised the German public:⁵⁷

On Sunday [February 8], in soldierly fulfillment of his duty, Reich Minister Dr. Todt died in a plane crash during the execution of his military assignments. The Führer has ordered a state funeral for Dr. Todt.

Following a two-day visit to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, Todt had died on a Sunday under mysterious circumstances near the Rastenburg airfield. After takeoff, his plane turned around and tried to land. Shortly before landing, it exploded.⁵⁸ The precise circumstances of his death may never be known.⁵⁹

In any event, his death meant that Hitler had to worry about one Obergruppenführer less.⁶⁰ After all, Todt was a forceful personality and an impeccable man of stature, who had great organizing ability. He was very energetic and popular. He was just the kind of man who could have handled the difficulties that would undoubtedly have arisen after an attempt to remove Hitler. It is another matter, though, as to whether he would have been willing to do so. It is not known whether he had already turned against Hitler, at least in spirit. In any case, Hitler seemed to be relieved to hear of his death. His greatly exaggerated obituary oration⁶¹ made the whole affair even more suspicious.

On February 9, the following official statement was made public:⁶²

The Greater German Reichstag has suffered a great loss through the accidental death of Reich Minister Dr. Todt. He had held the positions of Reich minister for armament and munitions, inspector general for road construction,

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and inspector general for water and energy. The Führer has transferred these three positions to the inspector general of the Reich capital, Professor Albert Speer, who retains his previous position.

The appointment of Speer, who had previously been entrusted largely with “artistic” tasks, created quite a stir since he was certainly not a man of Todt’s caliber. However, that was exactly why Hitler had chosen him. After all, he did not need any “experts.” His “own head” was “good enough.”⁶³ He felt that he had the young and gentle Speer well in his control. Above all, Speer was not an Obergruppenführer!⁶⁴ Nor was he a general. At this time, Hitler awarded the name “Fritz Todt” to the First Munich SA *Schützenstandarte* (Rifle Standard).⁶⁵

On February 11, Hitler received Antonescu at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.⁶⁶ The “head of state and marshal of Romania” had been picked up by Hitler’s private pilot and nearly froze to death on the trip because of a defective heater.⁶⁷

Hitler wanted to impress Antonescu favorably with the situation at the eastern front. Therefore, Hitler invited him to attend the daily discussion of the situation at the Führer headquarters for a few days. These discussions usually made the situation appear far more advantageous than it was, since Hitler for one had requested only favorable reports. In view of the foreign visitor’s presence, situation maps and news selections painted the situation in its brightest colors. Internally, these situation reports were referred to as “exhibition reports” (*Schaulagen*).⁶⁸

The interpreter Schmidt could not tell whether Antonescu saw through Hitler’s tactics or not. However, it seemed to him that, while the Romanian asked few questions, he left Hitler’s headquarters with “new courage.” Several days later in Bucharest, Schmidt heard that apparently not much of this courage restored by Hitler was left. Schmidt thought this was due to the rosy “exhibition reports,” which, as Antonescu found out, did not correspond to his own situation reports from the front. The main reason perhaps was that Antonescu was one of those Balkan politicians who fell time and again for Hitler’s rhetoric.

Surprisingly, it was not until five days after this visit that the German public was informed that Hitler had presented the Order of the Grand Cross of the German Eagle to Antonescu.⁶⁹ The communiqué on the meeting read as follows:⁷⁰

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At the invitation of the Führer, the Romanian head of state, Marshal Antonescu, visited the Führer at his headquarters on February 11. The marshal of Romania was accompanied by Colonel Dividescu, Lieutenant Colonel Gomescu, and officers of his staff. The Romanian envoy in Berlin, Bossy, and the German envoy in Bucharest, von Killinger, also traveled with him.

In the course of Marshal Antonescu's stay at the Führer headquarters, the Führer and the Romanian chief of state discussed the political and military situation.

The discussions between the Führer and Marshal Antonescu were conducted in the spirit of the loyal friendship and the unwavering comradeship in arms of the two people, which are being expressed and tried in the joint struggle against the enemies of the new Europe. On the German side, the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, participated in the discussions.

On February 12, Hitler sent his "heartfelt congratulations" to the Japanese Emperor, following the conquest of Singapore.⁷¹

At 3:00 p.m. on the same day, the official ceremony in honor of Dr. Todt took place in the Mosaic Hall at the Reich Chancellery. Hitler himself delivered the eulogy. Not since the commemorative address for Richard Wagner had he indulged in similar theatrics.⁷² His voice was choked with tears and he was so overcome with emotions that at times he was unable to go on.⁷³ He declared as follows:⁷⁴

Dear Mourners! Dear Mrs. Todt!

It is very difficult for me to honor a man whose deeds speak more clearly and more powerfully for him than words ever could. When we received the terrible news of the accident in which our dear party comrade Dr. Todt had become a victim many millions of Germans probably felt the same emptiness that we always feel when an irreplaceable man is taken from his fellow men. The entire German Volk knows that the death of this man means an irreplaceable loss for us. And it is not only the creative man who was taken from us, but it is also the brave man and unforgettable comrade whose leaving hits us so hard.

Dr. Todt was a National Socialist. From the moment he gained knowledge of the movement for the first time, he was a National Socialist not only intellectually but also with all his heart. The first contact with the party in the year 1922, the first meeting with me, immediately directed him internally to me. It also obligated him to stand by what he felt was the only means of a German rebirth. Making the connection between the national and the social idea was neither a problem nor a question for the technician and engineer who was temporarily forced to earn his bread by the work of his hands. Rather, it was a categorical duty for him to fight for a true German resurrection, which had to be more than a mere restoration of a form of state whose collapse had proved it to be outdated. As early as 1922, it was clear to this man that the goal of a

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German uprising could not be the restoration of broken old forms. Instead, it had to be a revolutionizing of the German spirit, the German Volk, and its internal social order.

When Dr. Todt joined the movement, he was thirty-one years old. His life up to then had included, besides elementary school, studies at a classical secondary school. From 1910 to 1911, he served one year as a volunteer with the Field Artillery Regiment No. 14 in Karlsruhe. From 1911 until August 1914, he studied civil engineering at the Technical Universities of Munich and Karlsruhe. In 1913, he passed the preliminary examination at the Technical University of Munich. When war broke out, it took him to the western front along with the Field Artillery Regiment No. 14. In October 1914, the reserve lieutenant was seconded for duty with the Grenadier Regiment No. 110. In this regiment, he fought until January 1916. Then, he joined the Luftwaffe and became an observer navigator. Finally, he secured command over his own plane formation on the western front until the end of the war. He was injured in an air battle. In 1919, he finished his studies. In the winter of 1920, he passed the examination for his diploma at the Technical University of Karlsruhe. He wrote his doctoral dissertation at the Technical University of Munich: *Sources of Defect in the Construction of Highway Surfacing Made of Tar and Asphalt*.

On January 5, 1923, this Doctor of Engineering, Fritz Todt of Pforzheim, joined the NSDAP for good through the Ortsgruppe Eitting in Bavaria. Immediately after the lifting of the ban on the party from November 23 until 1925, he again became a member. In the meantime, he agitated constantly. Not until 1924 were the various proceedings against him suspended. He joined the SA in 1931 and, as a true National Socialist, he began as a simple SA man. He then became Scharführer. That same year, he was promoted to Standartenführer. By 1938, he had risen to Oberführer, Brigadeführer, Gruppen- and Obergruppenführer. Alas, his activities in the party are not summed up by his service with the SA. In the beginning, he worked for the *Kampfbund* (Combat League) of German Architects and Engineers in Munich. Further, he was a technical adviser for road construction in the then NSDAP Office for Economic Technology and Job Creation. In 1932, he became the head of a team of civil-engineering specialists, and regional head of the *Kampfbund* of German Architects and Engineers. In 1934, his section and the *Kampfbund* of German Architects and Engineers fused to become the technical office and, finally, the National Socialist League of German Technology under his leadership. In 1936, the technical office was upgraded to head technical office because of outstanding accomplishments.

In the meantime, this man entered that sphere of activity that for the first time presented him not only to the German Volk but also to a large part of the world.

After the opening of the Automobile Exhibition in 1933, I tried to put into effect the then recently proclaimed principles not only regarding the improvement of the existing German road system, but also the construction of special expressways. This was a general plan, essentially regarding only basic

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issues. After extensive examination and deliberation, I believed I had found in Dr. Todt the man capable of putting this theoretical intention into practice.

A brochure published by him on new approaches to road construction was submitted to me. It reinforced me in my hopes. After long discussions, on June 23, 1933, I assigned him the task of building a new Reichsautobahn. Further, I entrusted him with a reform of the entire German road-construction system as inspector general for road construction. Through this, this man had found a role that he began to fill in a truly unrivaled and undying fashion. In their design and realization, the German Reichsautobahnen are the work of a uniquely inspired technician and artist.

I cannot imagine the German Reich without these expressways. In the future, these great lines of communication will as a matter of course extend to the entire European transportation system.

So great is the extent of the roads, which in this period were additionally widened, improved, and straightened with their blind bends eliminated, and of the bridges which were built, that only an intensive study can approximate an overall impression that does justice to this achievement. My dear party comrades, you will remember those stirring moments when this inspector general for road construction in Germany, Dr. Todt, spoke at the Reich Party Congresses in Nuremberg, briefly and pointedly summing up the progress on this assignment, which was beginning to surpass by far all engineering construction that the world had seen to date.

It was, therefore, a matter of course that this man was finally appointed plenipotentiary for the regularization of the entire building industry and held a privileged position as inspector general for special assignments in the Four-Year Plan.

Meanwhile, dark clouds on the horizon were beginning to signal the ever increasing threat of war against Germany. When the incessant inflammatory speeches by Churchill and his followers in England made it clear that the unstable situation in the parliamentary democracies might one day lead to a change in the regime controlling these countries and strike peace a blow, I felt compelled to speed up the defense of the Reich and to secure it generously.

I had arrived at a plan that provided for the construction of a large fortification across from the Maginot Line, but built according to different criteria so that, in any event, even if substantial German armed forces were tied down in the east, it would defend the vital west of the Reich against any kind of attack.

There was only one man who was capable of resolving this most [*sic*] unique engineering problem in the history of the world, and solving it as quickly as possible. On May 28, 1938, I announced my decision to the army and the Luftwaffe. At the same time, I gave instructions to inspector general, Dr. Todt, in cooperation with the appropriate military offices, to take on the responsibility for the construction of the most substantial part of this gigantic project. I stipulated that at least five thousand concrete and armored structures should be ready or ready for use by September 1938 at the latest. The first program was set at twelve thousand items total. This number increased to about

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twenty-three thousand in barely one-and-a-half years due to a steady expansion in general and, later on, through the structures built by the Luftwaffe as well as by fortress engineers. The current wartime experiences have only reinforced the conviction that no power on earth could have succeeded in breaking through this most gigantic fortification of all time. In its constructional design, in the purely organizational features of the construction, as well as in its technical completion, this miraculous work will for all time remain tied to the name Dr. Todt.

The outbreak of war immediately gave this mightiest organizer of the modern age new, additional tasks. A system of great marshaling routes had to be completed within the shortest time possible in areas of the Reich whose routes of communication in the past had been severely neglected. Thousands of kilometers of roads had to be either built or widened, paved, and rid of dust. Yes, when the fighting finally began, the units created by this unique organizational talent marched behind or alongside the troops. They removed obstacles, destroyed bridges, improved roads. Everywhere, they constructed new crossings over valleys, canyons, rivers, canals, and so on. In so doing, they complemented the engineering troops in an irreplaceable manner. They relieved them and enabled them to move up closer to the advancing front in order to participate more actively in the fighting, which otherwise they would not have been able to witness.

The victory in Norway and the victory in the west brought new tasks. Party comrade Todt, who had earlier been appointed Reich minister for armament and munitions and who therefore was responsible for putting a new, truly enormous area in order and under control, took on the additional task of protecting the conquered coasts against enemy attack by constructing new gigantic fortifications. Beyond this, the homeland and the front had to be provided with structures for passive and active air-raid protection. Never before in history had there been anything of this kind. To date, they are unrivaled and they will probably remain so for a long time.

This genius of an inventor and organizer succeeded in constructing, within the shortest time possible, concrete housing structures for numerous U-boats, structures that cannot be destroyed even by heavy bombs.

Gigantic battery sets made of concrete and steel were constructed according to his directions. Air-raid shelters were built for hundreds of thousands of men, some of which have not been equaled in any country on earth.

The war in the east set the Todt organization new tasks. The length in kilometers of the repaired roads and the numbers of the newly built bridges are infinite. With a minimum of helpers, this man mastered this entire tremendous project, in addition to his activities as Reich minister for armament and munitions.

In this respect, he was undoubtedly the greatest organizer that the German Volk has called its own up to now. Far from bureaucratization, he knew how, with the smallest conceivable apparatus of his own, to make use of all the offices and forces that had previously been responsible for the solution of his problems or which appeared useful otherwise.

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Much of what this man has created will come to the knowledge of the German Volk only after the war and will lead it to admiring astonishment. The creations of this man are so unique that we will never be able to thank him enough.

If I have been speaking of the technician and organizer Fritz Todt up to now, I must now make special mention of the man who was so close to all of us. You cannot characterize his personality better than by stating that this mighty ruler of men in the homeland never had a single enemy in the party or among his coworkers.

I must thank him especially that, despite his workload, he never forgot or abandoned National Socialist ideas and the goals of the movement. On the contrary, he became one of the creators of our ideology. And this applied especially to his attitude toward the social problems of life. The man who led millions of workers was not only intellectually a true socialist, but he was so with all his heart. Fate forced this greatest road engineer of all time to earn his daily bread by working as a common laborer, just as it forced me to do in my youth. He never felt ashamed of this. On the contrary, later on it was always a moment of proud and joyous remembrance when this greatest building supervisor ever known to the world could look at his own picture or show how, covered with dust and dirt, he worked on a road, his work clothes torn, or stood in front of a boiling kettle of tea. Because of this, he loved so dearly his "German road constructors," as he called his roadmen. He constantly strove to improve their living conditions, which were often very difficult. He wanted to replace their old pitiful tents with modern bedrooms and living rooms and to rid their camps of the atmosphere of cold mass accommodation. Above all, he wanted to instill in the laborers the feeling that road construction—and the building trade in general—was a type of work which every single one of them could be particularly proud of. Not only because it creates products of great importance to man, but also products of great durability. Before Dr. Todt, the work of a roadman was not a very highly regarded profession. Today, the tens of thousands of German roadmen have become a proud community aware of its value. He has made a contribution to National Socialist educational work. We must be particularly grateful to him for this today. If all human progress needs a model to strive for, then the Todt organization is such an example. It was about to develop further. Slowly, it intended not only to eliminate a social injustice here, but also thoughtless human stupidity for all time.

No matter whether this man was with laborers, ministers, or generals, he always remained the same. He was a self-confident as well as modest leader and the caring friend of all decent working Volksgenossen.

It is hence not surprising that this man, who so dearly loved his Volk, felt the same tender, loving attachment to his wife and children. Every free hour was, if at all possible, spent by this creator of the greatest technological buildings in viewing the great creations of nature, the little house at the lake in the midst of his beloved Bavarian mountains.

While the West Wall was being finished, parts of which were already under fire by the enemy, and while the columns of the Todt organization joined up

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for the first time with the advancing armies in Poland and assured their supplies, I considered awarding him the Knight's Cross for his role as one of the leading heads of the German resistance and the German will to self-assertion in this war. I changed my mind, because this award—as glorious as it is—could never have done justice to the importance of this unique man.

I had already decided earlier to establish a German medal that, founded on the principles of our movement, would in several categories honor the greatest merits that a German could possibly earn in serving his Volk. After the conclusion of the campaign in France, I told Dr. Todt that I would one day acknowledge his unique merits by awarding him, as the first recipient, the highest class of this medal. From modesty, he did not want to hear of it at the time.

Like the National Award for Arts and Sciences, whose bearer Dr. Todt was, and which had first been awarded to the deceased Professor Troost, I confer, in the name of the German Volk and its National Socialist movement, the new order for the first time on our dear and unforgettable Dr. Todt, the inspector general of our roads, the architect of our West Wall, the organizer of our weapons and munitions in the great war of our Volk for its freedom and its future.⁷⁵

For my part, I can add only a few words to this. With this man, I lost one of my most loyal assistants and friends. I see his death as a contribution of the National Socialist movement to the fight for freedom of our Volk.

Around noon on February 13, Hitler received the new Norwegian prime minister Quisling for a talk at the Reich Chancellery, in the presence of Dr. Lammers and Terboven.⁷⁶

As Hitler later told Goebbels, Quisling had apparently developed “naive ideas.” He had spoken of the “buildup of new Norwegian armed forces” and of a “completely free Norway.” Hitler felt that these ideas were very “naive,” since he wanted to annex Norway body and soul to the German Reich. Why else would he have appointed a Reichskommissar? Following the discussion, Quisling was Hitler's guest for lunch. Goebbels also attended this reception, during which Hitler enthusiastically spoke of a “breakthrough at the Channel by German warships.”⁷⁷

On February 14 at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler received the new Croatian envoy, Dr. Mile Budack, who presented his credentials.⁷⁸

Two weeks had passed since Hitler had threatened a massacre of the Jews, and the English had still not put out a feeler for peace to Germany! His hope that the fall of Singapore would cost Churchill his job⁷⁹ had not come true either. Now the Führer had no choice but to go ahead with the massacre of the Jews. By this undertaking he would, so he said,

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“render mankind an invaluable service.”⁸⁰ He once again took Goebbels to task,⁸¹ telling him of his resolve to do away with the Jews in Europe. [Hitler said to Goebbels:]

One should not get sentimental here. The Jews deserve the catastrophe that they are experiencing today. With the annihilation of our enemies, they will experience their own annihilation. We must speed up this process with cold brutality. With this, we render mankind an invaluable service, since it has suffered under and has been tortured by Jewry for millennia. We must enforce this clear anti-Semitic attitude in our own Volk, too, despite the resistance of some circles.

Hitler claimed that he would make this clear to the “group of officers” to whom he would shortly speak. However, this was just big talk intended to impress and encourage Goebbels.

Hitler was not about to inform the 9,883 officer candidates he would speak to at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 15⁸² of the planned annihilation of the Jews. Instead, he proceeded in the same old way. Following the usual “party narrative,”⁸³ he reiterated the well-known topics that he usually discussed at such appeals to officer candidates: the inevitability of struggle in life, the relationship between population and Lebensraum, and the Germans as not only the best, but also numerically the strongest people on earth. He dwelt on the history of man, as he saw it of course, and revealed the following flashes of inspiration:

By living, one individual prevents the life of others. By dying, he opens up the way for new life.

The first picture we have of the Germanic people of our sort is one of hopeless fragmentation. German tribes whirled about Europe.

Hitler also spoke of the American “lack of culture” and the “colonization of England by Germans.”

When Mr. President Roosevelt stutters about culture, then I can only say: what Mr. President Roosevelt calls culture, we call lack of culture. To us, it is a stupid joke. I have already declared a few times that just one of Beethoven’s symphonies contains more culture than all of America has managed to produce up to now!

Strictly speaking, we colonized England and not the other way around.

Of course, Hitler had to make himself sound grand. The world was against him because it had been against Frederick the Great and Bismarck.

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Today, I have the honor to be this enemy because I am trying to make a world power out of the German Reich.

I am boundlessly proud of Providence for allowing me to wage this inevitable war. After all, the years pass and, if Providence had not bestowed this blessing on me, I would still be fifty-two years old today. These fifty-two years might have passed in indolence, perhaps in a middle-class life of luxury. In this way, however, these fifty-two years were years of constant struggle, work, cares, and fighting.⁸⁴

No matter when Providence will end my life, not even at the last moment will I regret having led this fight. On the contrary, I will be able to tell myself: It was a life worth living! It was not a life of cowardice, indolence, and restraint. Instead, it was a life that one day will hold its own before history!

Like the Hitler Youth,⁸⁵ Hitler now reminded the officer candidates of their great good fortune to live at a time like this.

Be proud that time has put you in the midst of something very great happening!

After a long “philosophical” discussion, Hitler returned to the present and hinted at wanting to proceed to the Caucasus.

Perhaps you will say: all the things we must do! We march one thousand kilometers into Russia, perhaps one-and-a-half thousand, two thousand, three thousand kilometers. Perhaps, the Führer will lead us to the Caucasus. What tremendous distances!

My young Comrades! Once German emperors and knights on horse rode the same distances. They went to the Holy Land, to Palestine. They went across the Alps countless times. What we are doing is not unique in history. Our ancestors did the same thing!

Hitler then praised the “German front-line soldier”:

I can only take my hat off to every single one of those front-line soldiers who fulfill their duty at the front in this icy cold. They deserve our admiration and our gratitude. All the heroic deeds that their officers have accomplished!

The front-line soldier will never give in as long as his leader never gives in!

In concluding, Hitler stated that he knew all their worries:

I know it all the more since I went through the whole gamut of human responsibility myself: as a common soldier, as an unknown and nameless man, who undertook to conquer a state, as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, and, above all, as commander in chief of the army. I know everything. I know how difficult this can be at times!

February 24, 1942

Because of this, the young officers should behave in the “hour of trial” in such a manner that people would say of them: “Look here, German Volk, this is how your officers fight!”

After these concluding statements, Göring felt compelled to make a lengthy pledge of fidelity. He stressed: “What the Führer has accomplished in the course of these last weeks and months, what gigantic demands this made on heart and character—only his closest assistants know.”

Having returned to the Führer headquarters, Hitler turned his attention to the problem of morality in the army and SS. He issued a decree that prohibited sexual intercourse between German soldiers stationed in Poland and Polish women. This became an offense punishable by law.⁸⁶

A second decree established the death penalty for SS members guilty of violations of paragraph 175 [homosexuality].⁸⁷

On February 24, Hitler was absent for the first time from the festivities in commemoration of the party’s foundation in Munich. He claimed that it was not possible for him to leave his headquarters since he was “preparing for the final confrontation.” Obviously, this was merely an excuse. There could be no talk of a “final offensive” before May or June. And on other occasions before and after February 24, it was evidently possible for him to leave his headquarters.⁸⁸

The truth was that he was afraid of his old party comrades, especially of the Obergruppenführers.⁸⁹ He feared that one of them would stand up and reprimand him for his various false prophecies. From 1939 on, he had made dozens of wrong forecasts, including the claim that the English would never go to war and that the Russians were “already broken and will never rise again.”

Hitler chose to send a “message” instead, which Gauleiter Wagner read to the audience:⁹⁰

Führer Headquarters, February 24, 1942

Party Comrades!

For the first time in many years, I am unable to participate in the day of commemoration with my oldest comrades in arms. I cannot well leave headquarters at a time when the winter is ending, a winter on which our enemies have placed all their hopes. From June to October 1941, German armies advanced over a thousand kilometers into the empire of an enemy who intended to destroy our Volk and our homeland for good. This winter—the like of which has not been seen in over a hundred years⁹¹—surprised us as early as

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late November 1941. Snow and frost temporarily halted the triumphant advance of the German Wehrmacht that was unique in history.

Our enemies hoped that the German armies would then suffer the same fate as the Napoleonic retreat. This attempt pitifully failed. Above all, it failed because of the bravery and the willingness of our unique men to sacrifice, who side by side with our allies held out during the icy storms of December, January, and February as staunchly as they had before fought for their unfading victories in the heat of June, July, August, and September.

Now that the worst cold is over, now that the snow is beginning to thaw in the Crimea and in southern Russia, I am unable to leave my post, as preparations for the final confrontation are being made, to settle accounts with this conspiracy in which the banking houses in the plutocratic world and the vaults of the Kremlin pursue the same goal: the extermination of the Aryan people and races.

This community of Jewish capitalism and Communism is nothing new to us old National Socialists, especially to you, my oldest comrades in arms. As before, during, and after the First World War in our country, so today the Jews and again only the Jews have to be held responsible for tearing apart the nations.

There is a difference, however, if we compare the present world struggle with the end of the war from 1914–1918. In 1919, we National Socialists were a small group of believers who not only recognized the international enemy of mankind but also fought him. Today, the ideas of our National Socialist and Fascist revolution have conquered great and mighty states. My prophecy will be fulfilled that this war will not destroy the Aryan, but, instead, it will exterminate the Jew. Whatever the struggle may bring, however long it may last, this will be its final result. And only then, after the elimination of these parasites, a long era of international understanding, and therefore of true peace, will come over the suffering world.

Today more than ever, I am with you in spirit, my old National Socialists, since you were already my followers when, as [is still true] today, being a National Socialist only meant making sacrifices.

On this day, I am personally all the more inspired with the imperturbable confidence and the sacred faith that this mighty fight, in which we are engaged today and for which, back then, on February 24, 1920, we set out from this same hall in which you are now assembled, cannot and will not end differently from our own miraculous struggle for power in the German Reich. Just as Providence has blessed our fight in all those years, it will now let us win it for good! What used to be our party program are now the basis of a new and improving world.

Therefore, receive my greetings, which I convey to you through party comrade Adolf Wagner, as though I were standing in your midst.

In my thoughts, I am with you anyway in these hours!

Adolf Hitler

February 28, 1942

In this message, Hitler again expressed his determination to exterminate the Jews. To murder millions of defenseless people was all he had left to offer, a Führer who was too much of a coward to face his old followers at the Hofbräuhaus hall in Munich. Never again would he dare to face them in this hall.⁹²

On February 24, Hitler sent a telegram of condolences to Franco on the death of his father.⁹³

Two days later, Hitler addressed Field Marshal Kesselring in a handwritten letter, awarding him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.⁹⁴

On February 28, Gauleiter Wagner laid a wreath from Hitler at the coffin of Anton Drexler at the Westfriedhof in Munich.⁹⁵

On March 1, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Emperor of Manchukuo on the national holiday.⁹⁶

On the same day, he signed a decree on the "systematic spiritual struggle against Jews, Freemasons, and their allies, the . . . opponents of National Socialism." He called this a "necessary war mission." The decree read as follows:⁹⁷

Jews, Freemasons, and their allies, the ideological opponents of National Socialism, are the authors of the war presently directed against the Reich. The systematic spiritual struggle against these powers is a necessary war mission.

I have therefore instructed Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg to carry out this mission in conjunction with the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht. His operational staff for the occupied territories is authorized to search for relevant materials in libraries, archives, lodges, and other ideological or cultural institutions of all types, and to have this material confiscated for the ideological work of the NSDAP and subsequent research work at the National Socialist Hohe Schule.

The same regulations apply to cultural goods in Jewish possession or ownership, or that are derelict, or whose origin is not incontestably established. Implementing regulations on cooperation with the Wehrmacht will be decreed by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht in agreement with Reichsleiter Rosenberg. In his capacity as the Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories, Reichsleiter Rosenberg will take the necessary measures in the eastern territories under German administration.

Adolf Hitler

This decree on the "mental combating" of the Jews obviously was intended to mask the simultaneous beginning of the "physical combating," that is, the extermination of the Jews. Even though anti-Semitism had been elevated to a political philosophy in the Third Reich and the torment and harassment of Jews had become a feature of everyday life, never before had there been talk of literally exterminating

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them and killing them off without exception. It was only recently that Hitler had threatened this, for example, in his speeches of January 30, 1941 and 1942, and in his message of February 24, 1942.⁹⁸ Initially, he had done so by making “prophecies.” Now, however, after the failure of the eastern campaign had become evident, he turned to the practical implementation of his plan. And here some resistance had to be overcome first. It took some time to get Goebbels used to the idea of the total, physical annihilation of the Jews in Europe, that is, those in German hands. His diary entries show this.⁹⁹ It was a different matter, of course, with Heinrich Himmler and his men. Hitler had long seen to training them not only to accept all his ideas—no matter how crazy or criminal—as absolutely correct, but also to carry them out to the letter.

Still on March 7, 1942, Goebbels wrote in his diary:¹⁰⁰ “There are still over eleven million Jews in Europe. Sometime later on, they shall have to be concentrated in the east; it is possible that after the war we will be able to assign them an island, perhaps Madagascar.” On March 20, 1942, he wrote:¹⁰¹ “In this matter [the question of the Jews], the Führer is as inexorable as ever: the Jews are to be thrown out of Europe, if necessary with use of the most brutal means.”

For Goebbels, the situation then underwent a complete change. On March 27, 1942, he wrote: “Jews are now being deported to the east from the territory ruled by the General-Government, starting with Lublin.¹⁰² Here will be used a fairly barbarous method which one can’t come close to describing; not much will remain of the Jews themselves. On the whole, it can be determined that sixty percent of them will have to be liquidated, only forty percent being usable for the purposes of labor. The former district leader of Vienna,¹⁰³ who is in charge of the action, is showing a good deal of circumspection in following a method that does not attract a lot of attention. Justice is being meted out to the Jews; although it is barbarous, they fully deserve it. The prophecy that the Führer uttered against them for having brought about a new world war now begins to be realized in the most frightful way. In these matters, sentimentality must not be permitted to hold sway. If we did not defend ourselves against the Jews, they would destroy us. It is a struggle of life and death between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus. No other government and no other regime had the strength to resolve this question in its generality. In this respect too the Führer is the constant champion and spokesman of a radical solution.

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The ghettos being vacated in the cities of the General-Government may now be filled with Jews deported from the Reich, and here, after a certain time, the process will start again. It's no laughing matter for Judaism; the fact that its representatives in Europe must pay dearly for the organizing and propagandizing of war against Germany by its representatives in England and America is no doubt justified."¹⁰⁴ (Cf. *The Goebbels Diaries*, *ibid.*, pp. 114–143.)

As mentioned before and illustrated by example,¹⁰⁵ the doglike subservience of the SS men to Hitler's will formed a parallel case to the subservience of Napoleon's Old Guard. Had Napoleon proclaimed the idea of killing the Jews in his hands, his guardsmen would undoubtedly have done this as they had killed, on the retreat from Moscow, all Russian prisoners by shooting them through the base of the skull.

Hitler's manservant Linge reported on secret conferences between the Führer and Himmler. Nobody else was allowed to be present at these talks, which in all likelihood concerned the annihilation of the Jews.¹⁰⁶ In practice, the procedure was to be the following: first, Jews in the east, in Poland and Russia, would be exterminated, along with their wives and children, and then, under the pretext of a "resettlement" (*Aussiedlung*), the Jews in Germany and western Europe would be deported to the east so that the whole process of annihilation could begin anew.¹⁰⁷

Hitler's argument for this monstrous crime was quite simple: Jews, like Russians, were not human. They were "animals and beasts."¹⁰⁸ If valuable men had to die each day at the front, then it was really of no consequence if such vermin like the Jews were killed. They were no different from "tuberculosis bacilli." If such "innocent natural creatures as rabbits and deer" had to die, then why should "the beasts, who want to bring us Bolshevism, be spared?"¹⁰⁹

Hitler was known to be very fond of animals.¹¹⁰ He shared this fondness with a number of mass murderers.

In spite of all of Hitler's reasons for the annihilation of the Jews, it was not easy for Himmler to find SS men willing to implement the cowardly annihilation of millions of defenseless human beings: men, women, children, and old people. They had not only to be encouraged by extra bottles of brandy; in addition, ethical arguments had to be employed: as difficult and unpleasant as this task might be, those chosen to carry it out had to realize the "exalted nature of their mission,"¹¹¹ by

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means of which they were rendering a service to the fatherland, Europe, and mankind.¹¹²

This confusion of concepts was carried to an extreme reminiscent of the persecution of the Christians in ancient Rome which had led Christ to make the following prophecy: "I have said all this to you to keep you from giving up your faith. They will expel you from the synagogues; indeed, the time will come when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God."¹¹³

And had not Adolf Hitler written in *Mein Kampf*: "By defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."¹¹⁴

Besides the extermination of the Jews, Hitler also envisioned and carried out the annihilation of the Gypsies. In his eyes, they were vermin, beasts, tuberculosis bacilli, too. In this respect, an ordinance by the then Reich minister of labor is of interest, an ordinance which decreed the "equality of Gypsies and Jews under the labor laws."¹¹⁵

As monstrous as Hitler's massacre of the Jews was, as much as it shamed Germany, it nevertheless formed only one part of his rule; and it was not the cause of the fall of the Führer and the Third Reich. Their fate was sealed at eleven o'clock on September 3, 1939. And the reason for it was the same as for the collapse of the Kaiser's empire, namely, the attempt to expand Germany's borders by the use of force. This is a clear, historical fact, and it would be dangerous to try to diminish it by pointing to the Holocaust.

March 15, 1942

2

On March 1, Hitler exchanged telegrams with King Boris on the anniversary of Bulgaria's accession to the Tripartite Pact.¹¹⁶

One day later, he awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle to the Croatian head of state, Ante Pavelich.¹¹⁷

On March 4, Hitler sent a telegram of condolences to Victor Emmanuel on the death of the duke of Aosta, who had died in English captivity in Nairobi.¹¹⁸

On the same day, the appointment of Otto Gebühr as "state actor" by Hitler was made public. Gebühr would play the title role in *The Great King*, a new film on the life of Frederick the Great.¹¹⁹

On March 8, Hitler promoted Infantry General von Manstein to colonel general "in recognition of the merit he earned in the conquest of the Crimea and the subsequent defensive combat."¹²⁰ At the same time, a photograph taken at a reception for the panzer general, Walter Model, at the Führer headquarters was published and his promotion to colonel general was made public.¹²¹

On March 12, Hitler had his adjutant Schaub present a handwritten letter to Frick, congratulating him on his sixty-fifth birthday.¹²²

On Heroes' Memorial Day on March 15, Hitler appeared in Berlin and delivered the following speech at the state ceremony, which began at twelve o'clock in the inner courtyard of the Zeughaus:¹²³

When, in the year 1940, we celebrated our Volk's Heroes' Memorial Day for the first time in this hall, the German Volk and its Wehrmacht once again found themselves, after decades of humiliating enslavement, in a struggle for their freedom and future, facing old enemies. The defenseless impotence of the Reich calmed them no more than they were satisfied with the economic reduction to misery that was forced on us.

A trial¹²⁴ is taking place in France these days, the most characteristic feature of which is that not a word is said about the guilt of those responsible for this

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war. Instead, it is a question exclusively of too little preparation for this war. We witness a mentality here that we cannot understand. But perhaps it is better suited than anything else to a revelation of the causes for this new war.

In the year 1918, the statesmen responsible for the war in England, France, and America arrived at the insane decision not to allow Germany under any circumstances ever to rise again and become a factor of equal rights in economic or political life. From this intent, all further measures and injustices were derived, at the mercy of which the Reich found itself after the unfortunate day of the Armistice.

The German Volk, despairing of its leadership and itself, now found no means to resist a fate that could be conquered not by subservience, but only by united will power and bravery. The consequences of this weak surrender to the situation forced on us were not only politically and militarily dishonorable, but also truly destructive economically. One of the most hard-working people in the world witnessed the progressive reduction of its economic base and, therefore, the collapse of its existence. It was foreseeable in what a short period the number of our Volk would persistently decline because of its material misery, and, hence, that the German Reich would not be able to ward off the destruction thrust on it because of its own loss of strength.

This economic collapse of the strongest people in Central Europe was no blessing for its enemies either: their hatred prevented them from seeing that the reduction to misery of the German nation by no means meant an economic boom for the so-called victors.

So those states the leadership of which suffered a thorough Jewish-capitalist contamination caught up with the German Reich in their unemployment figures and, in part, exceeded them in spite of their immeasurable riches in the products and the treasures of the earth.

But even this development failed to convey to the blind hatred of the leaders of our old enemies, essentially directed by Jewish elements, a clear insight into the true necessities of the future life of all people. Immediately after the seizure of power by the National Socialists, they began again to take up the old inflammatory slogans—instead of learning from Germany's exemplary economic and social measures—in order to prepare their people emotionally through propaganda for a renewed challenge.

We know today that in the years 1935 and 1936, the decision for war had already been made in England, France, and especially in America, by the influential Jewish circles and by the political leaders in bondage to them.

We now witness the heart-wrenching drama in which the betrayed and dumbfounded people do not see the insane intention of starting a new war as such, but the neglected and, in their eyes, insufficient preparation of their armament.

This foreign, incomprehensible mentality in particular teaches us how necessary the military preparation of the German Volk was, after the rejection of all German proposals for disarmament and understanding, to thwart the second attack on its freedom more successfully than in the First World War in 1914.

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When, for the first time in the year 1940, we celebrated our Volk's Heroes' Memorial Day in wartime, we did so in the proud recognition that we had won the first phase of a confrontation that was forced on us against our will. With the greatest confidence, we could hope to succeed in the second one as well.

And, indeed, by March 1941, a war year of successes unequaled in world history lay behind us. In a triumphant march without equal, the north and the west of Europe were cleansed of the continent's enemy forces. Italy joined our side as a loyal ally in this struggle of the "have-nots" for "to be or not to be."

The accomplishments of the German armies in this campaign pale in comparison with what Fate demanded that our Wehrmacht and our allies solve and master in the past year.

And only today we realize the extent of the preparations of our enemies. Today, we see the interplay of the Jewish wire-pullers, who are spread over the whole world. Through a joint attack by a conspiracy which united democracy and Bolshevism in a community of interests, they hoped to be able to destroy all of Europe.

That Providence allowed us to withstand victoriously this coalition of Jewish Marxism and capitalism on all battlefields makes us grateful from the depths of our hearts to Him, without Whose protection and care all human effort, all diligence and courage would be in vain. For behind us lies not only a year of the greatest battles in world history, but also the year of our own Volk's hardest test.

It was a test that the front as well as the homeland, I can say, passed. That the German does not fear the threats of man, his history has proved frequently enough. This time, he was put to the test not only by the force of the enemy's weapons and virtually infinite blood resources from the most primitive people, but also by the cruel harshness of nature. For today, we can inform you that behind us lies a winter the like of which has not been seen in central and eastern Europe in more than a hundred forty years. Truly, our soldiers and those of our allies were cruelly seized up by Providence in the last four months in order to assess their true inner worth. However, they passed the test in a manner such that nobody is justified in doubting that—no matter what the future or Providence will bring us—what lies ahead can only be easier than what lies behind us.

In barely four months of summer, the German Wehrmacht, following the successful conclusion of the Balkan campaign in the year 1941, began its march into the vastness of the Russian space. Battles were fought and victories secured that will be seen as unique glorious deeds even in the distant future.¹²⁵ United with its brave allies, the Wehrmacht attacked ever new Russian bodies of men. It defeated them, eliminated them, only to confront new droves of men. In four months, endless distances were covered in an offensive whose depth and breadth have no equal in history.

Weeks before experience or scientific forecast led anyone to expect, winter set in on our armies, a fact which gave the enemy four months to bring about a change in his favor in this fateful struggle. After all, it was the only hope of the rulers in the Kremlin that this revolt of the natural elements, which they

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had also never before witnessed, would deal the German Wehrmacht a fate like that of Napoleon in 1812.

Through a superhuman struggle and the dedication of the last forces of soul and body, the Germans and our allied soldiers have passed this test and have overcome it. In a few months, history will be in a position to judge whether it was militarily correct or incorrect to pour hecatombs of Russian lives into this struggle.

Today, we already know one thing: the Bolshevik hordes, who were unable to vanquish the Germans and the allied soldiers this winter, will be defeated by us this coming summer and annihilated. The Bolshevik colossus, whose cruel danger we only now realize, may never again touch the sacred fields of Europe—and this is our irrevocable resolve—but instead it should receive its final borders far from them!

At this moment, we all sense the greatness of the times in which we live. A world is being fashioned anew. While in the Far East, the heroic Japanese people—just as provoked, abused, and economically choked as the Germans and Italians—is crushing the democratic-capitalist citadel in mighty blows at sea, in the air, and on land, the conditions are established in Europe to grant this continent its true independence.

For it is unbearable that the life of hundreds of millions of men of the highest cultural worth and indefatigable diligence should be forever dependent on the will of a small, truly criminal, community of Jewish-capitalist, international conspirators and their control of public opinion in a few states which are set against Europe because of this alone. There can be only one solution, namely, to wage this war for as long as it takes to secure a lasting peace, that is, until the enemies of this peace are destroyed!

By professing this decision for a solemn avowal, we are best able to do justice to the sacrifices that the war of 1914–1918, the struggle of the Nationalist Socialists for the domestic resurrection of our Volk, and finally the present fight have demanded of us and will continue to demand of us. How the outside world fashions its life is of no concern to our German Volk. The attempt by the extra-continental powers to interfere persistently in inner-European affairs, and especially in the concerns of our own Volk, will now be warded off for good and prevented.

If, and in which world, the American president intends to live is of no consequence whatsoever to us Germans. However, his intention to bring the German or even the European world into line with his needs, that is, to topple a world which has become dear to us and to erect one hated by and alien to us, will not only come to nothing, but on the contrary: his own world will be ruined in this attempt. As regards the intention to punish Europe with Bolshevism, I have already said elsewhere that the state that has devoted itself to it the most will be the first to become its victim. The German Volk is well-informed today about the blessings of this bestial doctrine. Above all, it is strong enough to be able to resist successfully this deadly threat to its existence.

In view of the past great year and—as we are convinced—the no less great coming one, we commemorate our heroes and those of our brave allies of past

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and present, with the firm intention to see that all these sacrifices are not and will not be in vain. We could not observe this holiday more dutifully than by realizing that the present generation is again on a par with the great times of the past. Its soldiers at the front are on a par with it, as are its men and women in the homeland. Whatever destiny may demand of us, these fighting years will in spite of this be shorter than the years of the long and blessed peace that will result from the present struggle. It is the future task of the National Socialist state to build this peace so that it will do justice to the sacrifices of our soldiers from all classes of our Volk. For they all perished for the eternal German Volk, our shared Greater German Reich, and for a better community of the nations on our continent.

May the Lord grant us all the strength to do whatever duty demands of us now and in the future. With this request, we bow respectfully before the dead heroes, the family members mourning them, and all the other victims of this war.

On Heroes' Memorial Day, Hitler promoted Vice-Admiral Karl Dönitz, the commander in chief of the U-boat fleet, to the rank of admiral. In addition, he had a wreath laid at the grave of Ludendorff in Tutzing.¹²⁶ He also sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on the Slovak national holiday.¹²⁷ Furthermore, he engaged Hácha in an exchange of telegrams on the anniversary of the protectorate's establishment, sending him his "sincere best wishes for the future of the Czech people."¹²⁸

Having returned to his headquarters, Hitler received Rundstedt, who reported to him after a "convalescent leave." In addition, Rommel appeared at the Wolfsschanze. As a reward for his "defensive victory," he received the earlier awarded Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords from the Führer's hands.¹²⁹

On March 18, a "state funeral" took place in Stuttgart in honor of the "pioneer of labor" and leader of economy, Dr. Robert Bosch. The Reich minister of economics Funk laid a wreath from the Führer.¹³⁰

On the same day, Hitler commissioned Professor Heinrich Hoffmann, who had served as his personal photographer for many years, to see to the "organization of the 1942 Greater German Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst."¹³¹

Around March 20,¹³² Hitler received Goebbels for a lengthy talk at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Of all Hitler's apostles, he was the only one who truly loved him. He virtually drank in all of Hitler's words, which left him feeling "like a recharged battery."¹³³

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Goebbels was not unintelligent, but whenever he faced Hitler reason deserted him completely. The crudest platitudes and lies that any child could have seen through seemed to him perfectly acceptable, as long as Hitler was their author. Goebbels was really dependent on him. He considered Hitler to be the archetypal Messiah for whom he and others had been longing for so long. In his barely known book *Michael*, a kind of novella written in the twenties, Goebbels enthusiastically described a spellbinding orator with hypnotic blue eyes, a charismatic savior and liberator who had come from the unknown to lead the disillusioned German Volk after the lost war of 1914–1918 into a better future, into a world of true freedom: “This is no orator. This is a prophet!”¹³⁴ And Goebbels kept faith in him until the end. He was the only one who shared his fate at the Führerbunker.

Hitler did not return Goebbels’ affections. On the contrary, he distrusted him. He thought him to be a type of Mephistopheles because of his clubfoot. He never asked him to attend secret meetings, even though he might summon him in dangerous situation, for example, the Röhm Purge, so that he could keep an eye on him himself. On the other hand, he mercilessly exploited Goebbels’ propagandist abilities in order to launch a particular version of a story in the papers or a so-called “Volk opinion.” Now he used a sentimental approach in the talk at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in order to incite Goebbels against the generals, especially Brauchitsch, as well as against the lawyers and bureaucrats. He lamented his bad state of health, reporting the “strongest” feelings of dizziness. He complained about the “long, harsh, and cruel winter,” and about the war and its “sharpest concentration.” Goebbels noted in his diary:

Sometimes, the Führer said, he had felt that it was no longer possible to overcome it. But then, he had summoned his last willpower to fight off the onslaught of the enemy forces.

Had he been weak for only one moment, then the front would have begun to slide. A catastrophe would have been in the making that would have eclipsed the Napoleonic one by far. Millions of brave soldiers would have died of starvation and cold, and the result would have been that our laborers would have been led off into slavery to do compulsory labor, not to mention our intelligentsia.

Goebbels was profoundly shaken at hearing what the poor Führer had to go through.¹³⁵ But who was to blame for this wretched state of affairs? Brauchitsch, of course!

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The Führer had only words of contempt [for him]. A vain, cowardly wretch, who was incapable of grasping the situation, not to mention mastering it. He had completely made a mess of and ruined the entire campaign in the east, which the Führer had drawn up in a crystal-clear manner, by his constant interference and his constant disobedience. The Führer had had a plan that would have had to lead to victory. Had Brauchitsch done everything that was asked of him and what he actually should have done, then our situation in the east would be different today from what it is now.

The Führer had never had the intention of going to Moscow. He wanted to cut off the Caucasus and thereby strike a sore spot of the Soviet system. But Brauchitsch and his general staff had known better. Brauchitsch had always pushed for Moscow. He wanted prestigious successes instead of actual successes. The Führer described him as a coward and duffer. He had also tried to make a mess of the campaign in the west, but the Führer had been able to intervene there in time.¹³⁶

For the coming spring and summer, the Führer again has a completely clear plan. He does not want to wage war forever. His goals are the Caucasus, Leningrad, and Moscow.

Once we have realized these goals, he wants to be finished under all circumstances by early October and to go into winter quarters in a timely fashion. If need be, he intends to set up a gigantic line of defense and then to let the campaign in the east be.

Possibly, it will come to a hundred-year war in the east, but then this need not worry us particularly.

Hitler did not only want to go over the topics of Brauchitsch and Russia with Goebbels, but he also informed Goebbels of his idea to have the Reichstag issue Hitler a new “carte blanche” for moving against jurists in particular.

The judiciary must not be the master, it must be the servant of national policy. . . .

For the benefit of a rigorous procedure in political and military life, the Führer again wants a special judicial power to be issued to him by the Reichstag. It will let wrongdoers know that he is shielded by the Volksgemeinschaft in every way. He intends shortly to summon the Reichstag and to have it give him full discretionary powers for proceeding against saboteurs, and especially against those who neglect fulfillment of their official duties. A general judicial power for the Führer—which would authorize him not only to remove from office, at his own discretion, those officers who refuse their duty, but also to disgrace them—would work wonders by setting an example.

Hitler then took a broader view, speaking of a “crisis” in England. He speculated that the United States would become “ripe for Bolshevism” and expressed his admiration for the Japanese. However, at

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the same time, he regretted “the white man’s being forced back.” But “the English had wanted it this way.” They should have accepted Hitler’s offer of an alliance and the protection of their empire by German divisions!

When Goebbels took his leave, Hitler was “very touched.” A little more, and he would have broken out in tears. Goebbels felt “almost like in a daze.”

On March 21, Hitler signed a decree on a plenipotentiary for labor duties that would initiate measures in violation of international law and would send Sauckel to the gallows. The decree read as follows:¹³⁷

The securing of the manpower required by the entire war economy, especially by armament, necessitates a uniform management, reflecting the needs of the war economy, of the deployment of all available manpower, including foreign recruits and prisoners of war, as well as the mobilization of the yet unused manpower in the Greater German Reich, including the protectorate, the General-Government, and the occupied territories.

This mission will be carried out by Reich Governor and Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel as plenipotentiary for labor duties within the framework of the Four-Year Plan. In this capacity, he is directly subordinate to the commissioner for the Four-Year Plan.

On the same day, Hitler issued an ordinance on the protection of the war economy.¹³⁸ It dealt with the distribution of raw materials.

Since Hitler had made himself commander in chief of the army, he felt that it was unbearable that anybody in his Reich should have a different opinion from his. Hitler had always detested public servants and their “well-established rights,” “irremovable judges” and their freedom of decision, because they would not unconditionally accept as right whatever corresponded to the Führer’s view. He felt that the party jurists were the worst. They always tried to remind him of his own legal provisions, espousing the “naive” view that the laws of the National Socialist Reich must be recognized and maintained. He much preferred the bourgeois legal experts, like Gürtner and Bumke,¹³⁹ who had no scruples about publicly declaring his breaches of the law “legal.”

The only National Socialist jurist whom Hitler accepted was Lammers. He “took care of things without resorting to legal abstraction.”¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, Göring and Goebbels felt that Lammers was a “super-bureaucrat.”¹⁴¹ Understandably so, as Lammers always demanded that Hitler’s laws be obeyed in a bureaucratic fashion. Nevertheless, if Hitler desired to commit a breach of the law, topple the

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law in force, or have some hair-raising injustice legally sanctioned, Lammers was always immediately at hand to draw up the required decree and to countersign it. It was not surprising that Hitler considered Lammers to be the “only acceptable jurist.” This splendid cooperation was evidenced by Hitler’s decree of March 21 on the simplification of the administration of justice.¹⁴² Among other things, it provided for the following:

The defense of Volk and Reich necessitates the smooth and swift working of the administration of justice. In order to enable the courts and public prosecutors to continue fulfilling their tasks under the special circumstances of the war, I decree the following:

I

Proceedings in criminal cases, as well as the execution of judgments in civil cases and in matters of voluntary jurisdiction, shall, by the omission of all expendable steps and the deployment of all available forces, be simplified and speeded up insofar as this can still be reconciled with the purpose of the proceedings. In particular in criminal cases, the enforcement of the prosecution by the injured party and the opening of the trial shall be omitted. The penal authority of the judge of the Amtsgericht [district court] shall be enlarged, and the permissibility of the order of summary punishment shall be expanded.

II

Bills of indictment and judicial decisions shall be concise and short, restricted to what is absolutely necessary.

III

Participation of full-time assessors in judicial decisions shall be limited.

Undoubtedly, this decree signaled major interference by Hitler with the existing law. This would actually have required passing a new law. At the very least, it would have necessitated consulting with the Reich minister of justice, state secretary Dr. Schlegelberger, who had temporarily taken over this function following Gürtner’s death. However, he would probably have objected to this, and so Lammers jumped into the breach, simply countersigning as “Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery.” The state secretaries, judges, and so on, were free to read in the Reich Law Gazette what new principles of law Hitler had come up with!

However, these arbitrary decrees did not satisfy Hitler. His immense power was not yet great enough. Within the party, he was the sole authoritative leader; supreme commander of the SA; head of the political organization; and—since Hess’s escape—his own deputy.

March 29, 1942

Within the state, he was head of state (as “Führer,” he held the former office of Reich president); head of government (Reich chancellor); and minister of war. Within the armed forces, he was supreme commander of the Wehrmacht and commander in chief of the army. However, why was he not “Supreme Law Lord”¹⁴³ and sole authoritative chief of the entire judiciary?

Hitler spent February and March 1942 preoccupied with the privileges of jurists, including those of the party jurists. Not only did his statements to Goebbels prove this,¹⁴⁴ but also his verbal attacks on jurists with which he pestered his audience at the “Table Talk.”¹⁴⁵

He recounted all sorts of anecdotes from his life in order to prove what “a cancerous sore today’s jurisprudence is for the German Volk.” Besides this, he wildly attacked jurists in general.

On February 8, he declared for example:¹⁴⁶

Our judiciary is not flexible enough. After ten years of imprisonment, a man is a lost cause for the Volksgemeinschaft anyway. Who will give him work then? You either stick a fellow into a concentration camp or you kill him. These days, the latter is more important for the sake of deterrence. If you want to set an example, you must also hit all fellow travelers!

Instead of this, the judiciary dedicates all its love and care to rummaging in the files in order to arrive at a just judgment in line with its peacetime exercises. Such judgments must be quashed under all circumstances.

In a long tirade, Hitler claimed on March 29, 1942:¹⁴⁷

No man of reason can comprehend the jurisprudence that the jurists have concocted. In the end, today’s jurisprudence is nothing other than one great system of shifting the responsibility onto someone else. He would therefore do everything to disparage as much as possible the study of law, that is, the study of this type of interpretation of the law. Because these studies would not form men who were fit for life and suited to guarantee for the state its natural legal order. These studies only meant an education in irresponsibility.

He would take care that all judges, with the exception of a ten-percent true elite, were removed from the judiciary. The whole swindle of lay assessors would be done away with. He wanted to put an end for good to a judge’s getting around taking responsibility for his decision by declaring that the lay assessors had outvoted him.

Today, he was therefore making clear that, for him, a jurist was either someone deficient by nature or someone bound to become so over time.

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No matter how much Hitler railed against jurists, it soon became obvious, even during the “Table Talk,” what his actual objective was, namely, the autocracy of Adolf Hitler. He did not want to be restrained by legal norms or supervised by jurists. Characteristic of this attitude was the following “example,” with which Hitler sought to make things clear to his audience.¹⁴⁸

Further, he [Hitler] noticed that bequests—which were made to him in large numbers and which, for his own person, he waived as a matter of principle, only sometimes assigning them to the NSV—could only effectively be waived by having his signature under the relevant declaration attested by a lawyer. In the opinion of the jurists, the signature of the German Reich chancellor, together with the seal of the Reich, was apparently not as credible as that of a lawyer.

All of Hitler’s nice speeches and attacks were in vain as long as he did not have a concrete case, some striking example, which would enable him to tell German jurisprudence “to go to hell” and to make himself Supreme Law Lord.

Soon, a suitable occasion presented itself. On March 19, 1942, the case of Ewald Schlitt was tried by the Oldenburg Landgericht (regional court of a land).¹⁴⁹

Ewald Schlitt was a twenty-nine-year-old engineer at the navy shipyard at Wilhelmshaven. He had married in 1937, and this marriage had been far from ideal. In June 1940, the couple had had a violent dispute. In October 1940, Mrs. Schlitt had died in a nursing home. The case was rather unclear. It could not be established by forensic medical tests whether the death of the wife had resulted from an earlier battery by Schlitt or not. Normally, Schlitt would have spent several months in jail for assault occasioning grievous bodily harm. The judge, however, who was known for his strictness, sentenced him to five years in prison! Even in the case of battery resulting in death, the sentence could range from six months to five years in prison.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the sentence in the Schlitt case was called “too harsh,” even by superior judges.¹⁵¹

The *Berliner Nachtausgabe* reported on the Oldenburg ruling. Hitler read the article on March 21 and decided right away to use this case for his planned move against the judiciary and for seeing his full discretionary powers through the Reichstag. This mild sentence was outrageous: only five years of imprisonment for a man who had beaten his wife to death, while out there at the front thousands of brave soldiers had to die every day! Immediately, Hitler struck a pose and behaved like

March 22, 1942

a madman. He ranted and raved, demanding immediately to speak to Dr. Schlegelberger, although it was the middle of the night. He shouted into the receiver:

That's typical again! A violent criminal like this Schlitt gets away with five years of confinement to safe barracks, and this at state expense, while hundreds of thousands of decent men risk their lives at the front for their wives and children! I will tell you and the entire judiciary to go to hell if this sentence is not immediately revised! Immediately! If this does not happen, I will have the whole sentencing process and the whole criminal prosecution handed over to the Reichsführer SS!

Schlegelberger truthfully replied that he had not read the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* and was not familiar with the Schlitt case. And how would the acting justice minister in Berlin have known about so insignificant a case, which had just been tried by a Landgericht in the province?

Hitler angrily hung up. He then demanded to speak to Freisler, who served as second state secretary in the Reich ministry of justice at the time. Roland Freisler was a man who could not be accused of having any scruples.¹⁵² Nevertheless, he could not tell Hitler either how to go about revising this final sentence. Naturally so, as Freisler was one of those despised party jurists.¹⁵³ Hitler continued to rant and rave, as his pilot Baur told the "Table Talk" assembly the following day:

He [Hitler] was very angry about this mild sentence for a woman's murderer. He regards the murder of women and children as particularly abominable. If the judiciary continues to produce such sentences, then Hitler wants to tell the ministry of justice to go to hell [*zum Teufel schicken*] via a Reichstag law.¹⁵⁴

Undoubtedly, Hitler had already toyed with the thought of getting rid of the ministry of justice ever since Gürtner's death in 1941. For this reason, he had not appointed a successor to him. In 1938, the Reich war ministry had been abolished because it was no longer needed under Hitler. Was there a need for the Reich ministry of justice with an Adolf Hitler around? Why maintain the whole administration of justice? Were there not enough policemen and Gestapo officials? Were there not concentration camps which could see to the execution of a sentence?

On March 22, Rundstedt celebrated his fiftieth military-service anniversary. In December, Hitler had got rid of him by removing him from the southern front. In the meantime, Rundstedt had found favor in the Führer's eyes again. On his service anniversary, Hitler had his chief adjutant Schmudt present Rundstedt with a handwritten letter in

March 24, 1942

which he praised “the great merits of the field marshal in war and peace.”¹⁵⁵ At the same time, the news was made public that “Rundstedt, following his recovery, had taken up a position of responsibility again.”

On March 23, Hitler was forced to issue Directive No. 40. It concerned the powers of command along the coasts. It read as follows:¹⁵⁶

Points of Primary Importance

In the near future, the danger of enemy landings on the European coastline will become more and more imminent. The enemy will not fix the time and place of his landing operations on the basis of military considerations alone. Disappointments in other theaters, commitment to allies, and political considerations may seduce him into plans that from a purely military point of view must seem unlikely. Moreover even landing operations with limited goals, should they enable the enemy to gain a coastal foothold, must in any case involve severe disadvantage to our own planning. They would interrupt our coastal sea traffic and tie up strong infantry and air contingents that would then be diverted from commitment in areas of decisive importance. The danger is particularly acute if the enemy succeeds in reaching airbases or in establishing airbases of his own in the territory gained. Furthermore military bases located on or near the coast and sites forming parts of the defense system and outfitted with particularly sophisticated equipment must constitute enticements to local commando operations. Special attention is to be given English preparations for landing operations on the open coast, for which they have assembled a large number of armored landing craft equipped with personnel carriers and heavy ordinance. Moreover there is increased likelihood of parachute and air-to-land operations. [Technical details follow.]

This sounded strange coming from Hitler. Were small allied landing operations capable of significantly upsetting German intentions?! Had he not just publicly declared that he wanted to evacuate the area where the English were planning to land in order to “spare them the difficulties of a landing” and then to “discuss matters” later?¹⁵⁷

But all Hitler’s big talk had resulted in very little. Now, British commandos¹⁵⁸ disquieted him. In the course of the summer, they caused him endless trouble. This led him to the issuing of the infamous *Kommandobefehl* in violation of international law on October 18.¹⁵⁹

On March 24, Hitler once again received King Boris. The following communiqué was published on their meeting:¹⁶⁰

On March 24, the Führer received King Boris of Bulgaria at his headquarters and entered into a long and heartfelt discussion with him. The talks took place in the spirit of the brotherhood in arms founded in the World War and the friendship between Germany and Bulgaria.

March 30, 1942

No matter how much Hitler spoke of the German-Bulgarian brotherhood in arms during the First World War, he could not talk Boris into declaring war on Russia. He was greatly angered by this. During the "Table Talk,"¹⁶¹ Hitler lashed out at Bulgaria, its pro-Russian attitude, and claimed that Turkey was "a far more valuable ally than Bulgaria was."¹⁶²

On March 29, Hitler thanked the members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra by wire for the greetings conveyed to him on their centennial.¹⁶³

On the same day, the English began their "strategic air offensive" with an air raid on Lübeck. This offensive aimed at the destruction of all large German cities (those with a population of over a hundred thousand). Hitler's infamous threat, "we will erase their cities," (*wir werden ihre Städte ausradieren*)¹⁶⁴ now rebounded against Germany in a dreadful manner.

The strategic air offensive by the Royal Air Force, which was to end in the destruction of the city of Würzburg on March 16, 1945,¹⁶⁵ made one German city after another (those with more than a hundred thousand citizens) suffer the same fate as Coventry.¹⁶⁶ Now, the Germans, who had coined the term *coventrieren* ("coventrying"), would no longer speak of it, while the English now referred to "lübecking" in retaliation. Hitler was forced to watch, unable to do anything about it. From now on, he had to limit his "retaliatory attacks" to verbal ones.¹⁶⁷

The catastrophic news about the damage to Lübeck caused Hitler to phone Goebbels from the Wolfsschanze headquarters on March 30. He immediately transferred to him responsibility for rescue efforts during air raids.¹⁶⁸ Previously, such measures had lain in the sphere of responsibility of the ministry of the interior. However, in the Third Reich, one telephone call by Hitler sufficed to change responsibility!

On March 30, Hitler had Field Marshal Milch, who celebrated his fiftieth birthday in Berlin, presented with a handwritten letter and his picture.¹⁶⁹

In the meantime, the responsible men of German jurisprudence had tried to find a way to appease Hitler in the Schlitt case.¹⁷⁰ Schlegelberger and Freisler had met in conference with the president of the Reichsgericht, Dr. Bumke. Not surprisingly, this bourgeois legal expert, who had always found favor with Hitler,¹⁷¹ was better able than the two National Socialist "judicial officers" to find a way out. Since Hitler obviously desired a death sentence, the only remaining question was

April 2, 1942

how to justify such a revision of the earlier sentence. Bumke felt that this called for an “extraordinary objection by the supreme Reich counsel.” This would mean a new trial by the Leipzig Reichsgericht over which he presided. And that was exactly how things came to pass: without due consideration of the Oldenburg Landgericht, Schlitt was transferred to Leipzig. On March 31, 1942, Schlitt was tried by the “Extraordinary Criminal Division of the Court of Appeal,” presided over by Bumke. Of course, he was sentenced to death and executed on April 2 in Dresden.¹⁷² The German judiciary was capable of working quite speedily, if Hitler’s favor was at stake!

However, in this instance, the German judiciary failed to recognize the actual issue at stake. Hitler was interested in the Schlitt case only as a means of obtaining “full discretionary powers” from the Reichstag. And Hitler would not budge on this. In his speech before the Reichstag on April 26,¹⁷³ he cited the Schlitt case as though nothing had happened in the meantime, and did not even mention the new death sentence!

On April 1, Hitler sent the chief editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Wilhelm Weiss, his picture with a personal dedication on his fiftieth birthday.¹⁷⁴

Hitler remained much preoccupied by legal matters. On April 2, for example, he dictated a decree on the execution of a sentence in the Wehrmacht during the war. It read as follows:¹⁷⁵

Berlin, April 2, 1942

The Führer and Supreme Commander

The execution of a sentence in times of war must be quickly adapted to the changing requirements of the military situation. Measures must not be adhered to that under different circumstances might have proved trustworthy.

The opportunities for probation provided by the eastern front must be taken advantage of to a greater extent in the future. In particular, convicts who do not belong to combat units must be afforded the opportunity, insofar as possible through a transfer, to prove their worth in the face of the enemy.

Also, in the future, certain convicts will not be deployed with combat troops, at least not immediately. Unstable elements, who count on escaping service at the front by serving their term of imprisonment, must be discouraged by the improvement and graduation of the execution of a sentence. To this end, convict details are to be set up immediately, which are to be called in for hard labor under dangerous conditions in the theater of operations, if possible in the operational area of the combat troops. In the new regulation for the execution of a sentence, it is essential that all members of the Wehrmacht be treated equally. In principle, the status of one branch of service or formation is to be prevented from being better than that of another.

April 10, 1942

The necessary regulation on the new order for the execution of a sentence will be decreed by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On April 5, Hitler issued Directive No. 41, which revealed his military plan of action in Russia to a certain extent. As mentioned earlier, his objectives now were limited, restricted mainly to the Caucasus and possibly Leningrad. The directive read as follows:¹⁷⁶

The winter fighting in Russia draws to an end. Thanks to the surpassing courage and self-sacrificing commitment of our troops on the eastern front, German arms have been able to repel enemy efforts of the greatest magnitude. The enemy suffered extremely heavy losses in personnel and material. In an effort to exploit apparent initial successes, they largely expended in this one winter the great bulk of the reserves they were holding back for future operations. As soon as weather and terrain conditions permit, the superior German leadership and men must again seize the initiative to impose their will upon the enemy. The goal is to deprive the Soviets once and for all of the living defensive forces still at their disposal and to cut them off as far as possible from the centers supplying them with military resources. To achieve this, all available forces of the German army and of our allies are to be committed. But it is absolutely necessary that the occupied areas in western and northern Europe, especially the coastlines, be secured.

I. General aim: In accordance with the original features of the eastern campaign, the main point is that the army center hold its ground, while in the north Leningrad is taken and a corridor established to the Finns, and on the southern flank a breakthrough is forced into the Caucasus region. In view of the condition in which our forces will be when the winter fighting is over, of the availability of men and supplies, and of the transportation situation, this goal can be reached only step by step. For this reason, all available units are to be massed first in the southern sector in order to eliminate enemy forces before they reach the Don and then secure the oil fields in the Caucasus region and make the Caucasus itself passable. The final encirclement of Leningrad and the taking of the Ingerman region must await either a favorable development in the area around Leningrad itself or the availability of additional units. [Technical details follow.]

During the next days, some honors to statesmen of “befriended” states followed, reminding them not to forget their honors on the Führer’s birthday. On April 6, Hitler received the royal Romanian chief of staff, General Steflea,¹⁷⁷ at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. In addition, he awarded the “marshal of Croatia,” Slavko Kvaternik, the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.¹⁷⁸

On April 10, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Croatian “head of state,” Ante Pavelich:¹⁷⁹

April 20, 1942

On the first anniversary of the existence of the independent state of Croatia, I send Your Excellency my sincere best wishes for your personal welfare and for the prosperous future of the allied Croatian people, which is so actively participating in overpowering Bolshevism and erecting a new European order.

Adolf Hitler

On April 12, Hitler awarded Horthy the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold.¹⁸⁰

On April 15, Hitler sent the President of the Republic of Portugal, General de Fragosa Cramona, a “telegram of heartfelt words” on the beginning his new term of office.¹⁸¹

The next day, Hitler awarded King Boris of Bulgaria the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold.¹⁸²

On April 17, shortly before the Führer’s birthday, uninvited visitors appeared: four-engine Lancaster bombers of the Royal Air Force attacked the MAN factory in Augsburg in broad daylight. The planes flew low, just above the chimneys. While the daring mission cost about two-thirds of the planes, those “senile” English effectively demonstrated their fighting spirit.¹⁸³

On April 19, Hitler awarded the Finnish state president Ryti the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold. The Finnish prime minister Rangell received the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.¹⁸⁴

On April 20, Hitler celebrated his fifty-third birthday at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The obligatory communiqué presented a bit of a problem for him. On the one hand, he did not want to appear to be celebrating too much, because of the war. On the other hand, he wanted to make clear how much he had been honored. Finally, he settled on the following version:¹⁸⁵

The Führer spent his birthday at the headquarters. At the beginning of the military briefings, which took place as on any other working day, the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, and the chief of the army general staff, Colonel General Halder, congratulated the Führer on behalf of the army.

Around noon, the Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, Hermann Göring, who was accompanied by Field Marshal Milch, and Grand Admiral Raeder, conveyed the congratulations of the Luftwaffe and the navy.

Congratulations were likewise conveyed to the headquarters by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop; Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, Himmler; the NSDAP Reich leader of organization, Dr. Ley; the chief

April 20, 1942

of the party chancellery, Bormann; the Reich press chief, Reichsleiter Dr. Dietrich; the chief of the Reich chancellery, Reich Minister Dr. Lammers; and the Reich minister for armament and munitions, Albert Speer. Earlier in the morning, the members of his closest personal staff had congratulated the Führer, headed by Major General Schmudt and SS Gruppenführer Schaub.

Of course, Hitler had received congratulatory telegrams from Victor Emmanuel III and from Mussolini. He thanked them in the following telegrams:¹⁸⁶

My heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty for the friendly best wishes, which you conveyed to me on the occasion of my birthday today, for the future of the German Volk as well as for my personal welfare. It is my unshakable conviction that, together with our ally Italy, we will emerge greater and stronger than before from this joint struggle.

Adolf Hitler

My heartfelt thanks, Duce, for the friendly best wishes, which you conveyed to me on my birthday today in your own name, and in the name of Italy's Fascist government and the Italian people. More than ever, I share your conviction that Germany and its allies, united by their common will to fight, will victoriously conclude this war for the future of our people.

Adolf Hitler

Congratulations by other heads of state and statesmen were scarce, of course, since by now Germany was at war with the most important states. Neutral states were reluctant to send congratulatory greetings to Hitler. On the other hand, the number of the communiqués could not possibly be shorter now than before. And so, the names cited in the official headquarters publications were rather obscure. In part, these men had never before been heard of:¹⁸⁷

In addition to the already published congratulatory telegrams from the king of Italy, the emperor of Ethiopia, and the Duce, further telegraphic congratulations were received from the following: state president Hácha; the king of Romania; the Romanian head of state, Marshal Antonescu; the king of Bulgaria; the king of Denmark; the regent of the kingdom of Hungary; the Hungarian prime minister; the head of state of Croatia; the marshal of Croatia, Kvaternik; the president of Finland; the president of the Slovak republic; the Spanish head of state; the president of Portugal; the French head of state, Marshal Pétain; the prince of Liechtenstein; the emperor of Manchukuo; and the president of the National Chinese government. Moreover, the former king of Bulgaria, Ferdinand; the crown prince of Italy; the royal Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano; the imperial Japanese war minister, General Tojo; and the chief of the imperial Japanese general staff, General Suyiama, among others, relayed their congratulations to the Führer by telegram.

April 22, 1942

The Führer has conveyed his thanks for the best wishes by telegram.

In addition to the already mentioned congratulatory telegrams by foreign heads of state, heads of government, and statesmen, congratulations were received from the president of the Thai regency council, Prince Dibaba; from the Slovak prime minister, Tuka; from the Romanian vice prime minister, Antonescu; from the Croatian foreign minister, Lorkovic; from the French prime minister, Laval; as well as from the Greek prime minister, Tsolakoglou.

On April 22, as was his custom, Hitler published the following expression of his gratitude:¹⁸⁸

This year, I again received so many best wishes on April 20 from all Gaus of the Reich and from abroad that I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have thought of me.

Adolf Hitler

At the same time, Hitler issued the following appeal for the third Kriegshilfswerk of the German Red Cross:¹⁸⁹

Führer Headquarters, April 22, 1942

German Volk!

A winter of the most difficult battles and of the heaviest burdens lies behind us. In its course, the German soldier has passed a trial that by far surpassed all sacrifices previously made by him in this war. Superhuman demands, of a physical as well as psychological nature, had to be made on him. He has fulfilled them with a willingness to sacrifice, in comparison with which pale all burdens and privations suffered by the homeland, no matter how difficult they may have been and still are in each individual instance.

When this winter put us to the severest test, millions of German soldiers thought of their homeland in order to fight for their wives and children, for the existence and future of our Volk, against a barbaric enemy, whose victory would have meant the end of everything. The homeland also knows this. It has understood that its fate lies exclusively in the hands of the German soldier. What the front sacrifices for our Volk, the homeland will probably never be able to repay. It should nevertheless pay off at least a small part of its debt by helping as best it can in healing the wounds that this war has dealt our soldiers.

For a third time, I appeal to the German Volk on behalf of the Kriegshilfswerk of the German Red Cross. The fulfillment of this duty will represent a modest expression of gratitude to our soldiers by the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft. As their Führer and supreme commander, I expect that each German will realize more than ever before the heroism of the front and will attempt by his sacrifice to thank our brave men.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler had planned to spend the next few days as follows: on Sunday, April 26, he wanted to summon the Reichstag in order to give

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a triumphant report on his achievements during this “most difficult winter,” and then, using the Schlitt case, he wanted to have himself declared supreme law lord with full discretionary power.

If all went well—and how could anyone doubt this—then he would permit himself a holiday on the Obersalzberg. So as to have an excuse to do so, he had scheduled a conference with the Duce for the end of April. He would meet with him for several days in Salzburg and at Klessheim Castle.¹⁹⁰ And so, the German ambassador in Rome, von Mackensen, was instructed on April 23 to arrange such a meeting in accordance with Hitler’s wishes. This did not suit Mussolini, however, who requested a postponement of the conference until early May.¹⁹¹

It is easy to imagine how outraged Hitler was at his friend Mussolini’s response. His vacation plans for the Obersalzberg should be upset because Mussolini refused to obey? Such a postponement was completely out of the question.

On April 24, Hitler telephoned Rome, claiming that a postponement was not possible “because of reasons beyond his control.” Something beyond the Führer’s control, that was unheard of. Was that supposed to mean that the schedule for the meeting was in Eva Braun’s control? In any event, Mussolini gave in, and his visit was set for April 29 and 30.

Though everything was settled now, Hitler still felt that it was necessary to add a little drama. He went to the telephone and called Goebbels, pretending that he was unsure of what would be the best time for the Reichstag to convene. The Führer wished to ask Goebbels for advice! Apparently, a lengthy discussion ensued,¹⁹² although the date remained fixed: Sunday, April 26.

On the evening of April 24, Hitler left East Prussia aboard his special train. The next day, he arrived in Berlin at noon. He immediately conferred with Goebbels¹⁹³ at the Reich Chancellery, discussing “the question of vegetarianism at great length.” Eating meat was “injurious to mankind.” He said that he intended “to tackle this problem also after the war.”

On another topic, Goebbels reported that Hitler was “extraordinarily incensed” by the escape of the French general Giraud, who had managed to flee from the Königstein fortress in Saxony to the Alsace region and from there to Switzerland.¹⁹⁴

One day later, Goebbels lunched with Hitler. Goebbels felt depressed because of the heavy English air raids on Rostock. However,

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Hitler immediately made him feel better by juggling the numbers and claiming that the German air raid on Bath, a city in central England, had been far more devastating than the English raid on Rostock. This was a boldfaced lie, but Goebbels swallowed it, as usual:¹⁹⁵

. . . he gives me some more figures on our attack on Bath. According to these, it was far more extensive than the one which the English made on Rostock. The Führer declared that he would repeat attacks like this night after night, until the English have had enough of their terror attacks.

At 3:00 p.m. on April 26, the Greater German Reichstag, which had been elected on April 10, 1938, met for its sixth and last session at the Kroll Opera House.

Hitler began his speech as follows:¹⁹⁶

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

On December 11, 1941, when I was last able to speak to you, I had the privilege of accounting for the course of events during the past year. The full extent of their historic greatness and continued political significance will perhaps not be appreciated until centuries have passed. Only a few weeks after the suppression of the revolt in Belgrade, which was instigated jointly by England and Moscow, Europe realized, perhaps for the first time in centuries, the common threat from the east. The existence or nonexistence of our continent has often depended on the successful defense against it. For many men, the causes of the bloody war, which has been forced on us following September 1939, have now become clearer.

For this war does not share any longer the characteristics of the inner-European confrontations that we have previously grown accustomed to. Increasingly, the deep impression has taken hold that the usual or reasonable interests of individual countries do not suffice to explain the reasons for this historic struggle. Instead, it seems to be one of those elemental confrontations which, by shaking up the world once every few millennia, herald the millennium of a new era.

Many of the historical figures who appear in its course are no more aware of the profound meaning of their mission and actions than the simple soldier is in the context of a larger military operation. Such eruptive epochs are so long that the individual human being finds it difficult to see the context and even the significance of his life in relation to the overall course of the events. In spite of this, even where there appears to be no sense to or benefit of such a process, which shakes up people and even continents, there are beneficiaries. Many believe they have to drive, but they are only the driven. Others want to strike and, in the end, they are the ones who are stricken.

When, on September 3, 1939, after endless German endeavors for peace, the new Reich was presented with the declaration of war by France and England, after these states pushed Poland to the front as the chosen force, issuing it a *carte blanche*, one had to despair of the reason of a world which, apparently

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without reason, virtually forced the catastrophe, instead of attempting to prevent the misfortune of an insane war.

Hitler then discussed at great length the history of the British Empire and the English policy during the First World War. This was followed by a tirade directed against England, which now worked together with the Bolsheviks and rejected his "peace proposals."

No matter with what great hypocritical friendship its archcapitalists welcome the Bolshevik statesmen, no matter how tenderly its archbishops embrace the bloody beasts of Bolshevik atheism, the more they resort to lies, hypocrisy, and fraud in order to cover morally for the unnatural coalition with this empire before their own people and the rest of mankind, the less they will be in a position actually to deceive the perceptive people, in order to prevent the natural evolution of an inevitable historical development. There is a wise saying dating from antiquity, namely that the gods first blind those whom they have destined to damnation [actually: "the gods first drive insane those whom they wish to destroy"].

I do not know whether all Englishmen today still consider it a wise and enlightened act to have dismissed the numerous opportunities for an understanding, which I had proposed ever since the year 1935. Or whether today they are still as convinced that it was very clever to have turned down my offers for an alliance, which I had renewed even on September 1, 1939, and to have rejected my peace proposals after the Polish and French campaigns.

I also know another commandment. It says that man must give an added push to what the gods have destined to fall.¹⁹⁷ So now what has to happen will happen.

Naturally, it was the Jews who were to blame for all that.

When understanding and reason have apparently been silenced in international life, then this does not necessarily mean that there is not a rational will somewhere, even if from the outside only stupidity and stubbornness can be discerned as causes.

The British Jew, Lord Disraeli,¹⁹⁸ once said that the racial question is the key to world history. We National Socialists have been raised in this belief. By devoting ourselves to the essence of the racial question, we have obtained clarification of many events that would otherwise appear to defy understanding.

The hidden powers that drove England into the first World War in the year 1914 were Jews. The power that paralyzed us at that time and finally forced us to surrender under the slogan that Germany should not be allowed to carry its flag home victorious was a Jewish one. Jews engineered the revolution by our Volk and thereby robbed us of our powers of further resistance.¹⁹⁹ After 1939, Jews maneuvered the British empire into a dangerous crisis. Jews were the carriers of the Bolshevik infection which once threatened to destroy Europe. At the same time, they were the warmongers in the ranks of the plutocracies. A

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circle of Jews in America once drove this country into the war against all national interest, simply and solely because of Jewish-capitalist motives. And President Roosevelt, lacking capabilities of his own, has the support of said brain trust, whose leading men I need not mention by name: they are only Jews.

Through them, as in the year 1917, the United States of America was driven step by step into a war without reason and sense, by a Jewish-infected president and his completely Jewish cohorts, against nations which have never harmed America, and against people from whom America can never profit.

What sense does a war make that is waged by a state representing a space without a people, against people without space? In this war, politically speaking, it is not a question of the interests of individual people, but a question of the confrontation between nations that seek to secure life on this earth for their members and people, and nations who have become the instrument of an international world parasite. German and allied soldiers have become well-acquainted with the actual activities of this Jewish-international warmongering in a country where Jewry has set up an exclusive dictatorship, preached it as the idol of a future human race to which, as once here with us, other people's inferior subjects have incomprehensibly become enslaved. At this moment, as always in its history, the seemingly aging Europe again raises high the torch of a realization, and its men march today as the representatives of a new and better order, as the true youth of the social and national freedom of the world.

Now Hitler preached that, in the last winter, he had left the "most difficult struggle of his life" behind him in order to fulfill a "sacred mission."

If I speak to you today in the name of this true youth of Europe and therefore of a younger world, then I do this with the sentiment of a man who, for a sacred mission, has left behind him the most difficult struggle of his life. Further, I speak to you as the commander of armies. They are mastering a fate that is the most difficult trial, the kind which Providence only imposes on those who are destined for the greatest things.

If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible.²⁰⁰

My Deputies!

During this winter, a battle of the world (*Weltkampf*) was decided, a battle the problems of which far surpassed the tasks that should and can be resolved in a normal war.

When, in November 1918, the undefeated German Volk, befuddled by the phraseology of the then American president Wilson, laid down its arms and left the battlefield, it did so under the influence of that Jewish race that now hoped to construct a secure bastion for Bolshevism in the heart of Europe. We know the theoretical principles and the cruel reality of this international plague. It is called the reign of the proletariat but it is the dictatorship of Jewry! It is the

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extermination of the national establishment and intelligentsia of nations, the domination of the proletariat—by that time leaderless and therefore rendered defenseless due to its own fault—by the solely Jewish international criminals. What happened to such a cruel extent in Russia—the extermination of countless millions of leading persons—was to be continued in Germany. If this intention failed, then it was because our Volk still had too many healthy powers of resistance, but insofar as the establishment on the Bolshevik side is concerned, which consisted only of Jews, it was due above all to the lack of courage and to the unanimous approval by the proletariat for the execution in Germany of what had succeeded in Russia. In individual parts of the Reich at least, we witnessed the beginnings of this development and we eliminated it at the risk of numerous idealists' lives.

On Hungary, the curse of this satanic work weighed more heavily. There, too, it was only possible to break the power of Jewish might by the use of national force. The name of the man who, as the leader in the struggle against this crime, became the savior of Hungary lives on today among us as that of one of the first representatives of the incipient European uprising.

The most difficult confrontation with this threatening destruction of people and state took place in Italy. In a heroic rebellion, Italian war veterans and Italian youths, led by a uniquely blessed man, defeated the compromise between democratic cowardice and Bolshevik force in a bloody struggle. They have put in its place a new positive idea of people and state.

I recommend every German to study the history of the Fascist revolution. Not without being deeply moved, he will follow this man's path. His movement has so much in common with ours that we feel its struggle to be part of our own fate. Only with the victory of Fascism could one speak of the incipient salvation of Europe.

Only then, the conglomerate of ideas of a destructive and disintegrating nature was replaced not by the force of the bayonet but by a truly constructive new idea. For the first time, not only were Bolsheviks defeated in a state but also and above all Marxists were won over. Won over not only for the reshaping of a better and healthier social order, which regards the state not as the protector of a certain social class but as the guarantor of the standard of living of all.

At the same time when these history-making events were taking place, the National Socialist movement undertook the fulfillment of its mission in our own Volk. Here, too, the hour came when—in the confrontation between Jewish internationalism and the National Socialist idea of people and state—healthy nature prevailed.

Also in most other European countries, this conflict occurred. However, there was a difference in that it was at first overshadowed by compromise in some countries; in others, it was temporarily eliminated by public funds. We all remember the next great and decisive confrontation in Spain, where the leadership of a single man forced a clear and final decision. Following a bloody civil war, the national revolution there likewise defeated the Bolshevik archenemy.

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With the increasing recognition of Jews as the parasitic germs of these diseases, state after state was forced in the last years to take a position on this fateful question for nations. Imbued with the instinct of self-preservation, they had to take those measures which were suited to protect for good their own people against this international poison.

Even if Bolshevik Russia is the concrete product of this Jewish infection, one should not forget that democratic capitalism creates the conditions for it. In this way, the Jews prepare what the same Jews execute in the second stage of this process. In the first stage, they deprive the majority of men of their rights and reduce them to helpless slaves. Or, as they themselves put it, they make them expropriated proletarians in order to spur them on, as a fanaticized mob, to destroy the foundations of their state. Later, this is followed by the extermination of their own national intelligentsia, and finally by the elimination of all cultural foundations that, as a thousand-year-old heritage, could provide these people with their inner worth or serve as a warning to the future. What remains after that is the beast in man and a Jewish class that, as parasites in leadership positions, will in the end destroy the fertile soil on which it thrives.

On this process—which according to Mommsen results in the Jewish-engineered decomposition of people and states—the young, awakening Europe has now declared war. Proud and honorable people in other parts of the world have allied themselves to it. They will be joined by hundreds of millions of oppressed men who, irrespective of how their present leaders may view this, will one day break their chains. The end of these liars will come, liars who claim to protect the world against a threatening domination but who actually only seek to save their own world-rule.

We are now in the midst of this mighty, truly historic awakening of the people, partly as leading, acting, or performing men. On the one side stand the men of the democracies that form the heart of Jewish capitalism, with their whole dead weight of dusty theories of state, their parliamentary corruption, their outdated social order, their Jewish brain trusts, their Jewish newspapers, stock exchanges, and banks—a combination, a mix of political and economic racketeers of the worst sort; on their side, there is the Bolshevik state, that is, that number of brutish men over whom the Jew, as in the Soviet Union, wields his bloody whip. And on the other side stand those nations who fight for their freedom and independence, for the securing of their people's daily bread.

So it is the so-called "haves" from the cellars of the Kremlin to the vaults of New York's banking houses against the "have-nots," that is, those nations for which a single bad harvest means misery and hunger. In spite of all the diligence of their inhabitants, they are unable to obtain their daily bread at a time when, in the states and countries of the "haves," wheat, corn, coffee, and so on, are thrown into the fire in order to achieve somewhat higher prices. However, the battleground where the decision will fall is situated in the east of Europe.

I spoke to you about the successes of the years of fighting lying behind us, my Deputies, whenever time and circumstances commanded and made it

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possible. The last time I spoke about the fight in the past year was on December 11, 1941.

I would like to stress here that my speeches are primarily addressed to the German Volk and to its friends. I do not speak in order to convince people who, because of stupidity or ill intentions, fail deliberately to see the truth and do not wish to hear about it. Because if I compare the true course of events with the conclusions drawn from them by Mr. Churchill—to cite one example—then there appears so wide a discrepancy between the events and their interpretation that every attempt at reconciling these contradictory views must be futile. Since September 1939, indeed ever since the beginning of the seizure of power by National Socialism, I have made mistake after mistake and faux pas after faux pas.

By contrast, there was not a single phase that Mr. Churchill does not claim to represent an “encouragement” for his cause. He will probably claim this to the end.

That England declared war on us was an encouraging sign of its strength. That others found themselves willing to be led to the slaughter for British egotism was no less encouraging. A mere meeting between Churchill and Daladier or Paul Reynaud produced encouraging symptoms. Discussions between two or more Allied generals are as encouraging evidence of the military progress of the democratic cause as the fireside talks of the sick man in the White House are proof of the intellectual progress. When Mr. Cripps flew to Moscow for the first time, this was no less encouraging than his return flight from India. That General MacArthur was able to flee the Philippines just in time was likewise an encouraging factor. It is just as encouraging when twenty Englishmen with blackened faces and rubber soles, aboard a British inflatable raft, succeed in sneaking up to the coasts occupied by us and land, only to take off again at the appearance of a German patrol.²⁰¹ If an émigré government, that is, an assembly of zeroes, issues a declaration against Germany, then this seems encouraging, just as when Mr. Churchill announces the destruction of German U-boats, or speaks of a new invention, or a new offensive, or a second front, and so on.

Nothing can be done about this. Every people has its own type of encouragements. For example, I once regarded it as encouraging that we succeeded within eighteen days in sweeping away the Polish state with its thirty-three million men in a number of mighty battles of annihilation (*Vernichtungsschlachten*). I further regarded it as encouraging that, in this period, neither France nor England dared to feel their way up to the West Wall. I believe that it was also encouraging that we could land in Norway and that we did not do so at night with our faces blackened and with rubber soles, but in broad daylight and in climbing boots with spikes, and that we gained complete control of this Norway in barely six weeks. It was likewise very encouraging for all of us to see how the British Expeditionary Force was thrown out of Norway within a few weeks.

I likewise believe that we have good reason to find encouraging that it was possible for us in barely six weeks to beat the French-British armies to complete

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annihilation, to gain control of Holland for good in not even one week and of Belgium in barely three weeks, to defeat the British forces, to capture them, or to force them out to sea at Dunkirk. I myself felt that it was particularly encouraging that, together with Italy, we secured great successes not only in France but also in North Africa.

It was likewise encouraging in my eyes that, together with our allies, we were able within a few weeks to smash the Serbian rebellion inspired by Washington and London and engineered by Moscow. It was further encouraging for us to see that the British Expeditionary Force quickly retreated first to the Peloponnesian peninsula and then across the sea to Crete, to the extent that it was not destroyed or captured by us.

It was no less encouraging for the German Volk that, since June 22 of last year, we have been able, together with our allies, to repel from our borders the Bolshevik danger and to force it back over a thousand kilometers, and that, at the same time, our U-boats and Luftwaffe, as well as our other naval forces, sank more than sixteen million GRT [gross registered tons] of enemy merchant ships, continue to sink them today, and will sink them in the future. I regard it as an encouragement that we were able to adjust to our standard the gauges of the railroad system in the expanses of the east and to operate this system, which at this time is larger than that of the entire English motherland.

On the topic of the Japanese deeds of heroism, that unique triumphant march, I can only say that, in our eyes, they are likewise very encouraging. And in this manner, in response to the encouraging elements of which Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt speak, I could list countless deeds that represent an encouragement for us. As I see it, the most encouraging thing for Germany and its allies is that Mr. Churchill and Roosevelt work in London and Washington, and not in Berlin or Rome. The English will not believe this, but that is the way it is!

After this tirade, Hitler spoke again of what he had accomplished during the last winter. He justified taking over the army command, which actually served primarily to satisfy his lust for power, by claiming that it represented "obligation of honor in the most difficult hour." Hitler declared as follows:

My Deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

When I spoke to you the last time, a winter had set in in the east, the like of which Europe had not seen for over a hundred forty years²⁰² even in this area. In a few days, the thermometer dropped from around zero degrees to minus forty-seven degrees and below. Probably nobody can appreciate what that means unless he has experienced it himself. Four weeks earlier than anticipated, all further operations came to a sudden end. The front, which was in the middle of a forward movement, could not be allowed to be swept back, nor could it be left in the positions taken up at that moment. Therefore, a withdrawal to a general line stretching from Taganrog to Lake Ladoga was made. I can say today that, while this process can be easily described here, it was

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infinitely difficult to carry it out in reality. The lightning impact of such a cold wave, which even in these areas occurs only once every hundred years, paralyzed not only the men but also and above all the machinery. There were moments when both threatened to freeze. Looking at the vastness of this east, you also have to consider the psychological strain which destroyed the French army in 1812, and whose memory is still capable of paralyzing the vigor of weak natures.²⁰³

The main burden of the battle lay with the army and the allied foreign units. Therefore, I felt it was an obligation of honor for me to tie my name at this moment to the fate of the army.

As a soldier, I felt so very responsible for the conduct of this battle that I would have regarded it as unbearable in this most difficult hour not to confront personally whatever Providence appeared to have in store for us. That we succeeded in completely mastering the threatening catastrophe, I owe primarily and exclusively to the bravery, the loyalty, and the superhuman capacity for suffering of our brave soldiers. They alone have made it possible for me to hold a front against which the enemy began to throw hecatombs of men.

For months on end, ever new, barely trained masses from the expanses of central Asia or the Caucasus assaulted our lines, which, especially at night, could be held only in the form of strongpoints. It is impossible to lie in an open field without cover at minus thirty, forty degrees or lower. If, in spite of this, the Russians succeeded in pushing or seeping through these barely fortified positions with ever new waves of attack, then this was possible only by sacrificing hundreds of thousands of men.

But the problem that weighed on us most heavily at this time was the question of supplies. Neither the German men nor the German panzers, nor regrettably our German locomotives were prepared for the onslaught of the cold. And, still, the existence or nonexistence of our armies depended on the maintenance of our supply lines. You will therefore understand and surely approve that, in one case or another, I acted ruthlessly and harshly in order to overcome a destiny to which we might otherwise have succumbed, by fighting with the fiercest determination.

Because, my Deputies, when in the year 1812, the Napoleonic armies were swept back from Moscow and were finally wiped out, minus twenty-five was the lowest temperature. This year, however, the lowest temperature we measured at one location along the eastern front was precisely fifty-two degrees below zero.²⁰⁴

In summing up, if I give my view on the accomplishments of the troops themselves, I can only say that they all have fulfilled their duty to the utmost. But surely the German infantry once again ranks at the top. On the march for thousands of kilometers, forever on the attack, it plunged into a winter practically overnight. It had neither anticipated it in this form, nor had it ever before witnessed it. We all know the paralyzing influence of the cold. It puts man to sleep and kills him painlessly. That we were spared this fate in these critical weeks, we owe to the superhuman fitness and strength of will not only of the soldiers, but also and above all of the noncommissioned officers, and

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officers up to those generals who, in realizing the approaching danger and at great risk to their own lives, spurred on the men time and again and formed them into that sworn community that today is probably the best the German Volk has ever called its own. In speaking of this infantry, I would today like to underline for the first time the constant and exemplary bravery and toughness of my SS divisions and SS police units. From the start, I regarded them as an unshakable unit, just as obedient, loyal, and brave in wartime as in peacetime.

However, in the ranks of this infantry also fought the panzer grenadiers and panzer destroyers, engineers, gunners, signalers, and, last but not least, the drivers of our columns. They all deserve the homeland's gratitude. Through its heroic sorties, the Luftwaffe has helped these brave soldiers time and again, and not only through its valiant pilots of fighters, bombers, spotting and transport planes, but also, wherever necessary, through its flak and Luftwaffe battalions which on the ground unshakably defended their airfields and finally also defended the especially threatened sections of the front.

In the fierce cold, construction teams of the Todt organization and the *Standarte Speer* helped time and again to free arterial roads from interference and to defend the traffic routes—if necessary with their own blood—against the partisans. Men of the Labor Service fought with the spade and the rifle. Superhuman efforts were demanded of the medical officers and medical noncommissioned officers, the stretcher-bearers, the male nurses, and, above all, the female nurses of the German Red Cross and the NSV.

Railroad engineers set up ever new lines, bridges, and crossings at a time when the steel was so brittle that tracks began to crack when used. In spite of great weariness, train crews and switchmen tried to help their comrades at the front, because there were times when everything depended on a few single railway sections and trains. That all this was achieved, we owe to the death-defying courage and fighting morale of countless and nameless heroes who will live on through their unfading glorious deeds in the history of our Volk.

It would therefore be a great injustice if I failed on this day to commemorate those who have shared our suffering. It is hardly necessary to speak about our Finnish comrades in arms. They were so excellent and so experienced in this battle that they can only serve as examples to us. In particular, they remained calm in the face of Russian units breaking in or seeping through. By closing their front ranks, they began with the annihilation of the Bolsheviks operating behind their backs. If I start from the north, then I also have to mention the soldiers of one division from the south of Europe who went through everything at Lake Ilmen that our own men had to go through.

When the Spanish division one day returns to its homeland, we cannot neglect appreciation of their loyalty and bravery until death. All other units of our Hungarian, Slovak, and Croatian allies deserve the same evaluation: they have fulfilled their mission with the greatest bravery and reliability. The three Italian divisions remained in their place all winter in spite of the cold, which was particularly painful for them. Thanks to their bravery, every Russian breakthrough was doomed there as well. The same applies to the brave soldiers of the allied Romanian army, under the command of Marshal Antonescu.

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There, as everywhere else along the front, a gradual welding together of the various European nations in the face of the common enemy was notable. This applied not only to the Germanic volunteers with the SS units, but also to the Belgian and French participants in this joint venture. But also Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, and Tartars took part in the fight against the Bolshevik enemy of the world. The air forces of our allies, too, dealt the enemy heavy losses, starting with the Finnish down to the Italian fighter pilots.

In the course of these mighty, historic successes, it was necessary for me to intervene only in a few cases. Only when nerves failed, obedience faltered, or a sense of duty was lacking in performing tasks, did I make hard decisions. I did so empowered by the sovereign right that I believe has been accorded to me by my German Volk. For the homeland's supporting me in this struggle, I wish to say thanks not only in my own name but also and above all in the name of our soldiers.

It fills me with great pride and profound satisfaction that the education of our Volk through National Socialism is increasingly becoming apparent. While the party has by far the greatest number not only of its members but also of its leaders at the front—millions of men from the political organization, the SA, the National Socialist Motorized Corps, and so on, do their duty as soldiers—their leadership truly serves as an example. It helps not only the frequently pressed homeland through its organization of the labor front and the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization, but also the soldiers in the field.

My appeal for a wool collection has made it possible within the shortest time, together with many organizational improvements, to give the troops warmer clothing than possible before. Therefore, we may all feel proud—and I say so at this moment—particularly of the soldiers in the front lines. We have overcome a fate that brought another man²⁰⁵ to his knees a hundred thirty years ago. The trial that this winter represented for the front and the homeland should serve as a lesson to all of us. From a purely organizational point of view, I have made the necessary dispositions to prevent a repetition of a similar state of emergency. No matter where the coming winter finds us, the German Reichsbahn will do a better job than in the previous winter. From locomotives to panzers, tractors, and trucks, the army in the east will be better equipped. For the individual man, however, even in the event that a similar natural disaster repeats itself,²⁰⁶ experience and work will prevent the development of a situation similar to the one we have witnessed. That I am determined to do everything in order to be able to fulfill these tasks, you will not doubt, my old comrades in arms.

All of a sudden, Hitler addressed his main concern, namely, to have the Reichstag issue him again complete discretionary powers and to appoint him "Supreme Law Lord."

In order to do so, I expect the following:

That the nation accords me the right to intervene immediately and act accordingly wherever there is no unconditional obedience and action in the

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service of the greater mission, which is a question of “to be or not to be.” Front, homeland, the transportation system, the administration, and the judiciary must be subject to only one thought, namely, the struggle for victory. Nobody can in this period insist on acquired rights; instead, he must know that today there are only duties.

I therefore ask the German Reichstag for an explicit confirmation that I possess the legal right to order everybody to fulfill his duties, or if the case dictates to sentence, to a dishonorable dismissal whoever, in my view, fails conscientiously to fulfill his duty, or to relieve him of duty and position, irrespective of his person and acquired rights.

It is precisely because it is a question of a few exceptions among millions of decent men that above all the rights of these exceptions today there stands one common duty.

I am therefore not interested in whether or not, in the present emergency situations, vacation can be accorded to every official or every employee. And I also refuse to tolerate that this vacation, which cannot be accorded, will be given credit for in later years.

If anybody has the right to request a leave of absence, then this would have to be first our frontline soldiers, and second our workers for the front. And if, for months, I have not been in a position to grant this leave of absence to the front in the east as a whole, then nobody in the homeland should come to me insisting on his office’s “acquired right” to leave. I myself have the right to refuse this, because—as these persons may not be aware—I have not even taken three days of vacation for myself since 1933.²⁰⁷

I likewise expect the German judiciary to understand that the nation does not exist for it, but that it exists for the nation. This means that the world, which includes Germany, should not perish so that a formal law can live, but that Germany should live, no matter what the formal opinions of the judiciary may be. To mention only one example, I fail to comprehend why a criminal, who marries in the year 1937 and batters his wife until she finally becomes mentally ill and dies as the result of the last battering, is sentenced to five years’ imprisonment²⁰⁸ at a time when tens of thousands of honorable German men must die in order to save their homeland from destruction through Bolshevism, and, most importantly, to protect their women and children. From now on, I will intervene in such cases and I will dismiss from office those judges who obviously fail to recognize the dictates of the moment.

The accomplishments of the German soldier, the German worker, the farmer, our women in the cities and in the country, millions of people of our middle classes, and their sacrifices for the sake of victory demand a congenial altitude in those who have been appointed by the Volk itself to guard its interests. At this time, there can be no highhandedness and acquired rights. Instead, we all are only the obedient servants of our Volk’s interests.

My Deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

We have a mighty winter battle behind us. The hour will come when the front loses its stiffness again. Then history will decide who won this winter: the attacker, who idiotically sacrificed masses of his men, or the defender, who

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simply held his positions. Week after week, I read about the mighty threats of our enemies. You know that I regard my mission as far too sacred and serious ever to allow me to be careless. What can be done by man to prevent danger, I have done and will continue to do in the future. And to what extent our preparations for the overcoming of this danger were sufficient will be shown by the future. The great warlords of England and the United States of America do not frighten and terrify me. In my eyes, generals like MacArthur do not possess miraculous abilities, as the British press believes, but at best the ability for running away. What I do admire is the modesty of my enemies in assessing the greatness of their own successes or themselves. Should the idea of continuing the aerial warfare with new means against the civilian population prevail in England, then I would like to say the following to all the world:

Mr. Churchill began this war in May 1940. I warned and waited for four months. Then came a time when I was forced to act. The man who is solely responsible for this type of combat then began to bemoan it. Now, too, my waiting is not weakness. May this man not again wail and whimper if I am now forced to give a response that will bring much suffering to his own people. From now on, I will retaliate blow for blow²⁰⁹ until this criminal falls and his work dies.

If I look at the world we embody and at all the men whom I am fortunate to have as friends and allies, when I further look at the group of my political leaders in the Reich, at my Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, at my ministers, and so on, at my Reichsmarschall, field marshals, admirals, colonel generals, and the numerous other leaders at the fronts, then I look with the greatest confidence to a future where not clowns but men will make history. The war in the east will be continued. The Bolshevik colossus will be beaten by us until it is smashed. And against England, the German U-boats will be increasingly brought to bear. In the autumn of 1939, after he sank about ten U-boats nearly every day, Mr. Churchill assured the English people that he would overcome the danger of the U-boats. Now, I wish to assure him that this danger will more likely overcome him. At another point, I have already stated that the freezing of the German U-boat deployment last year was exclusively due to my efforts which were directed at avoiding every conceivable occasion for a conflict with America. However, this could not prevent the president of the American Union, driven by his Jewish patrons, from attempting to restrict the German conduct of the war by ever new measures and to make U-boat warfare impossible for us through declarations in violation of international law.

Therefore, we were gratified that the valiant Japanese people decided to respond to the impudent provocations by this lunatic in the only way possible in the eyes of its own people and world history. The German U-boats were finally released on the oceans in the full sense of the word. And even if, nearly every week, the British-American press twaddles about a new invention that will lead to the irretrievable loss of the U-boats, this is no newer than the fact that our German and allied U-boats and weapons improve from year to year in the same way. What the German Navy has achieved in spite of its numerically

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small size far surpasses what our far greater navy was capable of achieving in the World War.

What our U-boats are capable of will be proved month after month. Because, contrary to the tipsy statements by Churchill in the autumn of 1939 on the end of the German U-boats, I can assure him that their number will increase at a steady pace every month and that today it has already far surpassed the maximum number of U-boats in the World War.

If the Italian-German cooperation in the Mediterranean has led to an ever closer comradeship and to ever increasing successes, then Germany's cooperation with Italy, Japan, and the other allies will bring equally great results in other theaters of the war. That provoking Japan to enter this war was perhaps the most disingenuous and stupid act by our enemies has already been proved by the few months of heroic struggle by this people. I do not know whether today all Englishmen still firmly believe that the political methods of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt were correct, and that the deployment in this war was ever in keeping with a possible profit.

We Germans have everything to win in this struggle of "to be or not to be," because losing this war would anyway be our end. Central Asian barbarism would sweep across Europe as at the time of the invasions by Huns and Mongols. Nobody knows this better than the German soldier and the nations allied to him, who are getting to know the essence of the Bolshevik liberation of mankind at the front, who are seeing with their own eyes what the paradise of the worker and peasant looks like in reality, and who has described it correctly: National Socialism and Fascism, or our enemies. England cannot win this war. It will lose. And then perhaps the realization will finally go down in its history that one should not entrust the fate of people and states to cynical drunkards or lunatics.²¹⁰

In this struggle, truth will win in the end! And it is on our side!

That Providence has chosen me and allows me to lead the German Volk in such a great age is my great pride. I will unconditionally tie my name and my life to its fate. I address no other request to the Almighty than to bless us in the future as in the past and to preserve my life for as long as it is necessary in His eyes for the fateful struggle of the German Volk. For there is no greater glory than the honor to be the Führer of a Volk in difficult times and, therefore, the bearer of the responsibility! And I know no greater happiness than the awareness that this Volk is my German one.

Afterwards, an insecure and hesitant Göring delivered his address. He informed the deputies of the "resolution" desired and worded by Hitler, which they were to pass as a type of "Super Enabling Act," so to speak. It read as follows:²¹¹

There can be no doubt that, in the present time of war in which the German Volk struggle for "to be or not to be," the Führer must possess the right claimed by him to do all that serves the struggle for victory or contributes to it. Therefore—without being bound by existing regulations—in his capacity

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as the Führer of the nation, as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, as head of government, and supreme bearer of the executive power, as supreme Law Lord, and as leader of the party, the Führer must be able at all times to order every German—whether he is a common soldier or officer, low or high-ranking administrator, or judge, leading or lesser functionary in the party, worker or employee—to fulfill his duties by all means that appear appropriate to him; and if he neglects these duties, the Führer must be able to assign him a suitable punishment following a conscientious examination, irrespective of so-called acquired rights, and, in particular, without initiating prescribed procedures, to relieve him of his office, rank, or position.

Of course, the qualification that the Führer could proceed “without being bound by existing regulations” was crucial in this context.

The sequence in which Hitler listed his various functions, in accordance with their importance, was likewise interesting:

1. “Führer of the nation.” This meant head of state, the former office of Reich president.

2. “Supreme commander of the Wehrmacht.” This function was connected to the office of Führer or Reich president.

3. “Head of government.” This office of Reich chancellor, which Hitler had once sought so fervently, had apparently lost in significance in his eyes to such an extent that he felt it was not necessary to refer to it by name.

4. “Supreme bearer of the executive power.” Hitler had not previously made pretenses to this function. Normally, the head of the government was the bearer of the executive power as well; and this was the case at least since January 30, 1934, when the sovereignty of the Länder in police affairs had been suspended. However, Hitler now placed great emphasis on being the supreme chief of the police. After all, you could never tell when some Obergruppenführer²¹² might come up with the idea of appropriating for himself police powers.

5. “Supreme Law Lord.” Hitler had coined this term in a Reichstag session on July 13, 1934, when he had claimed with regard to the Röhm purge: “in that hour, I was responsible for the fate of the German nation and was thus the Supreme Law Lord (Gerichtsherr) of the German Volk!”²¹³ Now, he wanted to be able to carry out such arbitrary killings at any hour.

6. “Leader of the party.” The party, this “pillar” of the Third Reich, ranked lowest! It appeared only at the tail end of the list of Adolf Hitler’s functions. When it had been a question of seizing power in the state and securing it, the party had been important to him. But now, in

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the year 1942, the NSDAP interested Hitler no more than did the German Volk. Soldiers and policemen were all he needed!

The whole Reichstag session of April 26, including Hitler's speech and the—naturally unanimously approved—plenipotentiary law, made a poor impression on the German public and abroad. Partly, it led to the conviction that Hitler was fighting an inner opposition and no longer commanded the necessary power to enforce his decrees. Actually, the converse applied. While the Third Reich was in trouble militarily, this was because Hitler's political and military ideas were false, unrealistic, utopian, and insane. However, disobedience to his orders was not a problem, and, internally, the Third Reich was as stable as before.

The "resolution by the Greater German Reichstag" had been necessary to quench Hitler's thirst for power and to satisfy his pathological desire for a completely arbitrary reign. He could not bear the thought that anyone might be able to claim a right for himself if this did not correspond with his wishes. And he especially hated the Reichstag, which had once again fulfilled his wishes without objection. After all, this Reichstag had more powers than he did, because the almighty Führer had to *ask* this forum for his juridical powers. The Reichstag could in theory divest him of these special rights again. Completely legally, it could depose him and tell him to go to hell. A terrible thought! Thus Hitler decided now never again to summon the Reichstag.

Naturally, Goebbels was among the few who were enthusiastic about Hitler's speech. At first, he even took it for "one of his best speeches."²¹⁴ Shortly later, he would see it with more restraint.²¹⁵

After the Reichstag session had ended, Hitler took Goebbels up to the Reich Chancellery for a talk about his vacation at the Berghof. Having just told the Reichstag that he had "not even taken three days of vacation" since the year 1933,²¹⁶ Hitler now told Goebbels that "because of his overall state of health he absolutely needed to take a vacation of three months. But when, how, and where?" Goebbels felt sympathetic and later wrote down the following:²¹⁷

He [the Führer] knows quite well himself that this [the three-month vacation] is not possible. However, at the moment, he is pretty worn out. Thank God that he is going to the Obersalzberg for a few days at least for the important talks with the Duce. The Obersalzberg always has a calming effect. The Führer must be very careful about his health right now.

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Before Hitler left for the Obersalzberg, there was a cozy evening get-together at the Reich Chancellery on April 26. Professor Speer attended for the first time in his capacity as artist.²¹⁸ Hitler was in a very good mood, since he had finally got rid of the jurists, who had always spoiled things in the past by referring to “existing regulations.” Freed from this constraint, Hitler talked for hours about art and works of art, picture galleries, and future big projects. He was especially enthusiastic about the “metropolis” Linz and the huge “monumental structures” which he planned to build on the left and at banks of the Danube River.

He was also preoccupied with gigantic projects on the following day, when he stopped over in Munich on his way to the Obersalzberg. At the Osteria restaurant,²¹⁹ he met Hermann Esser and the architect Professor Giesler for lunch. Two years before, Hitler had instructed Giesler on the architecture in Paris.²²⁰ Now, he spoke to him about new gigantic railroad tracks with a gauge of four meters, which he planned to lay across Russia all the way to Berlin and Munich.

After Hitler had left for the south, Goebbels began to feel uneasy about the response to the Reichstag speech in Germany and the allies' reaction.²²¹ He noted the following:²²²

Even if confidence in the Führer has by no means diminished, the German Volk does ask itself with astonishment why the Führer had to be accorded new legal powers in the first place and what could have caused him to lash out at and criticize German internal affairs publicly.

There is also some skepticism in the assessment of the military situation; especially since the Führer spoke of a second winter campaign in the east, people think that he is not convinced that the war against the Soviet Union can be brought to an end this coming summer. Many questions have been raised by the Führer's speech. In certain contexts, it has spread feelings of insecurity.

April 29, 1942

3

On April 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese emperor on his birthday.²²³ On the same day, he welcomed his Italian guests at the Puch station near Salzburg. Mussolini and Ciano had left Rome on April 28, and the latter had entered the following into his diary:²²⁴

“This is a meeting that was requested by the Germans, and for which, as usual, they have given us no indication of an agenda.”

And the meeting resulted in nothing,²²⁵ since it took place exclusively in order to provide Hitler with an excuse for his stay at the Berghof.

In the course of the “two-day discussions in the spirit of the close friendship and the indissoluble brotherhood in arms,” Hitler as usual dominated the conversation.²²⁶ Mussolini was reduced to listening. The discussed topics were the following: the ingenious overcoming of the Russian winter,²²⁷ Germany’s intention to force Russia’s capitulation by taking the oil fields in the Caucasus, the anticipated English realization that it was better to conclude peace, and that America was a big bluff.

Ciano and Schmidt reported on the talks as follows:²²⁸

Hitler talks, talks, talks. Mussolini suffers, since he is in the habit of talking and, instead, practically has to keep quiet. On the second day, after lunch, when everything had been said, Hitler talked uninterruptedly for an hour and forty minutes. He omitted absolutely no argument: war and peace, religion and philosophy, art, and history. Mussolini automatically looked at his wristwatch, I had my mind on my own business, and only Cavallero,²²⁹ who is a phenomenon of civility, pretended he was listening in ecstasy, continually nodding his head in approval. Those, however, who dreaded the ordeal less than we did were the Germans. Poor people. They have to take it every day, and I am certain there isn’t a gesture, a word, or a pause which they don’t know by heart. General Jodl, after an epic struggle, finally went to sleep on the sofa.

May 1, 1942

Keitel was reeling, but he succeeded in keeping his head up. He was too close to Hitler to let himself go as he would have liked to do.

After the Italians had said goodbye, Hitler left for Munich. The local atmosphere excited him so much that he reflected at great length on opera conductors and general music directors at dinner.²³⁰ Bruno Walter, Clemens Krauss, Hans Knappertsbusch, and Wilhelm Furtwängler all received critical reviews.

On May 1, he was again on the Obersalzberg. The so-called “national holiday of the German Volk” appeared not to interest him any longer after the beginning of the war. Hitler had created it in 1933 only in order to weaken the Social Democrats and Communists. Now, he felt that it sufficed to speak about future “prestige buildings” to his company at his “round table” on the Obersalzberg.²³¹

This year, the “national holiday” had been rescheduled for May 2.²³² No flags would be hoisted. The Japanese emperor, who apparently failed to realize the reduced importance of this day, had sent a congratulatory telegram. Hitler replied as follows:²³³

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for the friendly best wishes which you have transmitted by telegraph to me on the national holiday of the German Volk. I am sending along with this an expression of my sincere admiration for the great achievements that the brave Japanese armed forces have accomplished in their inexorable triumphant march, and an assurance of my strongest conviction that the common efforts by the allied people will succeed in defeating our enemies and opening the way to a new order of the world for the sake of peace and progress. With my best wishes for the personal welfare of Your Majesty, I remain

Your devoted Adolf Hitler

In addition, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Dr. Ley on the occasion of the Reich Labor Chamber conference in the Mosaic Hall at the Reich Chancellery. This exchange was not without problems, since Hitler claimed that Ley’s style was on a “high-school level.”²³⁴

Hitler’s answer read as follows:²³⁵

I thank you and all working men and women for the loyal greetings transmitted to me and for the pledge of tireless work in the service of the fighting front and, therefore, of the struggle for victory and peace. Through its diligence and sense of sacrifice, as well as through its exemplary disposition shown in critical situations time and again, the homeland has proved worthy of our soldiers’ heroism. Just as, previously, May 1 was for us a national holiday on which the German Volk pledged itself in powerful demonstrations to the great works of peace and social progress, so it has become today, for our

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soldiers at the front and for our working people at home, a day of reflection, as well as of determination to fight and to work without rest until the freedom and social future of our Volk have been assured. I know that in this, the German homeland and especially all its working men and women will never forsake the soldiers at the front.

The war, which we have been forced to wage, is for our Volk a struggle of "to be or not to be." The victory, which we will secure, should therefore be a victory by the entire Volk. The heroism of our front, the diligence and sense of sacrifice of the homeland will then be rewarded in a true Volksstaat of the National Socialist community. As zealous National Socialists, we entered this war, which was forced on us. As zealous National Socialists, we will return from it.

I greet the working German Volk on its national holiday in the secure knowledge that this holiday will one day become again a celebration of peace and joy.

While Hitler's "Super Enabling Act" had been passed by the Reichstag, the Schlitt case, which he had used as a pretext, would still make trouble for him.²³⁶

The president of the Oldenburg Oberlandesgericht (superior court of a land, court of appeal) complained to the Reich governor of Oldenburg, Gauleiter Röver, about the procedure employed in the Schlitt case and attacks against the Oldenburg judges. He said that Schlitt was not a violent criminal but a "poor devil," for whom a five-year sentence was more than sufficient. Contrary to Hitler's claims, the prosecution and the judge had not sentenced him leniently but much too harshly. Röver adopted the senior judge's opinion and—this is really hard to believe—he visited Hitler to explain the true situation to him.

Hitler listened to Röver's lecture. As usual on such occasions, he then raged against certain people who had supposedly informed him incorrectly. In this case, he mainly blamed Freisler (the "Bolshevik").²³⁷ At the end of his performance, he asked Röver to express his regrets to the Oldenburg judges on the unfortunate development of the Schlitt case.

Röver was content and went home. Apparently, he was not even aware of the sacrilege that he had just committed:

1. He had allowed himself to be influenced by jurists in a matter which concerned the Führer.
2. He had dared to intervene personally in the affair.
3. He had proved to the Führer that the rationale for the Reichstag resolution of April 26 was built on a misconception.

May 14, 1942

Well, Röver did not have much time to reflect on these matters. By May 15, he was dead! And—what a strange coincidence—he had supposedly died as a “result of pneumonia.”²³⁸

On May 3, Hitler had Envoy von Renthe-Fink convey his condolences to Copenhagen on the death of Prime Minister Stauning.²³⁹ On the same day, his special train returned him to his headquarters in East Prussia. He had cut short his stay at the Berghof, because it had begun to snow again and he hated snow.²⁴⁰

On May 4, the English occupied the island of Madagascar. This was a further step in their drive to gain control of the entire African continent, which would serve as a powerful supply base, following the conquest of Italian East Africa and Abyssinia. A role of great significance would be played by the construction of a supply route, leading from Duala to Fort Lamy (N'Djamena) and then to Khartoum, which was completed in the summer of 1942.

On May 7, in addition to several insignificant administrative laws, Hitler signed three decrees that concerned the General-Government and the protectorate. Two decrees dealt with the appointment and function of a state secretary for security in the General-Government.²⁴¹ The third authorized the Reich protector to “take suitable measures in order to adjust the administration of Bohemia and Moravia to the existing situation.”²⁴²

Obviously, even in these areas which remained relatively secure in German hands at this time, subversive elements were beginning to exploit German weaknesses at the front, and this forced Hitler to take such measures.

On May 10, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to King Michael and Marshal Antonescu on the Romanian national holiday.²⁴³ Field Marshal List attended the festivities in Bucharest on Hitler's behalf.

On May 12, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the president of the Chinese national government, Wang Ching-wei, on his birthday.²⁴⁴

In addition, he received the Italian army general Gariboldi at his headquarters.²⁴⁵ Gariboldi was scheduled to take over command of the Italian troops in Russia soon.

On May 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to King Christian X of Denmark, who was celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of his accession to the throne.²⁴⁶

May 22, 1942

On the same day, Hitler ordered a state funeral for Infantry General von Lossberg, who had died in Lübeck at the age of seventy-five.²⁴⁷

On May 15, the abovementioned daring Gauleiter Röver suffered his “sudden death” in Oldenburg at the age of fifty-three. This event was not made public until May 17 and 18.²⁴⁸ Hitler ordered a state funeral for him.

Hitler replaced Röver with the deputy Gauleiter of the Mark Brandenburg, Paul Wegener. He named him Reich governor of Oldenburg and Bremen as well as Gauleiter of the Gau Weser-Ems. Wegener had served as Terboven’s deputy in Oslo since 1940. Hitler had his reasons for appointing a successor to Röver from so far away. All recently appointed Gauleiters were not from the Gau to which they were assigned.

On May 18, Hitler received Privy Counselor Hermann Röchling, an industrial magnate from the Saarland, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He discussed the construction of railroad and bunkers with him.²⁴⁹ Speer was also in attendance.

On May 20, a big show was put on in Berlin on Hitler’s orders. As he had already announced at lunch on May 10, he had decided that, because of “the immense idealism of the homeland, an armament worker should be presented with the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross.”²⁵⁰ In order to stage this ceremony in the flag-decorated Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery, a huge apparatus was set in motion. Delegations of peasants and workers arrived from all over the Reich. Göring, Speer, and Ley attended. The highlight was the presence of “the Führer’s special emissary,” Private First Class Krohn, who served at the eastern front and owned the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross. He handed the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross to “a German armament worker,” foreman Franz Hahne, and conveyed the Führer’s heartfelt best wishes.²⁵¹

In the meantime, Hitler had received the Hungarian Colonel General Jany, the commander in chief of an army, at the Führer headquarters.²⁵²

On May 21, Hitler took his special train to Berlin to attend the state ceremony for Röver. At lunch on May 22, only two hours before the ceremony, Hitler significantly expressed great concern with the problem of the administration of justice.²⁵³ Time and again, he stressed that in the war no mercy should be shown to rogues, spies, sex offenders, and juvenile offenders. He was “personally responsible for

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preventing a front of rogues (*Spitzbuben*) from rising up in the homeland again as in 1918.” It was obvious that Hitler had a bad conscience!

At 3:00 p.m., the state ceremony for Röver began in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler walked down the aisle, greeted the coffin with his raised arm, and “sympathetically” shook hands with the family members.²⁵⁴

Rosenberg delivered the eulogy. Afterwards, two SS officers brought in “a wonderful, big wreath,” which Hitler laid. Clearly, he did not mind dedicating a wreath to a man who no longer presented a danger to him. The sheer number of state funerals, which had become a characteristic feature of the Third Reich led to the belief that, as a variation of a widely repeated phrase,²⁵⁵ Hitler had come to the conclusion that the best National Socialist was a dead National Socialist.

On May 22, the anniversary of the signing of the “Pact of Steel,” a German-Italian exchange of telegrams took place. Hitler’s messages to Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini read as follows:²⁵⁶

On the anniversary of the signing of the Pact of Friendship and Alliance, which inseparably ties our two peoples, I ask Your Majesty to accept my sincere best wishes for the glory and greatness of Italy, as well as for the success of its arms.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

On the day on which three years ago Germany and Italy solemnly announced to the world their willingness to stand together as a staunch community, I think of you with heartfelt friendship and solidarity. The unyielding will of our people to win, united by National Socialism and Fascism, and the military deeds of our brave soldiers afford us the most certain guarantee of a joint final victory.

Adolf Hitler

On May 23, Hitler dismissed Reich Minister Walter Darré. The following official announcement was published on this topic:²⁵⁷

Reich Minister Darré has taken an extended leave of absence for reasons of health. For this period, the Führer has entrusted the conduct of the affairs of the Reich minister and Prussian minister of food and agriculture to Herbert Backe, who is state secretary in the Reich ministry of food and agriculture.

That was how another old National Socialist and Obergruppenführer disappeared. The “theoretician” Darré, who had made propaganda for the idea of “blood and soil,” was replaced by the servile Backe, who obediently carried out Hitler’s order to exploit the

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occupied territories with all ruthlessness. In spite of starving these areas, the food situation in Germany too began slowly but surely to deteriorate.

On May 23 at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler delivered an address on the current situation to the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters.²⁵⁸ In the Crimea, German troops had conquered the Kerch (Kerchenskiy-Poluostrov) peninsula within eight days. A Russian relieving attack at Kharkov had led to a tank battle that promised to become a full German success. That was reason enough for Hitler to paint the situation in its brightest colors.

On May 24, Hitler was back at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He received Speer and Reich traffic minister, Dr. Dorpmüller, discussing the planned gigantic railroads with them.²⁵⁹ In addition, he received Admiral Dönitz, who reported to him on the recent U-boat offensive.²⁶⁰

On May 26, Hitler again established a new medal, which for a change was to be worn on a ribbon and not as a pin. The award in question was the so-called "East Medal." The ordinance read as follows:²⁶¹

In appreciation of the heroic venture against the Bolshevik enemy in the winter 1941-1942, I establish the medal for the "winter battle in the east in 1941-1942" (East Medal).

Article I

The East Medal will be worn on the ribbon of the order's clasp or in the second buttonhole of the tunic, next to the Iron Cross and the War Service Cross. The ribbon will be red with a thin, white-black-white vertical stripe at its center.

Article II

The East Medal will be awarded in recognition of proof of worth in the fight against the Bolshevik enemy and the Russian winter in the period from November 15, 1941, to April 15, 1942.

Article III

The award recipient will receive a certificate.

Article IV

Following the death of the award recipient, his survivors will retain the East Medal as a keepsake.

Article V

The implementing regulations will be decreed, in accordance with my directives, by the state minister and chief of the presidential chancellery

May 29, 1942

On May 27, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on the country's independence day.²⁶²

On the same day, an assassination attempt was made on Reinhard Heydrich, the deputy Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia and chief of the security police. Heydrich was seriously injured.²⁶³ Hitler instructed SS Obergruppenführer and general of the police, Daluge to act as a stand-in for Heydrich.²⁶⁴

On May 28, Hitler had state minister and Gauleiter Adolf Wagner place a wreath at the grave of Eva Chamberlain in Bayreuth.²⁶⁵

That evening, Hitler left the Wolfsschanze headquarters aboard his special train, heading for Berlin.

On May 29, while lunching at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler held forth on all sorts of subjects.²⁶⁶ First, he attacked the Jews, claiming that even the Siberian climate was too good for them. They ought to be shipped to Africa, to the island of Madagascar. In addition, he spoke about the necessity of breaking Vienna's cultural hegemony, and about King Ludwig I of Bavaria and Lola Montez. Finally, talking about the last winter, he now claimed that it had been the coldest in 150 years.

A special event was a visit by "the pioneer of the Indian liberation movement," Subhas Chandra Bose. For months on end, this charlatan, who exercised no influence whatsoever, had played games with Goebbels, Ribbentrop, Ciano, and Mussolini. Later, he would likewise fool the Japanese.²⁶⁷ In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had mocked hopes for ethnic unrest in India and had written the following:²⁶⁸

Some Asiatic mountebanks—for all I care maybe even real Indian "freedom fighters"—who knocked about Europe at the time [1920–1921], managed to instill the *idé fixe* in otherwise quite reasonable men that the British empire with its cardinal point in India was ready to collapse there of all places!

Now, Hitler himself had to receive such "mountebanks." He had to be content to have any Indian at all as his guest and to be able to issue a communiqué once more. It read as follows:²⁶⁹

The Führer received at his headquarters, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the pioneer of the Indian liberation movement, Subhas Chandra Bose, for a lengthy discussion.

On May 29, Hitler signed Directive No. 42, which read as follows:²⁷⁰

I. Future developments in the condition of unoccupied France or of the French possessions in North Africa may make it necessary to occupy the entire territory of France. Likewise, the possibility of an attempted hostile move

May 30, 1942

against the Iberian Peninsula requiring immediate countermeasures must be taken into account.

II. Due to the constant shifting about of forces in the west and to the incessant changes in the combat readiness of the units, only general guidelines for conducting this operation can be given. The situation in terms of men and material prohibits our keeping special units and equipment in readiness for it. Hence, effective immediately, all previous directives given for Attila and Isabella are null and void. The improvisation of both operations is to be prepared in such a way as to make it possible for them to be carried out on the shortest possible notice.

III. Occupation of the remainder of France in cooperation with Italian forces. (Code name: Anton. Day of commencement: A-day.) [Technical details follow.]

IV. First countermeasures against enemy move on Iberian Peninsula (Code name: Ilona. Day of border crossing: I-day.) [Technical details follow.]

As pretty as the new code names “Anton” (hitherto “Attila”) and “Ilona” (hitherto “Isabella”) were, Hitler himself had to admit that he could only “improvise” with the available forces.

On May 30, Hitler gave a speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin. He spoke to ten thousand officer candidates who were reported present by Keitel.²⁷¹

As usual in such addresses,²⁷² Hitler reiterated the three standard themes: the inevitability of struggle in life, the relationship between population and Lebensraum, and the Germans as not only the best but also the numerically strongest people on earth.

First, he presented a “party narrative”²⁷³ and long excursus into German history and antiquity. A few new quirks from this speech deserve to be cited, however. Hitler’s obsession with the superlative started in the following greeting:

My young Comrades!

A perhaps most profoundly serious proposition by a great military philosopher says that struggle and, therefore, war is the father of all things.²⁷⁴

After Hitler had assured his listeners that, without his person and his domestic struggle, “a second Genghis Khan would have come,” he declared that “the struggle outside has to be waged with the same objectives.”

We must elevate the German Reich to the leading power within a certain Lebensraum in Europe, if we do not wish our Volk and, along with it, Europe to disappear from this scene.

May 30, 1942

The collapse of the antique world brought a thousand years of chaos. The collapse of Europe would probably bring two to three thousand years of chaos.

Also very nicely said was Hitler's claim that his measures before the war had resulted in two-and-a-half million more people being brought into the world, of which only ten percent had been used up in combat up to now! He declared:

Compared with the state of affairs in the year 1932, the National Socialist revolution has managed to bring a little more than two-and-a-half million people into the world.

The present war has not cost us even ten percent of what flowed into the German nation in terms of additional human life.

Well, if this was how matters stood, then Hitler could proceed with an easy conscience to sacrifice an additional few million Germans! Hitler's flippant remarks parallel the facetiousness of Napoleon who, at the sight of the tens of thousands of Frenchmen killed in the Battle of Borodino, exclaimed: "One night in Paris will make up for this!" Naturally, births were interesting only insofar as they would later provide the state and the military with new recruits.

Having spoken about the winter's "natural disaster," Hitler prophesied new "planned blows," which would shatter and smash Russia.

Now, we face a summer for which we have prepared as much as humanly possible. The first blows [Kerch, Kharkov]—they have served as an introduction, a prelude. They have shown the enemy that, provided the conditions are the same, we are head and shoulders above him. I am convinced that the coming blows, which will fall according to plan, will shatter this state and rob it of its lifelines and sources of raw materials to such an extent that it will break up.

We have no other choice. Everybody should consider this. We are facing a merciless enemy. If this enemy won, he would wipe out our German Volk. Asian barbarism would take root in Europe. The German woman would become fair game for these beasts. The intelligentsia would be slaughtered. Whatever characteristics of a higher humanity we bear in ourselves, they would be wiped out and annihilated. We have no other choice—we must see this battle through.

With these well-known visions of horror, Hitler tried to boost the morale of the officers so that, in the end, *he* could collect the victor's laurels from "Providence." He continued:

May 31, 1942

I do not doubt for one second that we will win. It was not in vain that Providence has had me stride forth along the long path from the unknown soldier of the World War to the Führer of the German nation, to the Führer of the German Wehrmacht. It has not done this only to suddenly take away again all we had to struggle so hard for, as if it were just for the fun of it.

In continuing his speech, Hitler scoffed at the Allied generals in Burma and at Corregidor.²⁷⁵ He contrasted their example to that of General Scherer, who had been surrounded at Kholm for “over a hundred days” before being relieved.²⁷⁶ Hitler encouraged his audience to similar heroic deeds:

At this moment, you are the representatives of the German Reich, my little lieutenants. Your little group or the company that you lead is at this moment entrusted by Germany to your loyal hands! For, if everyone thought, “Things do not depend on me,” then—poor Germany!

At the end, Hitler returned to the topic of Lebensraum. There was no longer any talk of “protecting Europe against Asian barbarism.” Now, he declared the following:

I do not fight for a financial company, nor for any portfolio of stocks. I fight for the German Volk, for its future. We know the great Lebensraum. It will provide generations of Germans with wheat. There is iron under the earth there, there is coal, there is oil. Gigantic areas are there, fiber plants, gum plants, wood.

The German Volk will one day gain from this struggle the life of countless hundreds of millions, although today this struggle may cost hundreds of thousands of dead men.

And then the old prophesy will come true that the blood is blessed that has been spilled so that the soil can be tilled and will bear life for future young generations.²⁷⁷

On May 31, Hitler returned to the Wolfsschanze headquarters. At dinner, he made a derogatory comment on William II.²⁷⁸

He had believed that it was perfectly all right not only persistently to be rude to (*anpöbeln*) the men closest to him, but also to make his guests the laughingstock of all those present by making ironic comments. Also his clumsy friendliness with other monarchs (slapping them on the back and so on) had cost the Reich many sympathies. A monarch simply had to know when he had to exercise restraint and demonstrate dignity in personal relations. The example of William II showed how one single bad monarch could ruin a dynasty.

While there was some truth to Hitler’s statements, the Kaiser was no match for him, if one considers how he had “abused” Anglo-American

June 4, 1942

statesmen even before the war, how he had treated Chamberlain, and how he had relished publicly making fun of foreign heads of state like President Roosevelt.

On June 2, Hitler sent the Reich finance minister, Graf Schwerin von Krosigk a congratulatory telegram on his tenth service anniversary.²⁷⁹

On June 4, Hitler flew to Finland from the Rastenburg. He wished to use the occasion of Marshal Mannerheim's birthday²⁸⁰ in order to tie Finland closer to him and to demonstrate German-Finnish solidarity by means of this personal visit. This appeared necessary to him since it was no secret that the Finns were not partial to the German policy of expansion and, above all, that they did not wish to participate in the conquest of Leningrad.

Hitler had prepared this visit far in advance. He had his pilot Baur look out for a suitable landing ground for the four-engine Condor plane.²⁸¹ On the way to a meeting between Jodl and Dietl in northern Finland, which served as a pretext, Baur had chosen the landing field Micheli near Vyborg. Hitler had then decided on this undertaking, but did not inform the Finnish government until the night before.

With the exception of his trips to Italy, this was Hitler's only stay in a country or area that was not completely controlled by him. This fact alone did not make the decision easy for him.

Mannerheim had probably imagined his seventy-fifth birthday differently, as well as state president Ryti, who promoted him from field marshal to marshal of Finland. However, as a favor to Hitler, the Finnish special trains had to pull up close to the landing field Micheli, where the state ceremony was to take place in an improvised fashion and in the rain.²⁸²

At 11:15 a.m., Hitler's plane landed at the airfield. One of the plane's tires caught fire in the process. Mechanics had to extinguish the fire. Then state president Ryti greeted Hitler, who was accompanied by Keitel, Dietrich, Schmundt, and Envoy Hewel. A car took them close to the special trains. After they had crossed a swaying footbridge, Mannerheim approached Hitler and led him to his special train, where Colonel General Stumpff, General Dietl, and others awaited them. Hitler then delivered a speech reproduced by the German News Office (Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro) in the following manner:

In his address to Marshal Mannerheim, the Führer expresses how fortunate he feels himself to be today in being able to congratulate the marshal of Finland

June 6, 1942

personally. He extends these best wishes in the name of the entire German Volk and in the name of all German soldiers, who look with sincere admiration to their Finnish comrades and their great military commanders.

The Führer recalls the historic brotherhood in arms of the two people. For the second time in history, a joint struggle against a common enemy has brought the German and the Finnish people together. The first joint resort to arms in the year 1918 had created ties of an enduring nature. The second struggle will reinforce these ties for all time. It is easy to speak of friendship when you are aware of such a valiant army on your side. The entire German Volk thinks at this moment exactly as the Führer speaks right now. He admires the Finnish people and the Finnish military commanders. The Führer concludes his address by thanking state president Ryti for the hospitality extended to him and to the other German gentlemen and by expressing the wish that the marshal of Finland might live on for many years to come, to serve his people and the common cause.

Hitler was Ryti's guest for lunch. Ryti introduced him to the presidency of the Finnish parliament, the members of the government, and representatives of Finnish workers. Hitler fawned on them, claiming things that no one could possibly prove wrong. He declared the following:

It has long been my wish to see Finland. I had hoped to come to the Olympic Games in Helsinki.²⁸³ But then came the war.

Ryti and Mannerheim accompanied Hitler to the airport. The marshal was asked to return Hitler's visit at the Führer headquarters, while Dietl was promoted to colonel general. The Condor airplane departed at 5:15 p.m.

Hitler's visit in Finland attracted considerable attention, especially in the west. The next day, the United States published a resolution by the House of Representatives to declare war formally on Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. This was also meant as a warning to Finland not to go too far in its declarations of friendship with Hitler.²⁸⁴

Returning to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, Hitler was informed that Heydrich had died of his injuries that day. At dinner Hitler called Heydrich's "heroic gestures"—such as driving in an open, unarmored car or walking the streets of Prague without security men—"nonsense that does not benefit the nation."²⁸⁵ He now "decreed once and for all that persons at risk must absolutely observe the safety regulations."

Hitler ordered a state funeral for Heydrich. On June 4, he renamed the Sixth SS Infantry Standarte "Reinhard Heydrich."²⁸⁶

June 9, 1942

On June 6, Hitler received the new Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister Kallay at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a discussion of the political situation. Again, it was supposedly “marked by the traditional German-Hungarian friendship and brotherhood in arms.”²⁸⁷ Hitler awarded Kallay the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.²⁸⁸ Hitler, who loathed Hungarians, was actually not satisfied with Kallay, who had, at the talks, called a military confrontation between Hungary and Romania something worth striving for.²⁸⁹

On June 8, Hitler had his Adjutant Schaub present Reich Postal Minister Ohnesorge with a handwritten letter and his picture along with a dedication on his seventieth birthday. In addition, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Professor Lenard in Heidelberg in appreciation of his “services to science and National Socialism.”²⁹⁰ That evening, Hitler took his special train from East Prussia to Berlin.

On the morning of June 9, his train was delayed for some time because of a broken track. Of course, Hitler could not resist claiming that he had ordered his train to stop based on “intuition,” thus preventing an accident.²⁹¹ In any event, he reached the Reich Chancellery in time for lunch, where he grew impassioned about “the United States of America’s cultural understanding.”²⁹² That afternoon, the funeral ceremony for Heydrich took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery. After the eulogy, Hitler stepped up to the coffin and declared as follows:²⁹³

I have only a few more words to dedicate to this dead man.

He was one of the best National Socialists, one of the strongest defenders of the German Reich idea, one of the greatest adversaries of this Reich’s enemies. He fell as a martyr for the maintenance and security of the Reich.

As Führer of the party and as Führer of the German Reich, I bestow on you, my dear comrade Heydrich, as the second German after party comrade Todt, the highest distinction which I can award: the highest class of the German Order.²⁹⁴

Following the funeral ceremony, Hitler received state president Háchá and members of the protectorate government for an “expression of his sympathy” in the presence of Lammers, Himmler, and Daluege.²⁹⁵

After these events, Hitler indulged in a few days’ vacation on the Obersalzberg. He was simply catching up on the Berghof holiday, which he had to cut short because of the annoying snowfall in May.²⁹⁶ Because of this, he probably felt that it was not necessary to stage a “state

June 18, 1942

visit” by Mussolini or another satellite statesman. He stopped over in Munich on June 10. At the Osteria restaurant, he talked with Mrs. Gerda Troost and Mrs. Winifred Wagner, as well as with her daughter and her son,²⁹⁷ and paid everybody compliments.

On June 11, an extension of the British-Russian alliance for twenty years following the end of the war and the conclusion of an American-Russian treaty were made public. These announcements again demonstrated that Hitler’s hopes for a faltering of the British-Russian alliance in the course of the war against Germany were misplaced.

On June 14, Hitler sent the following congratulatory telegram to Antonescu:²⁹⁸

On your sixtieth birthday, I send you, Field Marshal, my heartfelt best wishes. In doing so, I honor the significant contribution by Romania and its valiant army under your leadership to the struggle for the defeat of the common Bolshevik enemy. I sincerely hope that your determined creative power may be preserved for many long years to the benefit of your country and the happiness of the Romanian people.

Adolf Hitler

On June 15, the NSK reported that Hitler had decreed that the Gau “Bayerische Ostmark” should henceforth bear the name “Gau Bayreuth.”²⁹⁹

On June 18, Hitler sent Horthy the following congratulatory telegram on his seventy-fourth birthday:³⁰⁰

I send to Your Highness heartfelt best wishes on your birthday, also in the name of the German Volk. May you have the privilege of determining for many years at the full height of your creative power the destiny of the Hungarian nation, allied to the German Volk in close comradeship in arms.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, the following official announcement was made public:³⁰¹

The murderers of the deputy Reich protector, SS Obergruppenführer and general of the police Heydrich, were apprehended in the morning hours of June 18 . . . in a Prague church [Karl Barromäuskirche] . . . and were shot upon arrest. At the same time, it was possible to render harmless their immediate circle of accomplices. All persons involved are members of the Czech ethnic group and were parachuted from British planes to carry out the assassination.

What was meant by “rendering harmless” was the destruction of the village of Lidice, the killing of all male inhabitants, and the deportation

June 22, 1942

of all females and children. Undoubtedly, Hitler himself ordered this atrocity. He commented on it as follows:³⁰²

When train derailments or assassination attempts take place, when enemy parachutists and agents, for example, Heydrich's assassins, are harbored, and so on, then the mayor has to be shot, the men have to be led away, or, in serious cases, they also have to be shot and their wives transferred to concentration camps.

On June 18, the corps commander of the National Socialist Motorized Corps, Reichsleiter Major General Adolf Hühnlein, died in Munich at the age of sixty years, "following a long and serious illness." Hitler ordered a "state funeral."³⁰³

The ceremony took place at 3:00 p.m. on June 21 in the domed hall of the Army Museum in Munich.³⁰⁴ After a eulogy by Goebbels, Hitler stepped up to the coffin and, "deeply moved, laid a laurel wreath with white carnations." Hühnlein was also awarded the "highest class of the German Order."

On the same day, Hitler visited the ill state minister and Gauleiter, Adolf Wagner in Munich.³⁰⁵ Since a recovery was unlikely, Hitler commissioned Gauleiter Paul Giesler of South Westphalia to substitute for him.³⁰⁶

Hitler's vacation at the Berghof was over. On the morning of June 22, he returned to Berlin. At noon, he again discussed Heydrich's assassination with Himmler at the Reich Chancellery.³⁰⁷

In the meantime, Rommel had started a new offensive in order to force the British out of Cyrenaica. The incessant bombing of Malta had allowed additional supply deliveries to reach the [German] Africa Corps and new divisions to come to North Africa.

There was a time when Kesselring and the Italian chief of staff Cavallero had dreamed of conquering Malta.³⁰⁸ However, Hitler had not assented to this plan, since he had no wish needlessly to anger the English, his future partners in the long-awaited world empire, by making such a move. Hitler yielded to Rommel's thirst for action only insofar as he allowed Rommel to try to force the British out of the conquered Italian territories and perhaps a little into Egypt. He did not wish Rommel to go too far. After all, Hitler wanted German troops everywhere, but not in those areas which belonged to the British Empire's sphere of influence. He wished the English to see what a good ally he was.

June 22, 1942

Rommel's offensive had begun on the night of May 26. By June 11, the British fortress of Bir Hacheim was taken. Tobruk was conquered on June 21, having been thought impregnable the previous year.

Hitler promoted Rommel to field marshal and sent him the following telegram:³⁰⁹

Führer Headquarters, June 22, 1942

Field Marshal Rommel:

In grateful appreciation of your leadership and your own initiative, which decided the battle, and in recognition of the heroic achievements of the troops fighting under your command in the African theater of war, I promote you to field marshal as of this day.

Adolf Hitler

The swift fall of Tobruk surprised not only the world but even Rommel himself.³¹⁰ After barely one day of fighting, twenty-five thousand Englishmen surrendered, among them several generals. The British Eighth Army quickly retreated into Egypt. This strategy stood in striking contrast to that employed the previous year in the determined defense of Tobruk. In the long run, however, it proved successful. Rommel was tempted to pursue the British army far into Egypt. A few months later, this undertaking culminated in the complete annihilation of the German Africa Corps and a second "Stalingrad."

As mentioned before, because of his "friendship" for the English, Hitler was not in favor of the move against Egypt and attempted time and again to delay it until "the end of the campaign in Russia." By contrast, Rommel wished to realize the German military dream of taking the Suez Canal. Whereas in the First World War the Turkish-German troops had at least succeeded in reaching the Suez Canal from the east after a long march through the desert,³¹¹ the German drive to the Suez Canal in the Second World War got stuck at El Alamein, a hundred kilometers west of Alexandria. Rommel's forces were not strong enough to push through the natural, fifty-kilometer-wide line of defense between the sea and the impassable Qattara Depression.³¹² On the contrary, the Desert Fox [Rommel] was forced to take up an echeloned defensive position.

On June 23, Hitler, who remained in Berlin, named National Socialist Motorized Corps Obergruppenführer Kraus to succeed Hühnlein as corps leader.³¹³

June 28, 1942

Hitler was most generous at a talk with Goebbels and Gauleiter Forster at the Reich Chancellery on topics of the domestic situation, the rationing of foodstuffs, and restrictions to be placed on visits to cafés.³¹⁴

On June 24, Hitler sent a telegram to the cultural rally of European Youth in Vienna and thanked the youth leaders assembled there for their “loyal telegram.”³¹⁵

On June 26, Hitler was back at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Reading English and American newspaper reports on Tobruk, he wondered aloud about “the stupid twaddle (*Gequatsch*) mankind falls for.”³¹⁶

On June 27, Hitler received the Finnish Marshal Mannerheim at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for his return visit. His pilot Baur and Major General Schmudt had gone to meet Mannerheim in Helsinki.³¹⁷ At 10:00 a.m., their plane had landed at Rastenburg. Keitel had greeted Mannerheim and had brought him to his quarters.³¹⁸ Shortly thereafter Hitler appeared to welcome his guest.

At the Wolfsschanze headquarters, a detailed discussion of the situation followed. Keitel, Jodl, Halder, and the German general at the Finnish headquarters, General Erfurth, as well as other German and Finnish officers, were in attendance. At the lunch reception, they were joined by Grand Admiral Raeder, Reichsführer SS Himmler, Lammers, Dietrich, Bormann, Envoy Hewel, numerous generals, and so on.

That afternoon, Hitler played the role of commander in chief of the army and introduced Mannerheim to all sorts of generals and OKW personnel. This culminated in a “comradely get-together and exchange of ideas,” that is, monologues by the Führer. Hitler had gone all out to impress Mannerheim. Whether he succeeded in this was difficult to tell from the Finn’s inscrutable face.³¹⁹

The next day, Mannerheim visited Göring before Baur flew him back to Helsinki.

On that June 28, the first phase of Hitler’s summer offensive in the southern portion of the eastern front began. It aimed at crossing the Don at Voronezh, taking the Donetsk area, and the city of Rostov. The second phase consisted of a drive to the Caucasus and the oil fields there. As Churchill put it, the German military machine “must be fed, not only with flesh but with oil.”³²⁰ The fuel was beginning to run out in spite of the Romanian oil fields and German synthetic refineries.³²¹ The following decree by Hitler gives evidence of this:³²²

June 29, 1942

Führer Headquarters, June 29, 1942

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Re: violations of the use of motor vehicles

In spite of all previously issued orders regarding the use of motor vehicles, constant violations, to an increasing degree recently, have been reported. Besides this, in many locations, thoughtless habits and a simple lack of thought in the deployment of motor vehicles have been noted. The necessity of combining various missions or isolated trips in form of a planned schedule is no more being observed than the deployment of horse-powered vehicles wherever possible. The fuel situation does not allow such thoughtlessness and violations under the circumstances.

To a great extent, this abuse of motor vehicles can be attributed to a lack of supervision by the responsible superiors. All commanders must therefore vigorously supervise the use of the motor vehicles under their command. In the event of noted or reported violations, they must call the offenders to account strictly for this. In the same way, violations of the duty to supervise must also be punished.

It is the duty of all commanders to observe the given regulations themselves and, by example, to influence educatively the units under their command. The regulations regarding the prohibition of vacation trips, the limitation of official trips from the front and the occupied territories to the homeland and vice versa, aside from especially justified exceptional cases, the observation of speed limits apply also to the commanders of the headquarters and the troops.

The branches of the Wehrmacht and the commanders of the Wehrmacht will take precautions to adjust motor-vehicle traffic in the shortest time in their areas to the fuel situation. Patrols and all other controlling bodies shall be instructed to seize and to report to the appropriate offices all motor vehicles that exceed the speed limit or that the control reveals to be on an inadmissible official trip, prohibited vacation trip, or without a license.

Adolf Hitler

On June 29, Hitler had Meissner present Seldte a handwritten letter along with a picture on his sixtieth birthday.

The next day, he promoted the commander in chief of Army Group North, von Kücheler, to field marshal.³²³ This promotion was intended to compensate for the fact that the conquest of Leningrad was not making any progress. By contrast, the reasons for Manstein's promotion to field marshal on July 1 were better founded in reality: Sevastopol, the fortress in the Crimea, the conquest of which Hitler had already demanded in the autumn of 1941, had finally fallen after many months of fighting involving heavy losses.³²⁴ Hitler's telegram read as follows:³²⁵

To the commander in chief of the Crimean army, Colonel General von Manstein:

July 17, 1942

In grateful appreciation of your particular service in the victoriously concluded fighting in the Crimea, which culminated in the battle of annihilation at Kerch and the defeat of the fortress of Sevastopol, mighty by nature and through fortifications, I promote you to field marshal.

Through your promotion and the institution of a commemorative shield for all Crimean fighters, I honor before the entire German Volk the heroic accomplishments of the troops fighting under your command.

Adolf Hitler

The institution of the “Crimean Shield” would have to wait, however, since Hitler was still working on the institution of the “Kholm Shield.”³²⁶ Again, it was a piñon medal, which was to be worn on the left upper arm in the form of a shield.

On July 4, Göring and the new, for the time being acting, minister of food and agriculture, State Secretary Backe, were present at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Hitler discussed the food situation, in particular the “securing of the needed bread cereals.”³²⁷

On July 5, on Hitler’s behalf, Goebbels opened the “Great German Art Exhibition 1942” in Munich, organized by Heinrich Hoffmann.³²⁸

On the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Portuguese prime minister Salazar on his tenth anniversary in government.³²⁹

On July 8, he expressed his condolences in a telegram to Ismet İnönü on the death of the Turkish prime minister Refik Saydam.³³⁰ In addition, he awarded Professor Dr. Karl Brunner in Prien the Goethe Medal on his seventieth birthday for his “services in the struggle against trash (*Schund*).”³³¹

On July 17, Hitler signed Directive No. 43 on the “Continuation of Operations in the Crimea.”³³² In Hitler’s words, they served as a “prelude”³³³ to action in the Caucasus. The directive read as follows:

After cleaning up the Kerch Peninsula and capturing Sevastopol, the next task of the Eleventh Army is, while maintaining the security of the Crimea, to carry out all preparations, by mid-August at the latest, for crossing the Straits of Kerch with the mass of the army, with the goal of breaking through the western foothills of the Caucasus on both sides, to the southeast and to the east.

Action by code name “Blucher”—day of landing is called “Bl.-day.”

[Technical details follow.]

On July 12, Hitler had Reich Minister Lammers present state president Hácha with a handwritten letter on his seventieth birthday.³³⁴

July 17, 1942

The following day, Hitler received the recalled Turkish ambassador Huesrev Gerede.³³⁵

On July 14, Hitler sent the Croatian head of state Pavelich a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.³³⁶ In addition, he presented an “award for valor and service by members of the eastern people.”³³⁷

On July 15, he received the former prime minister of Iraq, Rashid Ali al Gailani, who had so pitifully failed the previous year and had then emigrated. This sad figure fitted in perfectly well with Hitler’s other foreign guests, especially the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Indian charlatan Bose.³³⁸ By 1942, the quality of his visitors was of little consequence to Hitler. It sufficed if a visit created, in his eyes, the impression with the German people and abroad that he had held an important meeting. The communiqué on al Gailani’s visit read as follows:³³⁹

The Führer received the Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al Gailani on Wednesday [July 15] in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The discussion took place in the spirit of the trusting friendship that the German Volk feels for the Arab people.

Hitler was so satisfied with the progress of operations in the southern portion of the eastern front that he felt that he could risk moving his new Werwolf headquarters to Vinnitsa in the Ukraine.³⁴⁰ He wanted to conduct the operations in the Caucasus personally; he felt that they would be decisive. On the one hand, Vinnitsa was closer to the operational area than Rastenburg because of the recent advances in the direction of the Don; on the other hand, Vinnitsa was far enough away from the front that he did not have to fear any unpleasant surprises.

Hitler remained at the Werwolf headquarters from July 17 until October 31, 1942, with the exception of a stay of several days in Berlin in late September and early October. Besides military men, Hitler received civilian visitors in Vinnitsa such as the accredited diplomatic representatives of Italy, Turkey, and Bulgaria, as well as politicians from the Balkan states.

The most curious visit was that of Professor Sauerbruch, whom Hitler summoned in order to send him to the Turkish foreign minister Menemencioglu, who had fallen ill.³⁴¹ Sauerbruch had to wait for Hitler for some time in a room. All of a sudden, Hitler’s German shepherd stormed in and attacked him. Sauerbruch, who knew how to handle dogs, quickly calmed him and succeeded in winning his favor. When

July 21, 1942

Hitler entered and noticed this, he behaved like a madman, screaming: "What did you do with my dog? That dog normally only comes to me. I will have him shot! I do not want to see him again!" Sauerbruch had decidedly more trouble in calming Hitler than he had with the dog.

Hitler's "Table Talk" at Vinnitsa began at noon on July 17.³⁴² Apparently in order to acquaint him with the Ukrainian milieu, he was told that the local population was not organized in villages, but in "brigades." Hitler was very impressed by this military form of organization. He declared that "we could do nothing smarter than to adopt this system."³⁴³

On July 18, Hitler awarded Kesselring the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords because of his service as "commander in chief of the German Luftwaffe units deployed in the Mediterranean and in North Africa."³⁴⁴

On July 20, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the widow of a leader of the war economy, Wilhelm Wissel of the Daimler-Benz Company.³⁴⁵

On July 21, Hitler felt that the military situation along the southern part of the eastern front was so excellent that he began planning for the conquest of Leningrad in September, along with the taking of the Murmansk railroad in the north. He issued Directive No. 44, which read as follows:³⁴⁶

Subject: Waging War in Northern Finland.

1. The unexpectedly fast and effective operations against the armies of Timoshenko give us the right to hope that Soviet Russia will shortly be cut off from the Caucasus, hence from her primary source of oil, and from an important route for the flow of English and American war materials. This, added to the loss of all the industry in the Donetsk region, would be a blow to the Soviet Union of incalculable consequence.

2. The important thing now is to cut off Russia from the northern routes connecting her with the Anglo-American powers, that is, primarily from the Murmansk railway, by means of which, mainly in the winter months, Russia received the bulk of her English and American war materials. The importance of this supply line will take on new dimensions when the time of year and the weather conditions block [German] effective operations against the northern convoys.

3. To accomplish this, Geb. AOK 20, in accordance with its proposal, is preparing an autumn offensive in coordination with the Fifth Air Force to seize control of the Murmansk line at Kandalaksha. It may be assumed a) that Leningrad will be taken at the latest by September, so that Finnish forces will be freed up, and b) that the 5th Sector Division will have reached Finland by

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the end of September. The operation carries code name “Salmon Catch [*Lachsfang*].” The day of attack is “L-day.” [Technical details follow.]

But nothing ever came of *Lachsfang* or of *Feuerzauber* (Operation Magic-Fire, that is, the conquest of Leningrad).

On July 22, Hitler sent Seyss-Inquart a handwritten letter on his fiftieth birthday.³⁴⁷

On July 23, Hitler received Chief of Staff Lutze and SA Obergruppenführer Jüttner at the Werwolf headquarters. They reported on the “activities and deployment of the SA in the war.” On the same day, he congratulated the author Bruno Brehm in a telegram on his fiftieth birthday and ordered a party funeral for Josef Stolzing-Cerny, an art editor and old party comrade.³⁴⁸

However, most of Hitler’s attention was directed to Directive No. 45, concerning the continuation of Operation Braunschweig, as Hitler dubbed the summer campaign in 1942, apparently in memory of Henry the Lion.³⁴⁹

Hitler demanded that Army Group A take the Caucasus and Baku (Operation Edelweiss), while Army Group B was supposed to conquer Stalingrad and, if possible, Astrakhan (Operation Heron— *Fischreiber* because of the fish in the Volga river). Army Group North was instructed to conquer Leningrad (Operation Fireworks because of the expected artillery fire). The directive read as follows:

I. In a campaign of little more than three weeks, the ultimate goals I had set the south wing of the eastern front have already been accomplished.³⁵⁰ Only some rather weak enemy forces belonging to the armies of Timoshenko have managed to escape the envelopment and reach the banks of the southern Don. These will presumably receive reinforcements from the Caucasus area.

Currently the enemy is massing another army group in the Stalingrad area, where stiff resistance is to be expected.

II. Goals of further operations

A: Army:

1. The immediate mission of Army Group A is to encircle the enemy forces that have escaped across the Don in the area south and southeast of Rostov and destroy them. [Technical details follow.]

2. Following destruction of the groups of enemy forces south of the Don, the most important mission of Army Group A is to take possession of the eastern coast of the Black Sea and therewith to neutralize the enemy’s Black Sea ports and fleet.

For this, assigned elements of the Eleventh Army (Romanian Mountain Corps) are to cross the Straits of Kerch as soon as the advance of the main forces of Army Group A becomes effective and at that point to advance to the

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southeast along the Black Sea coastal road. With a further group of forces consisting of all remaining mountain and rifle divisions, a crossing of the Kuban is to be forced and the plateaus of Maikop and Armavir are to be taken.

This group, reinforced at the appropriate time by Alpine units, is then to advance against and over the Caucasus making use of every available pass and in this way, in cooperation with Eleventh Army forces, to take possession of the Black Sea coast.

3. Simultaneously, a group of forces to be formed essentially with fast-moving brigades, without cover of eastern flank, is to take possession of the area around Grozny. Its elements are then to block the Ossetian and Georgian Military Highway, as far as possible at the level of the passes. At that point, by means of an advance along the Caspian Sea, the area around Baku is to be occupied. Army Group may count on the later addition of the Italian Alpine Corps. These operations of Army Group A get the code name "Edelweiss." Security level: Command Secret.

4. The mission of Army Group B—as ordered—is to build a defense on the Don, then to advance to Stalingrad, scatter enemy army group currently in formation there, occupy the city, and block the land corridor connecting the Volga and the Don. Once this is accomplished, fast-moving brigades are to move to the Volga with the mission of effecting an advance to Astrakhan, where the main arm of the Volga is to be closed to shipping. These operations of Army Group B get the code name "Heron." Security level: Command Secret.

B. Air Force:

The primary mission of the Air Force is to support with strong units first the army crossing of the Don and then the eastward advance of the brigades moving along the railroad to Tikhorechka, and to assemble and hold in readiness its main force for the destruction of Army Group Timoshenko. Secondly, it is to support the operations of Army Group B against Stalingrad and the western part of Astrakhan. The early destruction of the city of Stalingrad is to be given high priority. Besides that, occasional attacks are to be conducted against Astrakhan. Shipping on the lower course of the Volga is to be harassed by mining. In the subsequent pursuit of the operation, the main thrust of the air offensive is to be directed to cooperation with the land units proceeding against the Black Sea ports, whereby, aside from immediate support of the land forces, intervention of enemy warships is also to be prevented in coordination with the navy. Secondly, sufficient forces are to be provided for support of the advance on Baku by way of Grozny.

As oil production in the Caucasus is of vital importance for the conducting of future military operations, air attacks against the centers of production, the reserve oil tanks, and the Black Sea ports for shipping oil are to be carried out only if absolutely required by army operations. But in order to deny the enemy access to the oil supply coming from the Caucasus, high priority is to be given the swift interruption of usable railroads and pipelines, also to the harassment of shipping connections with the Caspian Sea.

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C. Navy:

The mission of the navy, besides the immediate support of the land forces crossing the Straits of Kerch, is to commit all forces available in the Black Sea to the harassment of enemy naval intervention against our operations on the Black Sea coast. As soon as possible, naval ferry barges are to be brought through the Straits of Kerch to the Don to assist army supply operations. Aside from that, Naval High Command is to effect preparations for committing light sea forces in the Caspian Sea to the harassment of enemy shipping (especially oil tankers connecting with the Anglo-Americans in Iran.)

III. Current preparation of operations in the zones of Army Groups Center and North are to be completed as quickly as possible. The goal is to bring the scattering and dissolution of enemy forces to its highest level. Army Group North is preparing the capture of Leningrad by the beginning of September. Code name: "Fire-Magic."³⁵¹ In line with this mission, five divisions of the Eleventh Army, along with heavy and heaviest artillery units and other necessary infantry units, are to be assigned. Temporarily two German divisions and two Romanian divisions are to remain in the Crimean Peninsula; the Twenty-Second Division, as already ordered, is assigned to Army Group South Commander.

IV. For the processing and transmission of this message and of the commands and directives contained therein, I refer especially to my command of July 12 concerning secrecy.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler has been blamed for Directive No. 45, most notably by some German generals, for his intention of taking the Caucasus and Stalingrad simultaneously.³⁵²

This blame is misplaced, however. Since Hitler had decided to conquer the Caucasus, it was necessary to secure the flanks along the Volga and the Don. If this was not done, the entire Caucasus army would be in danger of being cut off. Because of this, Hitler really needed not only Stalingrad but also Voronezh. But he succeeded in taking neither the one nor the other! The fact that German troops were unable to conquer Voronezh in the summer of 1942—in spite of all OKW reports to the contrary—was one of the causes of the catastrophe at Stalingrad.

On July 25, Hitler finally had time again to see through the announced "institution of the Crimean Shield."³⁵³

On July 28, Hitler issued three ordinances of a primarily domestic nature. The first of these decrees dealt with the restriction of trade in agricultural properties in wartime. It was directed against speculation and investment.³⁵⁴ A second decree concerned child care for members of

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the German Wehrmacht in the occupied territories.³⁵⁵ This decree began with the following paragraph:

For maintaining and promoting the racially valuable Germanic genotype, children produced in the occupied Norwegian and Dutch territories by members of the German Wehrmacht and born of Norwegian or Dutch women will be accorded, upon request by the mother, special care and looking after through the offices of the Reichskommissars for the occupied Norwegian and Dutch territories.

Of course, French and Belgian women were incapable of giving birth to “racially valuable” children. Earlier, Hitler had even made sexual intercourse between members of the German Wehrmacht and Polish women punishable.

The third decree concerned the medical service and the public-health service in full detail. Hitler tried to dominate here, too, appointing his personal physician Professor Karl Brandt “the Führer’s general commissar for the medical and public-health services.” Brandt was supposed to exercise the powers of his office in accordance with Hitler’s instructions. The decree read as follows:³⁵⁶

The deployment of personnel and materiel in the sphere of the medical and public-health services necessitates unity and planning of management.

I order the following:

1. For the Wehrmacht, I instruct the army medical inspector as chief of the Wehrmacht medical service in addition to his previous tasks to combine all common tasks in the medical service of the Wehrmacht, of the Waffen SS, and of all organizations and units subordinate to and associated with the Wehrmacht.

The chief of the Wehrmacht medical service will represent the Wehrmacht in all matters concerning the medical service of the Wehrmacht’s branches, the Waffen SS and all organizations and units subordinate to and associated with the Wehrmacht, to the civilian authorities and will protect the Wehrmacht’s interests in health-related measures by the civilian administration.

He will receive as subordinates in the comprehensive processing of these tasks one medical officer from the navy and one from the Luftwaffe with the respective rank of chief of staff. Questions of principle regarding the Waffen SS will be decided in agreement with the medical inspection of the Waffen SS.

2. For the civilian public-health service, the state secretary with the Reich ministry of the interior and Reich public-health leader, Dr. Conti, will be responsible for measures to be taken globally. At his disposal will be the appropriate high Reich authorities and their subordinate offices.

3. For special tasks and negotiations to balance the need for physicians, hospitals, medicine, and so on, between the military and the civilian sectors of the medical and public-health services, I vest Professor Karl Brandt with the

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requisite powers. He will be subordinate only to me and will receive his instructions directly from me.

4. My plenipotentiary for the medical service and the public-health service will be kept informed of fundamental proceedings with the Wehrmacht's medical service and the civilian public-health service. He is authorized to intervene in a responsible manner.

As plenipotentiary for the medical and public-health services, Professor Brandt will bear the title "the Führer's general commissar for the medical and public-health services."

On July 29, Hitler sent the Duce the following congratulatory telegram:³⁵⁷

In comradely attachment, I express to you, Duce, on the occasion of your birthday today my heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk. These greetings are above all for your personal welfare and the prosperity of Fascist Italy. In the unshakable conviction that, together with the allies of the Axis, our people will secure the final victory in this fight for Europe's freedom and future, I send you my heartfelt greetings, as always on this day.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini replied as follows:

A thousand times thank you, Führer, for your telegram on my birthday. Accompanied by the most friendly of feelings, I wish to reciprocate the best wishes that you expressed. Shoulder to shoulder we will continue to fight together as loyal and upright comrades.

On August 2, the anniversary of Hindenburg's death, General Weyer placed a wreath at the vault of the Tannenberg Memorial in Hitler's name.³⁵⁸

On August 4, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini a letter on the military and political situation. According to Ciano, the document "was of not great importance."³⁵⁹ This assessment was undoubtedly correct.

The next day, Hitler ordered a "state funeral" for Air Force General von der Lieth-Thomsen, who had died at the age of seventy-five.³⁶⁰

On August 15, Hitler received foreign diplomats at the Werwolf headquarters. The new Turkish ambassador Saffet Arıkan, who had arrived in Berlin in early August, was the first to present his credentials.³⁶¹

On this occasion, Hitler once again attempted to whet the appetite of the Turks for neighboring Russian territories. However, his visitor

August 18, 1942

was not interested. Next, the recalled Bulgarian Envoy Paravan Draganov bade Hitler farewell.

For some time now, Hitler had been troubled by the activities of the partisans in the east. In part, they consisted of regular troops who had withdrawn to impassable terrain in the course of the German advance. There were also irregulars and Russian parachutists. As in the days of Napoleon, the partisans attacked supply columns and made surprise raids. Hitler would use a proven method against them: extermination. He did not realize that terror is effective only against a weaker opponent, but not against one of equal or superior strength. In time, he would come to understand this both in the east and in the west.

On August 18, Hitler issued Directive No. 46:³⁶²

I. In the past months, gangster activities in the east have reached an intolerable level and have come to pose a serious threat to the supply of the front and to the economic exploitation of the country. If the Wehrmacht leadership is to be spared disadvantages of a decisive nature in the winter months, these bandit groups must have to be largely exterminated by the beginning of winter. The requirements are as follows:

1. Swift and vigorous attacks against these bands, involving all available and suitable elements of the army, SS, and military police.
2. Coordination of all propagandistic, economic, and political measures in the necessities of fighting the bands. [Technical details follow.]

While Hitler's summer offensive was making progress, the Allies had not remained idle.

As mentioned earlier, they had built up central and eastern Africa as a huge supply center.³⁶³ As early as July 1942, American troops had been stationed in Liberia. Allied landings in Brazzaville had followed. The French and Belgian colonies in central Africa had joined the Allies. In July, a "Headquarters for the American Armed Forces in the European Theater of War" had been set up in London under General Eisenhower. American troops had already occupied Greenland in 1941. Since January 1942, when the first Americans had landed in Northern Ireland, the number of troops stationed in Great Britain had constantly increased.³⁶⁴

Churchill had met with Roosevelt in Washington on June 18. In early August, he had reorganized the military high command in Egypt: he had named General Montgomery commander in chief of the British Eighth Army and General Alexander commander in chief Near and Middle East. Afterwards, he had flown via Teheran to Moscow, where he had consulted with Stalin from August 13 to 16.

August 20, 1942

On August 19, British commandos under Lord Mountbatten attempted a landing at Dieppe (northern France), the most ambitious venture of this type to date.³⁶⁵ British, Canadian, and de Gaulle troops participated in the assault, which lasted “nine hours.” Fighting took place on land—partly with tanks that had been landed—at sea, and in the air. The Germans captured about fifteen hundred men.³⁶⁶ The OKW report celebrated this event as the thwarting of an attempted invasion.³⁶⁷

Hitler was in a good mood due to the military successes in the east and west. At his headquarters, he again dedicated himself to domestic problems. On August 18, he signed a decree dealing with questions of municipal architecture in the Reichsgau Vienna.³⁶⁸

On August 20, he even named a new Reich minister of justice. Now that he himself was “Supreme Law Lord” and no longer bound by “existing regulations,”³⁶⁹ he no longer feared trusting a “jurist” with the exercise of this office. Of course, he also took care to maintain control of the justice system by conferring “special powers” on the new Reich minister in a simultaneous decree, which—according to Hitler’s “guidelines and directives”—empowered him to “depart from existing law.”

The following announcement on this topic was published:³⁷⁰

Führer Headquarters, August 20, 1942

Official communication: In view of the particular significance attributed to the tasks of the judiciary during the war, the Führer has decided to fill again the post of Reich minister of justice, which has been vacant since the death of Reich Minister Dr. Gürtner. The Führer has therefore appointed the president of the Volksgesichtshof, retired state minister Dr. Thierack, who served as justice minister of Saxony from the seizure of power until the nationalization of the administration of justice, to the post of Reich minister of justice.

At the same time, the Führer has relieved of his duties state secretary Professor Dr. Schlegelberger, who had been entrusted with the conduct of the affairs of the Reich minister of justice, and has approved his request for retirement. The Führer has thanked state secretary Dr. Schlegelberger in a handwritten letter for the excellent services rendered the German Reich during his decades of self-sacrificing work. Further, he has received him at the Führer headquarters to allow him personally to report off duty.

The Führer has appointed the president of the Hanseatic Oberlandesgericht Hamburg, Senator Dr. Rothenberger, to the post of state secretary in the Reich ministry of justice; and he has appointed the state secretary in the Reich ministry of justice Dr. Freisler, to the post of president of the Volksgesichtshof.

The Reich Press Bureau of the NSDAP announces the following:

August 20, 1942

The previous head of the National Socialist Rechtswahrerbund, president of the German Law Academy, and head of the NSDAP Reich legal office, Dr. Frank, has asked the Führer to relieve him of these duties so that he can dedicate himself fully to his work as governor-general. The Führer has granted this request. He has appointed the newly named Reich minister of justice, Dr. Thierack, to the posts of president of the German Law Academy and head of the National Socialist Rechtswahrerbund. The Führer has dissolved the Reich legal office and the Gau and Kreis legal offices. He has integrated the former leaders of the Gau and Kreis legal offices in the Gau and Kreis staff offices. Within the framework of these offices, the National Socialist legal counseling offices shall continue their work.

Official communication: The Führer has conferred special powers on the newly named Reich minister of justice in the following decree:³⁷¹

Führer Decree on the special powers of the Reich minister of justice:

A strong judiciary is necessary for the fulfillment of the Greater German Reich's mission. I order and empower the Reich minister of justice, in accordance with my guidelines and directives and in concurrence with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery and the head of the party chancellery, to build up a National Socialist judiciary and to take all necessary measures. In so doing, he may depart from the existing law.

The Führer Adolf Hitler

Besides Schlegelberger, Hitler had also received Thierack at the Werwolf headquarters.³⁷² It was interesting in this context that Frank was forced to relinquish his posts as jurist.³⁷³ Hitler again killed two birds with one stone—his old tactics.

At first, Thierack did serve Hitler well. In particular, the concentration camps were greatly expanded thanks to his measures. It was Thierack who coined the legal term *Vernichtung durch Arbeit* (extermination through work) and who regulated the corporal punishment ordered by Hitler.³⁷⁴

On August 20, Hitler sent Horthy the following congratulatory telegram:³⁷⁵

On the Hungarian national holiday, I express to Your Excellency my sincere best wishes. On this day, my thoughts turn with particularly heartfelt feelings to the allied Hungarian nation and its troops fighting together with us in the east.

Adolf Hitler

September 1, 1942

On the same day, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the regent. His eldest son Stephan, who had been Horthy's deputy since February 19, had died a "hero's death on the eastern front," where he had served as an officer with the Hungarian Air Force.³⁷⁶

There was progress being made in the southern part of the eastern front. General Jodl was even discussing the possibility of flying to Tbilisi (Tiflis) with Captain Baur, since the German troops were "soon about" to reach the Georgian capital.³⁷⁷ And on August 25, the Wehrmacht's report announced the following:

At 11:00 a.m. on August 21, an alpine unit hoisted the Reich war flag on the Elbrus at 5,630 meters, the highest summit in the Caucasus Mountains.

Militarily speaking, this hoisting of flags was completely insignificant. Nevertheless, it reflected Hitler's predilection for such displays, like the hoisting of the swastika on the Zugspitze in 1933, and on the Austrian Grossglockner in 1938.³⁷⁸ Both undertakings had also been celebrated as extraordinarily important ventures.

On August 22, Freiherr von Gablenz died in a "plane crash." According to official information, Gablenz had flown the plane himself on his way from Berlin to Munich. Hitler ordered a "state funeral." The ceremony took place on August 25 in the Haus der Flieger in Berlin. Field Marshal Milch presented the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross awarded by Hitler.³⁷⁹

Afterwards, Hitler sent Ribbentrop and Keitel, along with a "gigantic wreath," to Budapest, where they attended Stephan von Horthy's funeral on August 27.³⁸⁰

In late August, Hitler renamed the following SA groups by decree: *Bayerische Ostmark* was changed to *Bayernwald*, *Ostland* to *Tannenberg*, *Mitte* to *Elbe*, and *Südwest* to *Neckar*.³⁸¹ This was in line with the renaming of the Gau *Bayerische Ostmark* as *Bayreuth* on June 15. Since Russia was supposed to constitute the Greater German Reich's "Ostmark" or "Ostland" in the future, and, in the west, Burgundy and the Atlantic harbors would "return" to the Reich, Hitler found it difficult to reconcile himself with the old names.

On September 1, Hitler issued an appeal for the Kriegswinterhilfswerk 1942-1943 and announced an imminent "world-deciding victory of the have-nots."³⁸²

September 1, 1942

Führer Headquarters, September 1, 1942

At the beginning of the fourth year of a war in which the German Volk fights for its existence or nonexistence in the present and future, I appeal to the German Volk for the tenth time to make its voluntary sacrifice for the Winterhilfswerk.

The soldiers of our Wehrmacht fight globally at the risk of life and limb. They have been joined by the greater part of the European nations and people of the Far East in a loyal alliance, which will prevent our countries from falling to Bolshevik barbarity or Jewish, Anglo-American, capitalist exploitation. The enemies of the German Reich from long ago—when we fought for power at home—have again united against us today. The international Jew uses Bolshevism and plutocracy not only in order to destroy the European civilized states, but also to exterminate above all the representatives of an independent existence. American and English agents today claim that they want to build a new world—better than theirs used to be—where everyone will have work, clothes, and a home in the future. If that is so, then it would not have been necessary to attack the German Reich of all countries, since National Socialism has either long resolved these problems or was in the process of successfully resolving them. No, the intention of these international criminals is not the building of a better socialist world. Rather it is the brutal destruction of the National Socialist states of Europe opposed to capitalism. The goal is a type of enslavement like that which India has to suffer. That the Bolshevik Jew leads in the end, as the slave driver in both camps, is no different on a large scale from what it was on a small scale in Germany.

In a gigantic struggle without equal, the German and allied soldiers have mightily expanded the Lebensraum of the European people this year. The attempt by the international benefactors of humanity—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—to starve the European people can therefore already be regarded as having failed. If in this mightiest struggle of all time, the German soldier makes his difficult sacrifices and suffers from hardly imaginable deprivations, then the homeland is even more obligated this year to make the highest sacrifices, too. Even then, it will be able to accomplish only a fraction of what our Wehrmacht is accomplishing on land, at sea, and in the air.

Besides this, it is the purpose of our Winterhilfswerk, not only in peace but also and all the more so in war, to reinforce the German Volk's indissoluble community of fate with deeds—not with phrases as in England and America.

After all: the German Reich must and will return to peace from this international war as a National Socialist state through and through. It will be realized not only through the sacrifices of the front, but also through those of the homeland.

In the years 1939 and 1940, perhaps even still in the year 1941, our dull opponents may have thought that, as in 1918, the German Volk could be plunged by its internal disunion into an outward dependence and, thereby, into an enslavement through an even worse Dictate of Versailles. It is the task of the front and the working German Volk at home to destroy this hope of the international gold vultures and Bolshevik beasts more and more, and to make

September 1, 1942

clear to them that this war will not end with possible further exploitation by the have nations, but with a world-decisive victory of the have-nots.

Adolf Hitler



LI Inge Terboven, Hitler, and Ilse Stahl

Photo: Publisher's archives



LII Terboven, Goebbels, and Ilse Stahl

Photo: Publisher's archives



LIII Heydrich

Photo: Publisher's archives



LIV Portrait of Goebbels

Photo: Publisher's archives

September 2, 1942

4

On September 2, Horthy's son-in-law Count Karolyi died in a "plane crash." Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to Horthy.³⁸³

It was September now. According to plan, following an end of fighting in the south, the time had come for Hitler to attack Leningrad and the Murmansk railroad (Operations Fireworks and Salmon Fishing). However, operations in the south had not progressed in accordance with his plans. While the Reich battle flag was flying on the Elbrus and the destroyed Maikop oil fields were in German hands, it seemed impossible to reach the oil fields at Grozny. There was also little progress at Stalingrad. While German troops had conquered the bend of the Don River quite swiftly, Stalingrad appeared to be a hard nut to crack.³⁸⁴

Therefore, not surprisingly, Hitler's enthusiasm soon yielded to increasing disenchantment with his generals. He simply couldn't believe that his prophecies refused to come true, even though his orders and instructions were being followed. He knew that the generals were also beginning to notice this. It drove him crazy that, while they continued to carry out his orders, they no longer had any confidence in his strategic genius. As long as Hitler could offer them promotions, medals, money, and glory, they had followed him in "blind obedience." However, they would do so only as long as he scored victories, even deceptive victories. Now that everything was slowly beginning to crumble, and the catastrophes to which Hitler's politics and strategy were destined to lead seemed imminent everywhere, they no longer wished to be too closely involved with this unfortunate development. However, Hitler was confusing cause and effect. He truly believed or deluded himself that the skepticism of the generals was to blame for the reverses, while actually it was Hitler's failures that made the generals skeptical.

September 7, 1942

Hitler's anger was directed primarily at those generals who had actually had a formal education with the general staff. During the month of September, a series of unpleasant scenes took place at the Werwolf headquarters. On August 30, the *War Diary of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff* noted the following:³⁸⁵

The Führer is very discontented with the situation of Army Group A [Caucasus]. . . . His reprimands are not directed against the original deployment of the forces, but against the army group's failing to regroup them once it saw that it was going nowhere like this.

On September 7, Hitler felt that it was necessary to send Jodl, who was supposed "to fly to Tbilisi,"³⁸⁶ to Stalino instead for talks with the commander in chief of Army Group A, Field Marshal List.

Following Jodl's return, the previously mentioned scene took place. After Jodl declared that List had merely carried out the Führer's orders, Hitler shouted, "That is a lie!" and left the dining hall foaming with rage.³⁸⁷ That was the end of the common meals and Hitler's "Table Talk."³⁸⁸

The next morning, messages went out to Munich and Berlin by telex ordering the Reichstag stenographers to Vinnitsa. In the future, they would have to take down every word Hitler uttered in the course of the long discussions of the situation.

Hitler had not come up with this plan overnight.³⁸⁹ In all likelihood, he had already been upset at an earlier time by some general's referring him to his own statements. He wished to prevent such unpleasantness in the future. In view of the tremendous amount of paper produced in the course of the discussions of the situation, who would dare to quote any particular statement of his?³⁹⁰ Should anyone dare, he could literally stuff his mouth with paper!

It would be incorrect to conclude from all this that Hitler actually felt so confident that he was always right that he wished his every word to be recorded. He only asked everybody else to believe this of him.

Hitler was well aware that, in his discussions of the situation and public statements since 1939, he had contradicted himself and had made the most untenable prophesies, such as, for example, the following:

We will erase their cities!³⁹¹ Land taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!³⁹²

The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history.³⁹³

September 15, 1942

I say this here and now because I can say that this opponent has already broken down and will never rise again!³⁹⁴

Just how aware Hitler was of his false prophecies is evidenced by his increasing reluctance to speak before his old party comrades, the Reichstag, and the public in general. Plagued by a bad conscience, he would indulge his desire to speak only with his immediate subordinates. On occasion, Hitler would argue that the shorthand record of the discussions would one day serve as evidence before “history” that he took responsibility for everything himself. Indeed, “history” was one of Hitler’s favorite arguments. His use of this word will be dealt with in detail at the end of this volume.

Halder recorded Hitler’s next clash with the military, which took place at a discussion of the situation at the Werwolf headquarters about the same time, in the following manner:³⁹⁵

When he [Hitler] was presented with a summary report based on sound documents, according to which Stalin would still be able to order the deployment of one million to one-and-a-half million men in the area north of Stalingrad and west of the Volga, and of at least half a million men in the eastern Caucasus and to its north, and finally evidence was presented that the Russian production of tanks for the front amounted to twelve hundred a month, foaming at the mouth and with clenched fists, he attacked the speaker and told him to stop this idiotic babble.

On September 10, Hitler received Italian militia officers at the Werwolf headquarters in Lutze’s presence. While he detested militias in general, he was nonetheless happy that this occasion allowed him again to publish a communiqué:³⁹⁶

On Thursday [September 15], the Führer, in the presence of Chief of Staff Viktor Lutze, received the chief of staff of the Italian militia, His Excellency Enzo Galbiati, and the commander of Special Formation “Mussolini,” General Giua, and General Romegialli. He had a lengthy discussion with the chief of the Fascist fighting units, which was conducted in the spirit of heartfelt friendship and comradeship in arms.

On September 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram “characterized by heartfelt words” to the Italian Crown Prince Umberto on his birthday. On the same day, he had the German envoy in Manchukuo congratulate the emperor of the Japanese puppet state “on the occasion of the official state celebration of the tenth anniversary of the empire of Manchukuo on September 15 and 16.”³⁹⁷ In addition, he

September 24, 1942

addressed the leaders of the “European” youth movement in the following telegram:³⁹⁸

I thank you and the leaders of the European youth assembled in Vienna for the greetings relayed to me from the foundation conference of the European Youth Association and I reciprocate with my best wishes for the full success of the conference.

On September 18, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Chilean president, Rios Morales, on the country’s independence day.³⁹⁹

On September 20, the king of Thailand, Rama VIII, received a congratulatory telegram from Hitler on his birthday.⁴⁰⁰ On the same day, he had Envoy Hewel give a hospital aircraft to the Hungarian Red Cross as a gift.⁴⁰¹

Meanwhile, the SA counted a hundred bearers of the Knight’s Cross among its members. For this reason, Hitler issued the following “honorific decree” on September 23:⁴⁰²

In recognition of the SA’s deployment in the struggle for Greater Germany’s future, I award Infantry Regiment 271 the title Infantry Regiment “Feldherrnhalle.” On the left forearm, the Infantry Regiment “Feldherrnhalle” will wear a brown stripe with the inscription “Feldherrnhalle” embroidered in silver.

Hitler was as generous in distributing such awards as had been Napoleon, who had also awarded his troops numerous “honorific” names, standards, flags, and so on.

On September 23, Hitler received Mihai Antonescu at the Werwolf headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁰³

On Wednesday [September 23], the Führer received at his headquarters the Deputy Romanian prime minister Mihai Antonescu, who was staying at the Reich foreign minister’s field quarters for political talks, and held a lengthy and heartfelt discussion with him.

Pavelich visited on September 24. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁰⁴

Further on Thursday, the Führer received the head of state of the independent state of Croatia, Dr. Ante Pavelich, who was on his way to an inspection of the Croatian troops fighting on the eastern front. He held a discussion with the Poglavnik, which was characterized by its heartfelt and friendly spirit. In addition to the entourage of the Poglavnik, the reception was attended by the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel.

September 24, 1942

On September 24 came a break between Hitler and Colonel General Halder, the army chief of staff. Actually, Hitler had no reason to complain about Halder. In the last four years, Halder had loyally and obediently done whatever Hitler had ordered. He even undertook the most risky ventures in violation of international law. Halder had always been most respectful, unlike Jodl, who poked fun at Hitler in his absence.⁴⁰⁵

But Halder knew too much. He had heard Hitler contradict himself too often. Besides, he was a staff man of the old school. While he did what Hitler told him to do, he did so only because of a sense of obedience that he often lamented himself⁴⁰⁶ and, in many instances, without being convinced of the correctness of Hitler's orders. Although Halder entrusted his opposition only to his diary and did not rebel openly, Hitler felt that Halder thought he was somewhat superior. What Hitler needed, however, was a chief of staff who, like Napoleon's marshal Berthier, did not act as a counselor to him, but instead executed his orders with a "trusting faith."

Halder noted the following on his last talk with Hitler:⁴⁰⁷

After the day's presentation: Dismissal by the Führer (my nerves used up, his are also no longer fresh). We must part ways. Necessity of educating the general staff in the zealous belief in an idea.⁴⁰⁸ (Determined to see his will through in the army, too).

Halder was replaced by Major General Kurt Zeitzler, who was promoted by Hitler through ranks to colonel general on the same day.⁴⁰⁹ Hitler believed he had found in Zeitzler the type of general who unconditionally agreed with everything he said. Indeed, Hitler was far more open with Zeitzler and, on occasion, he would even listen to Zeitzler's reasoned arguments which he would have immediately rejected had Halder made them. If someone proved to Hitler that he accepted Hitler without reservation, then Hitler could be dealt with in a remarkably reasonable manner. The other method was to shout him down, as Sir Nevile Henderson had done in 1939. However, there was nobody on the German side who dared to do so.

On September 24, Hitler presented Gauleiter Wahl of Augsburg his picture with a dedication on Wahl's fiftieth birthday. On September 25, he sent King Christian X of Denmark a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.⁴¹⁰

September 27, 1942

On the second anniversary of the Tripartite Pact on September 27, a flood of telegrams was exchanged between the respective heads of state, prime ministers, foreign ministers, and so on. Hitler sent four telegrams:⁴¹¹

To the King and Emperor Victor Emmanuel:

On the second anniversary of the Tripartite Pact's conclusion, I send Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings and those of the German Volk. Bound together in the closest friendship, Germany, Italy, and Japan will relentlessly and determinedly wage the struggle for a new order in Europe and East Asia, an order which will be based on justice and mutual understanding, to a joint final victory.

To the Duce:

The second anniversary of the Tripartite Pact's conclusion, in which Germany, Italy, and Japan have tied themselves together in the closest cooperation for the preservation and securing of their rights and vital interests, sees our two people and the Japanese people united in indissoluble loyalty in the victorious struggle for a new and just world order. By thinking of Fascist Italy and its soldiers marching together with us on this day, I relay to you, Duce, my sincere and heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk in loyal comradeship.

To the Japanese Emperor (Tenno):

I send Your Majesty my sincere best wishes and those of the German Volk on the second anniversary of signing the Tripartite Pact. I am certain that the three great nations united in the pact will lead to a victorious end the freedom fight forced on them in the awareness of their historic mission and that they will thereby realize the great ideal of the creation of a new world order in Europe and in East Asia.

To the Japanese prime minister Tojo:

On the second anniversary of the signing of the Tripartite Pact, my thoughts and those of the German Volk turn to the allied Japanese nation and its soldiers. In the unshakable belief in our joint final victory, I feel one with Your Excellency in the knowledge that the war forced on our countries and on Italy will lead to a prosperous future for our people and for all of Europe and Greater East Asia. In this spirit, I send you my heartfelt best wishes.

Also on September 27, the pianist Elly Ney received a telegram from Hitler's headquarters on her sixtieth birthday.⁴¹²

Hitler was in Berlin the next day. At the Sportpalast, he again spoke to officer candidates. Göring reported twelve thousand young officers from the army, navy, and Luftwaffe present, as well as "Junkers" from the Waffen SS.⁴¹³

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The German News Bureau rendered the following account:

In rousing words, the Führer afforded the young men an insight into the great history of Germany, which is being crowned in the mighty fateful struggle of our days. After referring to the high duties that are imparted to an officer as the head of the soldiers entrusted to him in this struggle, the Führer concluded his address by expressing his absolute certainty of victory and his unshakable trust in the superior fighting qualities of the German soldiers.

On September 30, Hitler delivered another speech at the Sportpalast, at a “Volk rally” opening the Kriegswinterhilfswerk. The setting was the same as one year before, when he had claimed that Moscow would be reached within one or two days and the Russian “opponent has already broken down and will never rise again.”

At the beginning, he tried to explain why “regrettably” he spoke so little to the German Volk at this time. He admitted—hear, hear—that his speeches were getting “worse.” That was true. However, it was not for a lack of practice, as Hitler claimed, but because the overly exuberant forecasts of his earlier talks had not come true and the external situation made it increasingly difficult for him to fill himself and his audience with similar enthusiasm.

He now had to resort to all sorts of excuses, although he could not resist making more exaggerated prophecies:

. . . we rush on Stalingrad and will take it—you can be assured of that!—And you can rest assured that no human being can remove us from there!—No matter which place [for an invasion] he [Churchill] chooses next, he can consider himself fortunate if he can stay on land for nine hours!

In 1941, he had offered the English evacuation of the areas in question in order to “spare [them] the difficulties of a landing.”⁴¹⁴ Now, he was forced to limit himself to impotent tirades against “military silly boys” in the west, against these “lunatics and constant drunks,” against the “blockhead Duff Cooper, Eden, or another of these fellows,” against the Russian people “born in a morass,” against the Russian, who “was a type of swamp-man and no European.”

He scorned and derided his enemies abroad, as he once had his opponents within Germany, but still they were not intimidated! Applause at the Sportpalast was thin, Hitler’s big talk embarrassing even this captive audience. He began his speech as follows:⁴¹⁵

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My German Volksgenossen!

It was one year ago that I last spoke to you and the German Volk from this place. In many respects, this is regrettable. First, because I very much regret not being able to step before the nation more often and, second, because I fear that my speeches are not getting better but worse—because this also needs practice. Regrettably, my time is far more limited than that of my opponents. Someone who can travel around the world for weeks, in a white silk shirt, a wide sombrero on his head, can also attend to speeches more often.⁴¹⁶

During this time, I have had to concern myself more with actions and deeds. Besides, even otherwise, I cannot speak every week or every month, of course. What must be said today will be said by our soldiers! The topics on which I could speak are of course more difficult than my enemies' discourses, who sent their chats out to the world—at least in former times—more often from the fireside than anywhere else. I do not think it appropriate, for example, to concern myself with the design of what will be one day. Instead, I think it is more appropriate for us all to concern ourselves with what the present demands of us.

To concoct an “Atlantic Charter” is naturally quite simple. This stupidity will soon be rectified by hard facts. There is yet another reason why it is easier for our enemies to speak today: after long and futile efforts, they have suddenly discovered our party program. With astonishment, we see how they promise the world the same things we have already given our German Volk and for which we were in the end attacked by others.

It is also quite clever when, for example, a president says, “we want everyone to have the right in the future not to suffer misery,” or something of the sort.⁴¹⁷ Here you can only say: it would perhaps have been easier had the president used the entire capacity for work of his country to build up useful production instead of jumping headlong into a war, and had he above all taken care that need and misery would be eliminated among his own people, who live in an area with only ten persons per square kilometer but have thirteen million unemployed. All this the gentlemen could well have done! Now, they suddenly make an appearance, portraying themselves to the world as saviors, and declaring, “we shall take care in the future that the need of the past does not return, that there will be no more unemployment, and that everyone gets an apartment.”—But these owners of empires could have done this long before us in their own countries!

They are now suddenly discovering the principles of the National Socialist program. When I hear a man say—I think it was Mr. Eden, but it is hard to tell which zero is speaking over there—“the difference between the Germans and us is that the Germans believe something in which they do not believe, and that we believe something in which we do believe,” then I can only say, if they really believe what they pretend to believe in, then they could have acknowledged this belief much earlier. Why then did they declare war on us when they are after all not that far away from us?

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We did not merely believe something, we also did what we believed in. And now we believe that we have to fight the enemy until the final victory. This we believe and this we will do!

It is impossible for us to debate with these people about the term "belief." Who believes, for example, that Namsos was a victory, or Andalsnes, or who believes that Dunkirk was the greatest victory in world history or, for all I care, that some expedition lasting nine hours⁴¹⁸ was an equally astonishing and encouraging sign of a victorious nation—with something like this, of course, we naturally cannot compare our modest successes!

What are our successes by comparison! If we advance a thousand kilometers, then that is nothing but a "complete failure." For example, when we advance to the Don during the last few months—after all, it has been only a few months that war has been waged in this country—and when we move down the Don and reach the Volga, when we rush on Stalingrad and will take it—you can be assured of that!—then this amounts to nothing in their eyes! When we advance to the Caucasus, that amounts to nothing, just as when we occupy the Ukraine, take possession of the Donets coals, gain sixty-five to seventy percent of Russian iron, open up the greatest breadbasket in the world to the German Volk and Europe, and secure for ourselves the oil wells in the Caucasus. All that amounts to nothing! However, when Canadian advance parties with a small English tail in tow reach Dieppe and at great effort manage to hold the position for nine hours before they are finally destroyed, then that is an "encouraging, astonishing sign of the untiring victorious power that characterizes the British Empire."

By comparison, what is our Luftwaffe, our infantry, our panzer weapons? In the year 1939, they were nothing. At the time, Churchill had already appeared and said, "I am happy to inform you that the danger posed by the U-boats can be regarded as having been eliminated for good." No—wait a minute—perhaps that was not Churchill, but Duff Cooper; one of these swaggerers (*Schwadronneure*) is always bigger than the other, and you constantly mistake one for the other. At the time, they had already destroyed more U-boats than we owned! That we kicked them out of the Balkans, that we conquered Greece, that we occupied Crete, that we drove them back in North Africa—that amounted to nothing. However, if a few men land somewhere to take a lonely outpost of ours by surprise, then that is a deed, that is an accomplishment.

He who believes this will never understand our belief. Should the English seriously believe what they pretend to believe, then you can only worry about their senses.

In addition to these "deeds," they also have vouchers for the future, naturally. They say, "A second front will come. It is already advancing. You Germans, pay attention! About-face!" We did not pay attention and did not about-face. Instead, we calmly marched on. I am not saying that we are not preparing for a second front. Mr. Churchill now says, "We will leave it to the Germans to brood over in their fright where and when we will open it." I can only say, Mr. Churchill, you have never frightened me! But you are right in

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that we do have to brood over something. If I had an enemy of stature, then I could figure out where he would attack. However, if you are confronted by military silly boys (*Kindsköpfe*), then you can never know where they will attack, since it could be the craziest undertaking. And what is so unpleasant is that you never know with these lunatics and constant drunks what they will do next.

Whether or not Mr. Churchill has chosen the first location where he wants to start the second front appropriately and in a militarily clever way, opinions on this are divided even in England—and that is saying a lot. I can assure him: no matter which place he chooses next, he can consider himself fortunate if he stays on land for nine hours!

In my eyes, we have already passed the most fateful test for our Volk in the year 1942. It was the winter of 1941–1942. I may say that Providence weighed on the German Volk and especially its Wehrmacht in this winter. Worse cannot and will not come. That we conquered this winter, that the German fronts stood up, and that we could again line up in the early spring, this proved, so I believe, that Providence was satisfied with the German Volk. It was a very difficult and a very hard test—all of us know this. Nevertheless, we did not only survive this difficult time, but we also calmly managed to order and rearrange the divisions for the attack, as well as the motorized and panzer units which were earmarked to begin the next offensive. And this offensive has also developed differently from what our enemies had envisioned. After all, it is not necessary that we proceed in accordance with their method, since these methods have proved so unsuccessful.

I believe that, in looking back, we can be content with the past three years. The objective was always very sober; bold where it had to be bold, prudent where it could be prudent; unhurried where we had time, cautious where we believed that we had to be cautious under all circumstances. However, we were being daring where daring alone could help.

For this year, we have drawn up a very simple program. First: under all circumstances, to hold what must be held. That means that we will let the others get underway as long as they want to get underway where we do not intend to advance. To hold firm and to wait and see who will be the first to tire.

Second: It's absolutely imperative to attack where an attack is necessary under all circumstances. The objective is clear: the destruction of the right arm of this international conspiracy of capitalism, plutocracy, and Bolshevism, which is the greatest danger that has ever hovered above our German Volk and against which we have been in battle for a year now.

We have set ourselves several objectives here. I will briefly summarize in catchwords what has been accomplished in these few months in order to make you aware of it:

The first objective was the securing of our superior position at the Black Sea and the final clearing of the Crimean Peninsula. Two battles served this purpose: that of Kerch and that of Sevastopol. Let me say that had our enemies had at least one success in these three years of war, then it would surely be impossible to speak with them at all, since they would no longer float here on

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earth, but in the clouds, bloated by conceit. After we had set things in order there, it appeared necessary to us to eliminate the bulge that had developed at Volkhov. It was cut off, and the enemy destroyed or captured.⁴¹⁹

Then came the next task: preparing the breakthrough to the Don. In the meantime, the enemy chose a great offensive objective, namely, to break through to the banks of the Dnieper from Kharkov in order to bring about the collapse of our entire southern front. Perhaps you recall our enemies' enthusiasm in following these operations. It ended in three battles and the complete destruction of more than seventy-five divisions of our Soviet enemy.

Thereupon, we lined up for our own great offensive. The first goal was to take from the enemy the last great breadbasket; second, to pull out from under him the last bit of coal that can be carbonized; third, to move up to his oil fields, either to take them or at least to shut him out of there; fourth, the attack was to be continued in order to cut off his last great arterial road, the Volga. The objective was an area between the bend of the Don and the Volga, and the town of Stalingrad—not because the town bears Stalin's name, which is unimportant⁴²⁰—but exclusively because it is a strategically important area, and we were aware that the elimination of the Dnieper, the Don, and the Volga as traffic routes would be as terrible or worse for the Soviet Union, as it would be for Germany if we lost the Rhine, the Elbe, the Oder, or the Danube. On the mighty Volga stream alone, thirty million tons of goods are transported in six months. That is just as much as in one year on the Rhine. It [the Volga] has now been cut off for some time. Now it is the taking of Stalingrad above all that will be brought to a conclusion—whereby this lock will gain in depth and strength. And you can rest assured that no human being can remove us from this place!

As to our further intentions, you will understand that I will not speak about them, as it is a question of objectives which are being pursued at this time. In my stead, Mr. Churchill speaks about them. But the time will come when the German nation will obtain clarity on these further goals.

I can tell you, however, that the next task that we will set for ourselves will naturally be the organization of this gigantic area which we are now occupying. We were not as interested in marching so many thousands of kilometers as we were in placing this gigantic area in the service of feeding our Volk, securing our raw materials, and, in a wider sense, sustaining all of Europe.

To this end, traffic had to be put in order. The English, too, have achievements in this area. For example, they built a railroad from Egypt to Tobruk, from which we greatly benefit right now. Even if they managed to finish pretty much on time, what is this compared with the railroads that we must build for our use and not that of the Russians? There are ten thousands and again ten thousands of kilometers of railroads that we either will repair or which we have already repaired a long time ago, thanks to the diligence, hard work, and dedication of many ten thousands of German soldiers, railroad engineers, men of the Todt organization and other organizations, the Reich labor service and so on. The huge traffic network, which today runs on German gauges for the most part, was completely destroyed. Not hundreds, but thousands of bridges had to be newly built, craters or mines had to be

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eliminated, crossings had to be newly set up. All this was accomplished in a few months or will be finished in a few weeks.

Now, my party comrades, you will understand one thing: when people on our enemies' side say, "Why did they stop all of a sudden?" then I can only reply, because we are careful. Because we do not run to Benghazi only to have to run back again, but because we stop somewhere until our supply lines are back in order. Of course, people who lack military schooling cannot understand this. That is why they do not have any successes. Anybody who has a little bit of military knowledge will admit that what we conquered in terms of space in a few months is unique in world history. I am also saying this because it is possible here, too, that there is some old reactionary Philistine (*Spiesser*), who says, "Yes, what does this amount to, they have already been standing there for eight days." Yes, my dear Philistine, you don't understand. You should go first and put traffic back in order.

I know that the German Volk in its entirety has had up to now such boundless faith in its military leaders and in the accomplishments of its soldiers that it knows that there is always a reason for stopping. Not only do we put traffic in order on the tracks, but we must also build roads since the "blessed land of proletarians and peasants" regrettably does not have any roads, but only fragments of roads. The first truly mighty roads are being built now by our organizations there. In some areas, roads must be built through swamps that in former times were held to be impassable. If someone says, "but the Russian managed to get through"—well, he is a type of swamp-man (*Sumpfmensch*) and no European, that we must admit. For us, it is more difficult to advance in this swamp than for this people born in a morass!

Behind this, we are also organizing agriculture. After all, the area is supposed to be developed, and that is not easy, since it is not a question of simply sowing and harvesting. Rather, it is a question of making use of, that is, transporting these products across vast distances to a railroad, where they can be loaded. Finally, we must restructure part of this economy: thousands of tractors which were either damaged or eliminated must be improved or replaced with other means. I can only tell you: what has been accomplished here is simply incredible! While the front is fighting, a few kilometers behind it the same soldiers work with sickle and scythe, cultivate the fields again, and behind them the operational staffs of our agricultural organizations move up. And, if some blockhead (*Schafskopf*)—I simply cannot call them anything else—like Duff Cooper, Eden, or some other fellow says, "Yes, it was a big mistake for the Germans to move into the Ukraine or the Kuban region,"—we will see whether it was a mistake for us to take these breadbaskets!⁴²¹

Luckily, we are already able to make accessible to the German Volk the first, modest gains from this action. Rest assured, we are only beginning. The whole of last year was a year of fighting, a gruesome winter followed, and now we are fighting again. As early as next year this area will be organized in a completely different manner. You can rest assured of this, we know how to put something like that in order.

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And finally, there is the organization of the economy in general. After all, the whole economy must be put into service. Thousands of enterprises, factories, mills, and so on, must get going again, since right now things are destroyed. Next, there is the mining industry. It must also be developed, as well as electrical energy. I can only repeat one thing: if you could see how we work there and what we create there; how we know that, according to plan, this mine will be ready on this day, and how it will be hooked up to electricity in this month; and on this day so many tons of coal will have been produced there, and so on; how we no longer need to transport coal from Germany to the east, how we are instead building an industrial base of our own there; then you would understand that, at a time when apparently nothing is happening, there is nonetheless tremendous work being done.

Moreover, the population is released from the pressures of a Bolshevik power that psychologically subjects millions of human beings there to despondency and, as one can well say, holds them in a type of fear of which nobody has an idea here in Germany or in other countries. It is the fear of the commissar, it is the fear of the GPU,⁴²² a fear of the entire regime, which still frightens millions of human beings. This must gradually be overcome and it will be overcome. Today, there are already vast areas in which the entire population works with us—millions of them—and there are other areas in which they already fight in our ranks and on our side.

The results of this gigantic activity, which I outlined to you in only a few sentences, are tremendous. As we are on the defensive in the north of Europe, in the west, and on all other fronts, we are fulfilling a gigantic prerequisite for the organization of Europe in the war and for victory.

You know, of course, that our enemies are continuously working miracles. There is not one tank that they are building which is not “the best in the world.” No plane of which they do not claim the same. If they build a cannon, a very simple cannon, then it is the most amazing cannon in the world. If they make a new machine gun, then it is only natural that it is the very best. They say that the new Sten gun is the greatest invention in the world. If you look at this junk (*Gelumpe*), then you can only say that this is something which we would never place in the hand of a German soldier.

They are far superior to us in all things. They are superior in their matchless generals; they are superior in the valor of their individual soldiers. Any Englishman could take on at least three Germans.

However, history will put the great heroes of this war on our side! And history will thereby honor justice and truth.

In addition, there is on our side the further expansion of our alliances, the cooperation with our allies, at their head our oldest ally, Italy. We fight together not only along one front, but also along a number of fronts. And that is good because it proves that all the hopes of our enemies, who believed that they could dissolve this alliance, were crazy. Both of us know exactly what would become of our countries—we deduce this from crazy and stupid objectives of our enemies—we know what the fate of the German and Italian

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people would be, what the fate of Europe would be, if this outside world ever gained a victory.

If they say today, "Yes, of course, we will take on the protection of Europe against Bolshevism," then I can only reply that England should be careful to protect itself from Bolshevism! We do not need its protection. We have overcome Bolshevism at home, we will overcome it abroad, too! This we have proved!

If archbishops say Mass in a country with the Bolshevik flag on one side of their altars and the national flag on the other, then I fear for this country. We know what this leads to. The English will live to see it. Fate will perhaps punish them, as it once punished the former Germany, which believed it could make a pact with these people.⁴²³

Germany and Italy, just like Spain and a number of other European people like the Hungarians, Romanians, and so on, have overcome this problem. Whether or not the outside world will also do so it remains to be seen in this war.

That this outside world will not conquer us can be assured! If we add all our allies and those who fight on our side, Romanians, Hungarians, Croatians, Slovaks, and Finns in the north, and Spaniards, and so on, then we can truly say: even today, this is a European crusade. In addition, there are the Germanic volunteers in our Waffen SS and legions from individual European states. It is truly Europe that has come together here, as in former times against attacks by the Huns or Mongols.

Since I spoke to you last time, Japan has entered the war. Of course, it has supposedly suffered defeat after defeat. Of course, Japanese generals amount to nothing at all compared with the matchless heroes and famous generals from England and America. MacArthur, what a general! What is such a little Japanese man by comparison. However, these Japanese have in the meantime taken Hong Kong. They have taken control of Singapore, and they have taken possession of the Philippines. They are in New Guinea and they will conquer all of New Guinea. They have occupied Java and Sumatra. Naturally, this all amounts to nothing at all compared with the endless victories that England and America have won there; land battles, sea battles, the like of which the world has never seen before. Roosevelt says, "I cannot comment on this, I cannot say anything about this and, anyway, I do not wish to say anything concrete or expand on this." We know these heroes only too well!

There is today truly a worldwide alliance not only of the have-nots, but also of all people who fight for honor and decency and who are determined to make a clean sweep of the vilest coalition the world has ever seen. On this matter, I wish to speak again of our U-boats. Their successes since 1939, supported by the heroic deployment of our Luftwaffe units, have become greater every month. Our enemies now declare, "We have tremendous defensive capabilities, we have new methods, the British and the American genius has invented completely new machines with which we will overcome this danger." I can only tell them one thing: the German genius is not resting either!⁴²⁴

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We have far surpassed all earlier accomplishments with our U-boats! And I can assure you that this will not change in the future. We keep on top of things; you can be convinced of this. Not only do we continue to build weapons, but also and above all we keep building new weapons. Until now, in any event, we have lined up every year with weapons that were superior to those of the enemy. That is how it will be in the future, too! As we look at the overall result, we can only say that the last months of this year have also been successful. And it will continue to be this way.

In the following part, Hitler again announced “retribution” for bomb attacks and that “the end [will be] more terrible for England than the beginning.” This time, however, he refrained from threatening that he would “strike back a hundred times in the future for every bomb.”⁴²⁵ He no longer spoke of retaliating “blow for blow,” as he had in his speech of April 26.⁴²⁶ The only type of effective “retaliation” he could think of still was the massacre of the Jews who were in his hands. He declared as follows:

In addition to the “second front,” there is yet another means. The man who invented bomb warfare against an innocent civilian population declared that this bomb warfare against Germany and so on will shortly be greatly stepped up. I would like to add one thing to this: in May 1940, Mr. Churchill sent the first bombers against the German civilian population. At the time, I kept warning him, for almost four months—in vain. Then, we struck. And we struck so thoroughly that he began to cry and declared that this was barbaric and terrible, and that England would seek revenge. The man on whose conscience all this weighs—not counting the great warmonger Roosevelt—and who is to blame for everything, this man then dared to claim that he was innocent. Today, he continues to wage this war.

I would like to say here: the hour will also come this time when we have to answer! May the two great criminals of this war and their Jewish masterminds not start whining and weeping if the end is more terrible for England than the beginning!

At the Reichstag session of September 1, 1939, I said two things:

First, since this war was forced on us, neither the power of arms nor time will defeat us. Second, should Jewry instigate an international world war in order to exterminate the Aryan people of Europe, then not the Aryan people will be exterminated, but the Jews.⁴²⁷ The wire-pullers of this insane man in the White House have managed to pull one nation after another into this war. Correspondingly, however, a wave of anti-Semitism swept over one nation after another. And it will continue to do so, taking hold of one state after another. Every state that enters this war will one day emerge from it as an anti-Semitic state. The Jews once laughed about my prophecies in Germany. I do not know whether they are still laughing today or whether they no longer feel

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like laughing. Today, too, I can assure you of one thing: they will soon not feel like laughing anymore anywhere. My prophecies will prove correct here, too.

These prophecies were to prove correct, at least as far as the Jews living within the German sphere of influence were concerned. His extermination machinery was running at top capacity. In the extermination camps at Auschwitz, Belcec, Chelmno, Sibibor, Treblinka, Wolcek, and so on, millions of Jews from Russia, Poland, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, and the Balkans were herded together, including women, children, and the elderly. There they were shot, massacred, or gassed with Zyclon B.⁴²⁸

These atrocities perpetrated by Hitler's henchmen were unprecedented in history, with regard both to their systematic nature and their technical detail. The persecution of Christians in antiquity, the slaughter of the Saxons by Charlemagne, the Jewish pogroms of the Middle Ages and modern times, the guillotining of the French Revolution, the murders committed by the Cheka in Bolshevik Russia, the extermination of the Armenians by the Turks—all these pale in comparison with the insane, completely senseless massacre of the Jews by Adolf Hitler and his accomplices.

Hitler dedicated the last part of his speech to the “successes of the last months and their impact on world history.” He claimed that it was “impossible and out of the question” that Germany and its allies could ever be “defeated.”

The successes of the last months and their impact on world history are so great that it is now necessary to think of those to whom we owe all these successes. They read in the newspapers about great victories, great battles of encirclement. For weeks, however, they read no more than: “the operations are progressing,” or “the operations are progressing favorably,” or “there is calm at this or that front,” or “attacks at other fronts were repelled.”

My Volksgenossen! You have no idea what is concealed by these simple words in the reports of the supreme Wehrmacht high command. The Wehrmacht report must remain modest. We must try to keep a balanced view in order to render justice to the actual events in accordance with their importance for the overall situation. This does not mean that the fight is any easier for the individual German soldier in those instances which appear insignificant compared with the great events, than for the soldier fighting for major decisions. It is always a human being who risks his life.

There are often hundreds of thousands of brave soldiers from all branches of the services—infantry, army, engineers, artillery, Waffen SS units, Luftwaffe units, naval units; our warships above and below the water—all of them must risk their lives in such a situation for many days only to read: “defensive

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battles,” or “breakthrough by the enemy thwarted,” or “attacking enemy annihilated,” or “breakthrough achieved,” or “advances in this or that area,” or “conquest of this or that pass,” or “taking of this or that city.” My Volksgenossen, you have no idea what human heroism is concealed by this, what human pain and suffering, and, we can say, what fear in many instances, what fear of death especially by those who face this trial by ordeal for the first time. This is easy to read about, but incredibly difficult to do.

It is similar to the First World War. Then, too, many soldiers returned home and were asked, “What is it actually like?” They then realized that you cannot explain this to someone who has not gone through it himself. Who has not gone through this once himself does not know and understand it, and you cannot explain it to him. And that is why some simply remain silent and do not say anything, because they feel that they cannot describe what it was really like, especially considering how barbaric the enemy is in the east. He is an enemy of whom we know that he does not recruit men but beasts.

Behind all these dry descriptions, there lies endless suffering, endless devotion, endless activity. When you read that someone has received the Knight’s Cross, then there is a short report in the local press. However, the majority of our Volk cannot be made aware of what is concealed in the description of his individual accomplishments. It is impossible for the individual to know what it means when a pilot downs thirty, forty, or fifty planes or even eighty or a hundred. This does not mean one hundred battles; he risks his life a thousand times for this. And if he climbs to heights of, let us say, a hundred fifty, a hundred eighty, or two hundred downings, then this is

...⁴²⁹

However, this has never yet happened. Not even in the last war. Or, when U-boat commanders keep attacking time and again, when commanders of small motorized torpedo boats accomplish their missions time and again, mine-clearing details carry out their orders in incessant deployment, which can be mentioned with only one line in the Wehrmacht report—a continuous sacrifice of life over many weeks and months in contrast to one line printed in the paper! If we keep this in mind, then we have to realize that, considering everything the homeland does, it can never thank our soldiers enough.

And this applies not only to our soldiers but also to all the soldiers of our allied nations who fight on our side. Something else should be mentioned here: namely, that the German Wehrmacht does not act in its deployment as, for example, the English do. We do not send others where it is particularly dangerous. Instead, we regard it as our conscientious duty, as our honor, that we honestly assume our toll of blood ourselves. We have no Canadians or Australians to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for us. Instead, we fight [side by side] with our allies, all of them loyal and completely honorable.

We believe that this is necessary. Because only then will ultimately result from this most difficult struggle—perhaps the most difficult in our history—what we National Socialists envisioned when we came out of the First World War: the great Reich of a Volksgemeinschaft bound together by suffering and by joy. For there is a great, bright aspect to this war: namely, a great

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comradeship. What our party always sought to achieve in peacetime is now being fortified: the building of a Volksgemeinschaft based on the experiences of the First World War. All German tribes are part of this; otherwise, the foundation of the Greater German Reich would merely have been a constitutional act. Instead, it became an eternal document signed with the blood of all. It is a document that nobody can erase anymore and against which our enemies' talk and babble will remain completely ineffective. Above all, it is a document that gives this state not only power but also inner meaning.⁴³⁰

You will notice this in reading the proposals for the Knight's Cross. You see the common man next to the private first class, the noncommissioned officer next to the sergeant, the second lieutenant next to the general. In looking at the promotion list for our young officers, you will see the beginning of the impact by our National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft to its full extent. There are no more privileges by birth certificate, none by former positions in life, none by so-called origin, none by so-called education in former times. There is only one criterion: the criterion of the brave, valiant, loyal man, the determined fighter, the daring man who is fit to be a leader of his Volk. Truly, the collapse of an old world has been brought about. From this war arises a blood-fortified Volksgemeinschaft, a stronger one than that we National Socialists were able to convey to the nation after the World War through our avowal of faith. And this will perhaps be the greatest blessing for our Volk in the future: that we will emerge from this war improved in our community, cleansed of many prejudices, that this war will prove all the more how correct the party program of our movement was, how correct our whole National Socialist attitude is. For there is one thing which is certain: no bourgeois state will survive this war.

Sooner or later, everybody has to put his cards on the table here. Only he who manages to forge his people into a unity not only as a state but also as a society will emerge as the victor from this war. That we National Socialists laid the foundations a long time ago, we and I owe to our experiences in the first war. That the Greater German Reich must now fight a second war—to this our movement will owe the reinforcement and additional depth of its program in the future. May all those be assured of this who perhaps still believe that maybe one day they will be able to witness the new rosy dawn of their class world through empty talk and faultfinding. These gentlemen will pitifully suffer shipwreck. World history will push them aside, as though they had never existed.

Returning from the Great War as a soldier, I once explained this *Weltanschauung* to the German Volk and created the foundations for the party. Do you believe that any German could offer the soldiers, who today are coming home victorious from the war, anything less than a National Socialist Germany—in the sense of the true fulfillment of our ideas of a true Volksgemeinschaft? That is impossible! And this will surely be the most beneficial blessing of this war in the future.

Not only is the expansion of territory decisive, but also decisive is the filling of this space with a united, strong Volk, which must avow as its essential

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principle: every soldier of this Volk carries the marshal's baton in his knapsack—not only in theory, but also in reality. After this war, the way will all the more be open for every individual Volksgenosse whose ingenuity, whose diligence, whose valor, whose fitness and willingness for deployment may open the way for him.

At this moment, I should not like to neglect mentioning in contrast to the front, the homeland, which has also had to suffer a lot. The German worker has slaved away. I have witnessed this spring, when it was a question of quickly producing new defensive weapons, that many workers not only worked ten or eleven hours, but also without Sundays off for many weeks in the one thought of giving the front weapons and helping it. I must point out that the German workers have done immense work and that they loyally stand behind today's state, their leadership, and, above all, their soldiers, their comrades, and their colleagues.

I must point out that the German rural population has also fulfilled its duty. Millions of German women have integrated themselves into the working process. A peasant woman today must often do the work of two men. And finally, I must point out that our professions that work with the mind and all their institutions work self-sacrificially; millions and millions give everything to think and work in order to arm the nation and never again to set the front an example as in 1918.

If I can today tell the homeland that it can rest completely reassured that in the east, in the west, in the north, in the south, the German front and our soldiers stand unshakably, then I can also tell the front: German soldier, rest assured, behind you stands a homeland which will never let you down.

That is not an empty phrase. Week after week, month after month, the best of our Volk from all walks of life are increasingly forged together into an indissoluble community. And this community will prove itself, especially in the great *Hilfswerk* which we have to make succeed this winter. I have often pointed out that it would have been possible to render assistance by some other means, but that we did not do it because of the simple realization that it is important to acquaint the individual Volksgenossen with the tasks which move the nation and which therefore touch every one of us. Above all, the blessed among men thereby become concerned with the plight of those less fortunate. Continuous propaganda shows them what still remains to be done so that we can speak of a community in the true sense of the word, so that it is not lip service, but instead so that every individual really contributes to the best of his abilities in rendering useful service to this community and, above all, so that nobody has the right to excuse himself from this work, especially not at a time when millions of others defend this community with their blood.

I direct this appeal to the entire German Volk in the name of all its soldiers and of all those who sacrifice themselves in armament factories, the countryside, or elsewhere.

Also I should not like to neglect telling you at this hour that we will mercilessly destroy every saboteur of this community. Only a few weeks ago, an English newspaper in an enlightened hour correctly remarked that one

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ought not to laugh about the German *Winterhilfswerk*. Above all, one thing is a fact: if someone in England enriches himself at the expense of somebody else, then he will receive a sentence—provided that he is apprehended—of perhaps a few hours of lessons, at worst a few weeks or months of jail, where he can live better than any soldier at the front. On the other hand, anyone who sins against the community in Germany is practically digging his own grave. This English newspaper is right: at a time when the best of our Volk have to be deployed at the front, where they risk their lives, at such a time there is no room for criminals and good-for-nothings who destroy the nation!

Whoever enriches himself on what was earmarked for our soldiers can count on being mercilessly eliminated! Whoever enriches himself on what so many hands of our Volk made in sacrifice for our soldiers should not expect to find mercy. Every German must know that what he gives his soldiers or the suffering homeland will actually benefit those who deserve it and for whom it was meant. Above all, no habitual offender should delude himself that a new crime will help him survive this war. We will take care that it is not the decent man alone who may possibly die at the front, but that the criminal and indecent man at home will certainly not survive this time!

I do not want a German woman who is on her way home from work at night to have to constantly pay fearful attention to falling victim to some good-for-nothing or criminal. We will exterminate these criminals, and we have exterminated them. And it is to this fact that the German Volk owes it that there are so few crimes happening today. I believe that I am working on behalf of the maintenance of our community, especially on behalf of our front, which has a right to demand that, while the soldiers are risking their lives out there, their families, their wives, and other family members at home are protected.

At this moment I must assure the front of something else, too: namely, how immensely bravely this German homeland accepts and suffers the war wherever it is most immediately and harshly affected by it. I know a city, a Frisian city, which I have long wanted to evacuate because it kept being attacked. I wished to remove the children and women from there to bring them into security. It was out of the question; they kept returning to their city. You could not get them to go away, although they had suffered so much there. There are many acts of heroism being done, not only by men, but also by women, and not only by women, but also by boys who are barely fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old. They risk their lives in the realization that, in this war, we are a single sworn community which knows that either we all survive this war victoriously or we will be exterminated together.

If the soldier did not know this, then you could not expect him to risk his life. Vice versa, the homeland must know that it will be judged in accordance with its performance. I therefore expect that the new *Winterhilfswerk* will strongly document this indissoluble community, that the nation will show to the whole world through its vote that this is not a phony poll, but a vote for sacrifice by declaring the following:

We stand behind our soldiers, just as our soldiers stand up for us! Together we stand for our Volk and our community and we will never capitulate. Our

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enemies can continue this war for as long as they are able to. What we can do to defeat them, we will do! That they will ever defeat us is impossible and out of the question. Only National Socialist Germany and its allied states, as young nations, true people and true people's states, will emerge from this war after a glorious victory!

October 2, 1942

5

On October 1, Hitler received Rommel at the Reich Chancellery, handed him the marshal's baton, and thanked him for his accomplishments.⁴³¹

Rommel had attempted a new offensive in the direction of the Suez Canal on August 31. After a few days, he had to discontinue the attack, because the British resistance at El Alamein was too strong. In the meantime, he had set up defensive positions, which were about fifteen to twenty kilometers in depth, before he went on leave for six weeks.

Before he left for his vacation residence at the Semmering Pass in Austria, Rommel gave a press conference in Berlin. Just like Hitler, who had talked big in his speech of September 30 about Stalingrad, Rommel bragged about the situation regarding Egypt. He told the journalists the following:⁴³²

Today we stand a hundred kilometers from Alexandria and Cairo. We control the gateway to Egypt. And we fully intend to act here, too! We did not go there only to allow ourselves to be thrown back sooner or later. You can rely on one thing: what we have, we will firmly hold on to! I am doing very well. I can assure you that I will always be at my post when necessary.

Rommel's chief of staff, Colonel Bayerlein, declared the following in October at a Hitler Youth rally in Würzburg: "The German position at El Alamein is unconquerable!"⁴³³ Rommel and Bayerlein were indeed so convinced of this that they went on leave. So they were completely taken by surprise on October 23 when Montgomery launched his great and decisive offensive at El Alamein.

On October 2, Hitler received the new Bulgarian Envoy Slavtcho Sagorov⁴³⁴ at the Reich Chancellery. On the same day, he sent Franco a congratulatory telegram on "the day of the Caudillo."⁴³⁵

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On October 3, a congratulatory telegram to King Boris followed, on the anniversary of his accession to the throne.⁴³⁶

This year, too, Hitler refrained from speaking at the Thanksgiving rally, which took place on October 4 at the Sportpalast in Berlin. He felt that it was better to let Göring speak. As mentioned earlier, nobody was as gifted as Göring in reiterating the Führer's ideas with the true ring of conviction. This time, he really surpassed himself by declaring the following:⁴³⁷

From now on, on crossing the border, every German soldier who goes on leave—from the common man to the sergeant—will receive a package in the name of the Führer with one kilogram of flour, one kilogram of peas or beans, one pound of butter, and a big hard smoked sausage. It makes absolutely no difference here whether the vacationer in question comes from up at Kirkenes or down at Stalingrad.

You know that the entire German grape harvest was killed by frost and is lost. However, in wise realization, the German soldier has captured those areas in Russia which can compensate for this, namely, the most fertile areas on the Kuban and Don, where for miles on end, as far as the eye can see, there is one sunflower field after the other.

Do not forget that it is the best areas that we have taken from the Russians! May the German Volk realize one thing: how necessary this fight has become! The terrible situation in which we lived was unbearable. We had to get out of this confinement, and we thank the Almighty, the Führer, and the brave soldiers for breaking out of this confinement and that this vast space is now open to the German Volk!

I would think it a crime to promise something to the German Volk today which I am not completely sure that I can keep. And, therefore, I can say: the worst is over, even with foodstuffs. From today on, it will get better steadily!

Well, there would yet be many foodstuff shortages for the German Volk until 1945, and things would rapidly worsen from that October on, both militarily and politically.

In early October, one of the "greats" from the Balkan states disappeared: Marshal Kvaternik, on whom Hitler had showered award upon award. The last that was heard of him was that the Marshal had taken an "extended vacation," and that his offices had been assumed by the Poglavnik.⁴³⁸

Back at the Werwolf headquarters, Hitler arrived at the conclusion that he had to do something about the British commandos in the west.⁴³⁹ Apparently, they were troubling him as much as the partisans in the east. Therefore, the method he had come up with for fighting them was the same: extermination. Of course, this represented a violation of

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international law, since a commando party is made up of regular soldiers. That meant little to Hitler. He felt that he had to strike terror at the hearts of the “senile” English. He took reports about some German soldiers who were temporarily put in chains while fighting was still ongoing, as a pretext for issuing the following orders in the OKW report of October 7:

1. From noon, October 8, all British officers and soldiers captured at Dieppe will be put in chains. This measure will remain effective for as long as the British war ministry gives proof that in the future it will put into effect declarations on the chaining of German prisoners of war or that it will obtain the authority to enforce its orders on its troops.⁴⁴⁰

2. In the future, all terror and sabotage parties (commandos) of the British and their conspirators who behave not as soldiers but as bandits will be treated by the German troops as such. Wherever they appear, they will be mercilessly massacred in combat.⁴⁴¹

On October 7, Hitler received the Fascist general secretary Vidussoni at his Werwolf headquarters in the Ukraine. The following communiqué was issued:⁴⁴²

The Führer received the general secretary of the Fascist Party, Aldo Vidussoni, on Wednesday [October 7]. He had a long and heartfelt conversation with him. The reception, which was attended by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel, and the head of the NSDAP Party Chancellery, Reichsleiter Bormann, took place following a tour of the front, in the course of which the Italian guest visited the Italian troops deployed in the east.

In the weeks of October, Hitler distributed a multitude of awards.

On October 6, he awarded the Goethe Medal to the banker and councilor of state Dr. von Strauss on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁴⁴³ Congratulatory telegrams were received by the president of the National Chinese government, Wang-Tching-wei, on the national holiday on October 9;⁴⁴⁴ by Tiso on his birthday on October 13;⁴⁴⁵ by the king of Afghanistan on his birthday on October 15;⁴⁴⁶ by King Michael of Romania on his birthday on October 25.⁴⁴⁷

On October 15, Hitler forbade officers to challenge each other to duels. He abhorred this type of “honor custom,” which had already cost the lives of a number of his followers. Hitler’s struggle against duels followed the same line as that against speeding. Only he had the right to demand the sacrifice of blood and life. Any unnecessary death was at “his” expense, so to speak, since he could no longer dispose of the man

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in question.

Hitler's decree on the "Observance of Honor" for the officer corps read as follows:⁴⁴⁸

The measures and forms prescribed for the observance of honor contradict, in particular at the front, the necessary concentration of all expressions of will in the victory in this decisive final struggle of our Volk. A strengthening of the responsibilities of the commanders and a simplification of the forms are necessary here. For the duration of the war, I therefore repeal as of now all proceedings in the context of the regulations concerning the "Observance of Honor."

The offenses occurring in the army officer corps in the realm of honor are in the future to be prosecuted, according to the situation, manner, and difficulty of the case, by the responsible superior by disciplinary proceedings (instruction, caution, punishment), or, insofar as this is appropriate, by criminal proceedings. In difficult cases, a dismissal from active service because of unfitness in accordance with the Military Service Act, Paragraph 24, Section 2 b or c, is to be applied for.

Adolf Hitler

At the same time, Hitler concerned himself with the question of the marriage of members of the Wehrmacht. He decreed the following:⁴⁴⁹

The educational influence of the responsible disciplinary superior is still not as it ought to be. The disciplinary superior, who is supposed to be the adviser and educator of his men, should use his influence primarily to prevent relations with racially unworthy females or females of ill repute. In many cases, the emergency condition of the bride causes the man, who disregards his own reservations, to apply for a marriage licence.

While retaining the prescribed official channels, the Führer will therefore in the future apply stricter criteria than before to racial characteristics. Should the bride, according to the Führer's opinion, not conform with the racial and other requirements which are to be applied to the marriage of a member of the Wehrmacht with a German girl, then the Führer will refuse his assent for the time being.

The applicant should then be given home leave. The responsible party official there shall conduct a confidential discussion with him in order to determine whether his intentions for marriage are serious.

The leave of absence shall be arranged by the adjutancy of the Wehrmacht with the Führer and through official channels with the unit in question. Informing the responsible party officials will be undertaken by the head of the party Chancellery, Reichsleiter Bormann, who will be informed of the result of the discussion.

On October 18, Hitler issued the infamous *Kommandobefehl*. Contrary to the truth, he maintained that the use of commando parties

October 18, 1942

was prohibited by the “international agreements in Geneva.”⁴⁵⁰ The order read as follows:⁴⁵¹

1. Our enemies have long been using methods of warfare which are beyond the terms of the international Geneva agreements. Particularly brutal and insidious are members of the so-called “commandos,” who are known to be recruited even from criminal circles set at liberty [from prison] in the enemy countries. It has been concluded from their orders, which we captured, that they were given the task not only of chaining their prisoners, but also of killing the unarmed people without lengthy consideration, inasmuch as they believe that the latter would become a heavy burden as prisoners, preventing them from the further pursuit of their goals or would hinder them in any way. Finally, we came upon orders demanding that as a matter of principle prisoners of war should be killed.

2. For this reason, it was announced in an addendum to the report of the armed forces of October 7, 1942,⁴⁵² that in the future Germany will fight against those British sabotaging troops and their accomplices by their own methods, which means that they will be mercilessly exterminated by German troops wherever they should appear.

3. I therefore order the following:

From now on, all the so-called commando units in Europe or Africa who have been engaged by German troops will be fully exterminated to the last man, even if they are uniformed soldiers or members of demolition units, with or without weapons, fighting or fleeing. And it does not matter whether they are transported to the scene of their operations by ship or by aircraft or by jumping with parachutes. Even if these persons make efforts, when discovered, to give themselves up, they are to be given no pardon as a matter of principle. Besides, every single case must be reported in detail to OKW, to be submitted further in the armed-forces report.

4. If the members of such commando operations as agents, saboteurs, and so on, get into the hands of the Wehrmacht, in any other way, for example, through police forces in the countries occupied by us, they must be immediately transferred to our Security Service (SD). It is strictly forbidden to keep any of them under military supervision, for instance, in the camps for prisoners of war, even temporarily.

5. This order does not apply to those enemy soldiers who were captured or gave themselves up in the course of open combat, in normal warfare (major attacks, major landing operations and major airborne landing operations). This order does not apply, either, to those enemy soldiers who got into our hands after a naval engagement or who tried to save their lives by landing with a parachute after air combat.

6. I will have all those commanders and officers who will not inform the troops about this order, or who act contrary to this order, court-martialed for disobedience to this order.

Adolf Hitler

October 24, 1942

On October 23, Hitler founded an Efficient Driver's Badge for the Wehrmacht's drivers.⁴⁵³

On the evening of the same day, Montgomery began the great offensive at El Alamein with the British Eighth Army. The barrage from British artillery and the Royal Air Force's tremendous superiority in the air played havoc with the Germans within the first twenty-four hours. Panzer General Stumme, who had been substituting for Rommel since September 19, died of heart failure on October 24.

At the Führer headquarters, the situation was at first not judged to be serious. Nevertheless, Hitler phoned Rommel at his residence at the Semmering Pass on the evening of October 24. He asked him whether he could fly to Africa immediately.⁴⁵⁴ After Rommel agreed, Hitler said that he would call again, since Rommel was expected to fly out "only if the attack proved threatening."

Rommel returned to his home at Wiener Neustadt (Lower Austria). Shortly after midnight, Hitler phoned and asked him to take command in Africa in view of the difficult situation. The OKW report of October 25 noted that the enemy had deployed in Egypt for the "expected great attack."

Hitler was more interested in the coming twentieth anniversary of the "march on Rome" than in the situation in Africa. After all, he intended to make his presence felt at this great anniversary of Fascism. He dispatched a special "Delegation of the National Socialist Party," consisting of Ley, Reich youth leader Axmann, Reich leader of students Gauleiter Scheel, Gauleiter Hanke, and other dignitaries. Ley was charged with a handwritten letter for the Duce, which Ciano [on October 29] called "laudatory and sugarcoated."⁴⁵⁵ Equally heartfelt were the telegrams that Hitler sent to Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini on October 24:⁴⁵⁶

I send Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings on today's day of commemoration, along with my sincere best wishes for a glorious future for allied Italy and your personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

October 29, 1942

Duce!

On the twentieth anniversary of the March on Rome, I think of you and your unique historic accomplishments in loyal friendship and solidarity. With me the entire National Socialist German Volk follows with profound inner sympathy the return of the Fascist revolution's day of triumph. What you, Duce, and your fighters have accomplished since has turned the uprising then into a turning point in the history of man. Today both our people's revolutions fight together in a close brotherhood in arms against the same forces that once unsuccessfully opposed Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany. Jewry, plutocracy, and Bolshevism will therefore lose this struggle, just as they lost it before. In this secure conviction, I greet you, Duce, in the most heartfelt manner and send you and your Black Shirts my own and the German Volk's comradely greetings.

Adolf Hitler

On October 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Ismet İnönü on the Turkish national holiday.⁴⁵⁷

During September and October, the OKW had constantly spread reports of German successes at Stalingrad. It was almost embarrassing to hear daily of a new victory at Stalingrad. The number of these victory reports proved only one thing: despite heavy fighting over many weeks and months, German troops were getting nowhere. It was no different from Moscow, Leningrad, and Murmansk. The Russians put up so determined a resistance that all the bravery of the German soldiers was in vain.

The "rush on Stalingrad," as Hitler called it,⁴⁵⁸ had become a question of prestige. The city, however, was pointedly unsuited for such experiments due to its topography and history. In 1918, the Russian White troops under General Denikin had taken a terrible beating there. Tsaritsyn, as the city was named at the time, became the city of the Red Army's triumph. Like many Soviet generals, Stalin made a name for himself there.⁴⁵⁹

In spite of all his references to Providence, Hitler had never paid any heed to its signs and omens, like history's warnings, portentous places, calamitous dates, connections, and "coincidences."⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, he had no intention of stopping the senseless battle for Stalingrad.

The German armies encountered unexpectedly strong Russian resistance not only at Stalingrad and in the Caucasus. A storm was also brewing north of the Don, where the Russian army leaders assembled a huge number of troops. While Hitler had called indications thereof "idiotic babble,"⁴⁶¹ he now felt that it would be advantageous for him to

November 3, 1942

leave the Ukraine. On October 31, he returned to his safe headquarters in East Prussia.

On November 1, the Bavarian prime minister, SA Obergruppenführer Ludwig Siebert, suddenly died. Hitler ordered a “state funeral” and instructed state minister Gauleiter Giesler to assume the duties of the prime minister.⁴⁶²

In North Africa, British drumfire and ceaseless air bombardment continued. Obviously the German-Italian front there would soon collapse. It was time for Hitler to make a decision. A retreat was out of the question. After all, he had declared earlier: “Land taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!”⁴⁶³ If nothing could be done to save the position at El Alamein, then all soldiers, including Rommel, should at the very least die a hero’s death and furnish material for a new Germanic heroic epic. Hitler informed Rommel of this delightful prospect in a telegram on November 3:⁴⁶⁴

To Field Marshal Rommel:

With me, the entire German Volk follows the heroic defensive battle in Egypt with faithful trust in your leadership and the bravery of the German-Italian troops subordinate to you. In the position in which you find yourself, there can be no other thought than to hold out, not to retreat even one step, and to throw into battle every weapon and every fighter possible. Substantial reinforcements of airborne units will be provided to the commander in chief, south, in the coming days. Also the Duce and the *Comando Supremo*⁴⁶⁵ will exert themselves to the utmost in order to bring you the means for continuing the battle. Despite his superiority, the enemy must also be at the end of his rope. It would not be the first time in history that the stronger willpower triumphed over the stronger battalions of the enemy. You can show your troops no other way than that of victory or death.

Adolf Hitler

Upon receipt of this order, Rommel stopped the retreat, which was already underway. On November 4, the “unconquerable” position at El Alamein was broken up by the British. Rommel had to hurry in order to save at least part of the motorized units of the Africa Corps and to withdraw to a secure position in the west. He refused to sacrifice himself and his men, as ordered. Hitler would never forgive him for this!

In the meantime, a mighty armada of American troop transports and warships had left America for Africa. Not once was it hindered in crossing the Atlantic by German U-boats or planes.⁴⁶⁶

Nobody suspected anything at the Führer headquarters, although it would not have required great powers of deduction to guess that, since

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American troops had landed in Liberia and French West Africa in the course of the summer of 1942, the occupation of French North Africa would be the next step.

The Wolfsschanze headquarters did not notice anything amiss until a large convoy sailed from Gibraltar on November 5 and joined the Americans in the Mediterranean. On November 7, Hitler explained the suspected goal of the operation to the generals as follows:⁴⁶⁷

The Führer tends to believe that a big landing operation, consisting of about four or five divisions, is intended at Tripoli or Benghazi.

On the Führer's orders, the units earmarked for a contingent invasion of unoccupied France (Operation Anton)⁴⁶⁸ have been put on the alert by the commander in chief, west.

Come what may, Hitler was set on finishing the occupation of the remainder of France, an occupation which had been planned two years earlier.⁴⁶⁹

On the afternoon of November 7, Hitler took his special train to Munich, supposedly to attend the commemoration of the Putsch in 1923. Keitel and Jodl accompanied him. Only Zeitzler stayed behind.

At a time when Rommel's army was taking a terrible beating by the British in Egypt, when the Russians might at any minute launch their great offensive, when a large Anglo-American landing operation was in the offing in the Mediterranean, Hitler left his headquarters and took with him the most important experts!

The reason for this, however, was not the commemoration at Munich. This was merely a pretext, since Hitler had become pretty much indifferent to the "old marchers of 1923."⁴⁷⁰ The actual reason for his departure was that he had prescribed himself a fourteen-day vacation at the Berghof in female company, because of his "fragile health."⁴⁷¹ And he would not go back on that, no matter if the whole front went up in flames.

However, things did not proceed as smoothly as Hitler had planned. The Anglo-Americans made a contribution to the commemoration at Munich. Early on November 8, the Allied landing operation in Morocco and Algeria began. News of this hit the German public like a bombshell. Most Germans probably realized that this was only a prelude to a more active intervention by the Americans in the war.

Hitler's declaration of war on the United States was not even one year old, and already American troops stood on Germany's doorstep. News of the Allied landing in North Africa meant a great defeat for

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Hitler. It appeared much more consequential than the lost battle at El Alamein. Five days had sufficed completely to change the face of the war. In the Pacific, too, an about-face in the war had resulted from the battle at Guadalcanal.

On November 8, Hitler ordered the “commencement of movements in connection with Operation Anton.” The line of demarcation, however, should not be crossed. Still, the occupational troops on Crete should be reinforced, just in case.⁴⁷²

Normally, considering how catastrophic the effect of the Allied landing had been on public opinion in Germany, Hitler would never have given a speech. But what else could he do? After all, he had used the commemoration of November 8 as a pretext for his stay at the Berghof. He had no choice but to speak at the Löwenbräukeller in spite of everything.⁴⁷³ Not surprisingly, the speech was one of the most miserable he ever gave. The “old marchers of 1923” were so preoccupied with thoughts of the Allied landing that they even forgot at times to applaud the Führer’s most rousing proclamations.

Hitler, too, seemed rather confused. He barely mentioned the Putsch in 1923. By contrast, he spoke at great length of the year 1932 and its many crises, which had finally ended in victory for him. This was intended to prove that, despite the present crises, he was still able to secure the final victory. Most outrageous was his claim that he had taken power in Germany at the time by the use of force:

Only one thing remains and that is to fight! Just as, from a certain point on, I told my enemies at home: it is not possible to negotiate with you peacefully; you want to use force—therefore, you will get it now. And these enemies at home, they were eliminated!

Of course, Hitler impotently belittled his enemies in this speech, too. He called Roosevelt a “first-rate bum” and Eden a “snobbish, perfumed rascal.”

Regarding the decisive English breakthrough at El Alamein, Hitler stated the following:

And when they say today that they are advancing somewhere in the desert—well, they have advanced and retreated a few times already—what is decisive in this war is who lands the final blow. And you can be assured that we shall do that!

Regarding the Anglo-American landing in North Africa, Hitler said only one sentence:

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If Roosevelt is today attacking North Africa, saying that he must protect it from Germany and Italy, then there is no need to comment on this untruthful claim by this old gangster.

One year earlier, Hitler had rationalized the stalemate at Leningrad by arguing that he would “surely not sacrifice one man more than is absolutely necessary.”⁴⁷⁴ He repeated this pitiful rhetorical maneuver by claiming with regard to Stalingrad that he did not wish “a second Verdun” and that he preferred “to do it with very small assault parties.”

In reply to questions about Germany’s “retaliation” for Allied bombing attacks on its cities, Hitler could only offer a vague promise: “The hour will come when I will strike back and I will repay them with interest.” This was a far cry from earlier claims that he would return a “hundred times” each Allied bomb.⁴⁷⁵ The rhetorical climax of the speech undoubtedly was this assertion: “Germany back then laid down its arms at a quarter to twelve—as a matter of principle, I never quit until five minutes after twelve.”

Hitler began his speech with the following words:⁴⁷⁶

My German Volksgenossen! Party Comrades!

I believe that it is very rare when a man can step before his old followers after twenty years and that, in these twenty years, he has not had to make any changes in his program.

Following the usual “party narrative,” Hitler continued as follows:

The reason why we are fighting at such a great distance to protect our homeland is that we wish to keep the war as far away as possible from us. We wish to spare the homeland what otherwise would be its fate, and what now only a few German cities are experiencing and must experience. Therefore, it is better to hold a front at a distance of one thousand or, if necessary, two thousand kilometers from the homeland than to have a front at the Reich’s border and to be obliged to hold it.

The enemies are the same as before; the same enemies as in the past. It is no coincidence that the same state that sent one man to the fore in order to bring about Germany’s collapse through a wave of untruthful propaganda in the World War is today again trying to do it the same way. Back then, his name was Wilson; today, it is Roosevelt. The Germany of the time, without any type of education in government and national policy, without unity, without enlightenment about the Jewish question and its consequences, became the victim of this power. It is a great mistake for our enemies now to imagine that they can repeat this a second time. For at the time, we were the most miserable Volk in the world; today, we are undoubtedly the most disciplined Volk in the world. If anyone in the outside world today still imagines that he can shake up this Volk, then he does not know the present core of this Volk, the supporting

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force that today leads this Volk politically; he does not know the National Socialist Party and its mighty organization!

He also has no idea of what this movement has since accomplished; how it has taken hold of this Volk through its accomplishments, and how it has realized the socialist idea as no other state, freed of all international swindle and untruthful tirades.

I can direct the following question to any German fighting today in the east: look at our institutions, compare our homes, the settlements we are building, compare our National Socialist institutions with what you have seen over there; compare the fate of the German peasant with the fate of the Russian peasant, compare all this with one another, and then tell me what you think: who did it better and who meant it more honestly?

Surely, nobody has yet returned who would have expressed an opinion different from the following: if ever there was a socialist state anywhere that was in the process of being realized, then this is Germany alone.

However, that is the very reason why this outside world, insofar as it represents capitalist interests, is going against us. It is a collective that even today presumes to govern the world in accordance with its private, capitalist interests and, if necessary, to mistreat it.

When a few days ago, for example, a real snobbish, perfumed rascal (*snobistischer, parfümierter Bengel*) like this Mr. Eden declared: "We English have experience in government," then you could only say: in government?—in exploitation, in pillage!

What does "experience in government" mean when, in peacetime, there are two-and-a-half million unemployed in a country with forty-six million people ruling over forty million square kilometers of the earth? Is this the art of government, the art of leadership? This is only the unscrupulousness of exploitation.

And when the same man then says: "We have a fine instinct for idealistic and material values"—yes, that is true! They have destroyed idealistic values everywhere, and stolen the material values.

And they have always stolen them and converted them to their own use by brute force. During the last three hundred years, this Volk over there has subjugated and subjected state after state, people after people, tribe after tribe. If they are truly excellent rulers, then they could leave, now that the people of India have voiced their express wish that they leave, and then they could wait to see whether the Indians call them back. Strangely enough, they have not left, although they know how to govern so wonderfully well.

And they are all very much in agreement on this, these exploiters, whether they run around wearing Marxist caps or private, capitalist masks.

No, my friends, they do not know how to govern! They only know how to subjugate other people and to let them then become impoverished.

And when this first-rate bum (*Oberstrolch*)—I cannot call him anything else—Roosevelt comes and declares that he has to save Europe by American methods, then I can only say: the gentleman should have kindly saved his own country. Then there would have been no reason for him to start this war! It

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would have been more useful to eliminate his thirteen million unemployed. But he did not do this, since he was incapable of coping with his domestic problems and, just like his British ally, he was always on the prowl: not for idealistic values, but for material values; after all, he appreciates idealistic values even less than an Englishman.

Out of the art of government of our enemies and its ghastly consequences, the National Socialist movement was born in our democratic Germany. Had they made Germany truly happy at the time, then we would have had no occasion, and I would have had no reason, for dedicating ourselves to this work day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. After all, as all my old comrades in arms know: I did not take it easy back then, I did not appear here and there at some refined club to speak, I did not sit by the fireside to chat here and there. I started on a pilgrimage through the German lands, from top to bottom, from east to west. I toiled to release my Volk from the misery into which these rulers of international capitalism had plunged it. We wanted to eliminate this conspiracy of Jews, capitalists, and Bolsheviks, and we did eliminate it in the end. But barely had we toppled them in Germany that the other world immediately began to encircle us as in 1914. At the time, it was Imperial Germany; now it is the National Socialist Germany. At the time, it was the Kaiser; now it is me.

However, there is one difference: the Germany at the time was imperial in theory, while it was completely broken up in practice. The Kaiser at the time was a man who lacked the strength to resist the enemy; in me, they face an opponent who does not even think of the word capitulation! When I was a boy, I already had the habit—perhaps a bad habit at the time, but all in all still perhaps a virtue—of having the final say. And all our enemies may rest assured: Germany back then laid down its arms at a quarter to twelve—as a matter of principle, *I never quit until five minutes after twelve!*

My opponents at home experienced this ten years ago. Power was on their side, and I was only a single man with a small group of followers!⁴⁷⁷

Today, I must say that the belief of our enemies abroad that they can crush us with their power is almost ridiculous, because today we really are the stronger ones. When I add together all the human beings who work and fight for our side today, then this surpasses the number of those who have taken up position against us. You cannot compare this with the situation back then.

And there is something else yet. Today, this battle is being fought militarily. My party comrades, we are backed here by a mighty German history. The English say that they have never lost a war. They have lost many wars.⁴⁷⁸ They fought every war down to their last ally. That is correct, and in this the English manner of warfare differs from ours.

I need to take only one of the heroes of our past and compare his fate with ours. In his worst moments, Frederick the Great was indeed faced by a coalition of fifty-four million against his three point nine million. If I compare our position today with his and see the bastions of our troops far beyond of our borders, then I must say: they are truly quite stupid if they think that they can ever shatter Germany and, above all, that they could perhaps somehow impress

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me! I know well that this struggle is very difficult. Perhaps that is the difference between me and, let us say, a man like Churchill. Churchill says that we, the Reichsmarschall and I, have lately been giving speeches on the verge of tears. I do not know—if I hit somebody right and left, and he then tells me, “You are an absolute defeatist”—then you simply cannot talk with him.

Since 1939, I have never been on the verge of tears. Before that, however, I had been very sad since I had done everything to avoid war. Sven Hedin has recently published a book in which he quotes verbatim my offer to the Poles, which was transmitted to the English at the time. I am grateful to him for this. I felt a chill reading this offer again. I can only thank Providence that it caused everything to come out differently. I am grateful especially because of what I have learned since. Because had this offer been accepted at the time, then, although Danzig would still be German, everything else would have stayed the way it was. We would then have dedicated ourselves to our social works; we would have worked, beautified our cities, built apartments and streets, set up schools. We would have built a true National Socialist state⁴⁷⁹ and we would naturally have spent far less on the Wehrmacht.

And then one day, a storm would have broken in the east. It would have swept across Poland, and before we knew it, it would have been less than a hundred or fifty kilometers east of Berlin.

That this did not happen I owe to the gentlemen who refused my offer at the time. However, three years ago, I could not possibly have known this. Three years ago, as the Polish campaign ended, again I wanted to offer my hand for peace, which would not have cost these opponents anything. As you know, I was refused. I was forced to lead another and yet another campaign. In the year 1940, again I attempted to offer my hand for peace. Again, I was refused. That closed the matter for me!

Every peace offer was interpreted as weakness by our opponents and, therefore, exploited to the detriment of the German Reich. Thus, to attempt something similar would have meant to forget one's duty again. It was clear to me that there was only one thing left: somebody had to fall, either we or they!

We will not fall—therefore, the others will fall!

You will remember, my old comrades in arms, how often in the same way I offered my hand to our opponents at home, how long I courted them, how I tried to win them over. The things I did in order to bring about a reasonable understanding! Only after this had failed, did I decide to use resources that alone are capable of pushing something through in this world once reason has been silenced. These were the SA and the SS. And finally, the hour came when we dealt with these opponents, and how we did it! This fight at home perhaps only appears to have been easier than the fight abroad.

In truth, the men who once led the fight at home were also those who were the fighters abroad and who today again are the fighters at home and abroad.

My party comrades, this is a reason for us to be proud: as the bourgeois Germany made up of Marxists, bourgeois, men of the Center Party, and so on fought, only two Reichstag deputies fell in the course of the war compared to over two million dead, to cite only one example. Up to now, however, the

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National Socialist Reichstag has already left thirty-nine of its members on the field, I believe, compared to a total of three hundred fifty thousand dead.⁴⁸⁰ That is a very different ratio! And, if I consider the ratio of the party comrades, then I must say: wherever my SA men, wherever the party comrades, or wherever the SS men stand at the front, they fulfill their duty in an exemplary fashion.

In this respect, too, the Reich has changed. But we also fight inspired by a different realization. We know what type of fate we would have to expect if the outside world should be victorious. Because we know this fate very well, there is no thought of compromise here. If the gentlemen say from time to time that there is another peace offer from us on the way—then they are inventing this only to give a little courage to their own people.

There will be no more peace offers from us.

The last was made in the year 1940. Only one thing remains and that is to fight! Just as, from a certain point on, I told my enemies at home: it is not possible to negotiate with you peacefully; you want to use force—therefore, you will get it now. And these enemies at home, they were eliminated!

Yet another power which once made its presence felt in Germany has in the meantime noticed that National Socialist prophecies are not empty phrases. It was the main power to which we owe all our misfortunes: international Jewry. You will remember the Reichstag session in which I declared: should Jewry imagine itself to be able to bring about an international world war for the extermination of the European races, then the result will not be the extermination of the European races, but instead the extermination of Jewry in Europe. They laughed about me as a prophet. Countless numbers of those who laughed at the time no longer laugh today. Those who still laugh now will perhaps no longer be doing so in time. This realization has spread beyond Europe all over the world. International Jewry will be recognized as a demonic danger; we National Socialists will take care of this. This danger has been recognized in Europe, and state after state is adopting our laws.

Thus, there is only one possibility in this mighty struggle: that of complete success. There remains only the question of whether or not there are any reasons to doubt this success. If you look at the propaganda of our enemies, you can only describe it as “up one minute and down the next.” The smallest success anywhere—and they are virtually turning head over heels. They have already destroyed us. Then the tide turns, and they are again very distressed and downcast.

I may cite one example here: If you study the Soviet daily war bulletins following June 22, 1941, then you will read every day: “fights of insignificant character” or “of significant character.” They have always downed three times the number of German planes. The tonnage supposedly sunk by them in the Baltic Sea already exceeds the total tonnage that Germany possessed before the war. They have destroyed more of our divisions than we can activate. Above all, they are always fighting in the same location. After fourteen days, they will modestly say: “We have evacuated a city.” But, in general, they have been

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successfully fighting since June 22 in the same location. We are always forced to retreat—and this continuous retreat has now slowly got us to the Caucasus.

When I say “slowly,” I would like to say this for my opponents, not for our soldiers. Because the speed at which our soldiers cover the terrain is tremendous. And what was again covered this year was tremendous and unique in history.

I do not always do things as others would like me to—yes, I try to find out what the others probably think and, then, I do the opposite. As Mr. Stalin expected us to attack in the center—I did not want to attack in the center.

Not only because Mr. Stalin perhaps believed this, but also because I did not really care. I wanted to reach the Volga, and reach it at a certain location, in a certain city. By coincidence, the city bore Stalin’s name.⁴⁸¹ But you should not think that I marched there for this reason—it could have had any other name—I did it because it is an important place.

You can cut off traffic amounting to thirty millions tons there, nearly nine million tons of which are oil. All the wheat from the huge areas in the Ukraine and the Kuban region flows together there, so that it can be transported north. Manganese ore is brought there; it is a gigantic trade center. That center I wanted to take and, as you know, we are modest—we have it!

There are only a few small pockets left. Now the others say: “Then, why do they not fight more quickly?”—Because I do not want a second Verdun. I prefer to do it with very small assault parties. Time makes no difference here. No ship comes up the Volga anymore. That is what is decisive!

They reproached us for waiting so long at Sevastopol. Well, it was because I did not want to start a gigantic wholesale murder there. But Sevastopol fell into our hands, and the Crimea fell into our hands, and we have reached goal after goal through tenacity and obstinacy. And if the enemy now prepares to attack—you should not think that I wish to outdo him. We will let him attack if he wants to, since the defense is always cheaper. Let him attack, he will bleed himself to death. We have always made up for these breakthroughs. In any event, the Russians are not in the Pyrenees or in Seville—that is, after all, the same distance as for us today to Stalingrad or, let us say, to Terek. But we are nonetheless there. This cannot be denied, after all, since it is a fact.

If there is no other way, then of course they regroup and say that it was a grave mistake for the Germans to go to Kirkenes, Narvik, or Stalingrad, as now for example. They ought to wait and see whether or not this was a strategic mistake.⁴⁸² We already see many signs that tell us whether or not it was a mistake that we occupied the Ukraine, that we occupied the ore mines of Krivoy Rog, that we took control of the manganese ore. Was it truly such a great mistake that we occupied the Kuban region, which is perhaps the greatest breadbasket in the world? Was it also a mistake that we destroyed or captured about four fifths or five sixths of all refineries, that we took control of a production of nine to ten million tons of oil or brought it to a standstill, or that we prevented the further transport of perhaps seven, eight, or nine million tons up the Volga? I do not know whether or not all this was a mistake.

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We are already noticing it. If the English had managed to take the Ruhr area from us, the Rhine, the Danube, the Elbe, and then Upper Silesia—this is about the same as the Donetsk area and the ore mines of Krivoy Rog—and if they had got hold of a part of our oil wells and the fertile plain of Magdeburg, would they also have said that it had been a great mistake to take all these things from the Germans?

They might talk a few mentally retarded nations into believing this, nations which then either wish to believe part of this or not. They cannot talk us into believing it. And if they wish perhaps to talk me into believing this, then I can only say: I have never made my strategic plans in accordance with the prescriptions or views of others. It was surely also a mistake that I made the breakthrough in France and did not go around the top. But it was worth it. In any event, the English were kicked out of France. They had been so close to our border at the time. They had thirteen divisions, and, in addition, over a hundred thirty French divisions, about twenty-four Belgian divisions, and twenty Dutch divisions, close to our border at the Rhine, our Rhine. And where are they now?

And when they say today that they are advancing somewhere in the desert—well, they have advanced and retreated a few times already—what is decisive in this war is who lands the final blow. And you can be assured that it will be us!

It is the same with their production. They produce everything and, naturally, they do this much better than we do. A few days ago, I read that the Americans are constructing a new U-boat. As I read this, I immediately thought: Surely this will be the best one again!—and right underneath, it said, “The best U-boat in the world;” it is the fastest and, in all other respects, it is the best. By comparison, we are complete bunglers with our U-boats!

My German Volksgenossen, we are not sleeping, and neither are our designing engineers! In the winter of 1939–1940, a certain Mr. Churchill declared that the U-boat danger had been eliminated, simply eliminated. Every day, he destroyed two, three, five U-boats. He destroyed more than we possessed at the time. He did not destroy anything. Instead, I again made “a very great mistake” at the time. That mistake was that I allowed only a very few of our U-boats to fight and held back a large part for the training of the crews of newly launched U-boats.

At the time, such a small number of U-boats confronted the enemy that today I am still embarrassed to admit it. The majority, however, about ten times as many, remained in the homeland and continued training new crews. Then, from a certain point on, mass production began here, too.

Not only the Americans are able to mass-produce, even though they pretend that only they are capable of this. If they say, “We are building such and such a number of warships,”—well, if they count their corvettes, their herring boats, and what have you, and put a cannon on top, then this might truly be the case. If we also count all this, then I can guarantee that we are not building any less and, moreover, I believe that we are building more functional ships than they are. This has again proved to be the case.

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We have now sunk over twenty-four million tons⁴⁸³ which means twelve million tons more than the total of the World War. The number of U-boats today has significantly surpassed the number of U-boats in the World War. And we continue to build and construct, and this for all types of weapons.

And if the gentlemen over there say that they have a wonderful new weapon—well, they do not even know whether we have not already had a better one for ages. I usually issue a new weapon only when the old one is really no good anymore. Why expose new weapons ahead of time? This tactic has proved its worth again and again. Of course, our weapons were always worse. Our soldiers were always worse, clearly. Further, our organization was worse. That is no surprise! If you compare these organizing geniuses Churchill, Duff Cooper, Chamberlain, and all these people, or Roosevelt, this organizer par excellence—if you compare these folk with us, then we are simply bunglers in organization.

However, we have scored one success after another, and that is what matters. It was the same at home. We were always the worst at home, too. We did not know how to do anything right, we had no abilities—but, one day, we had power, and that was decisive.

It is understandable that in such a worldwide struggle as the present one you cannot expect to score a new success every week. That is impossible. After all, that is not decisive.

What is decisive is that you slowly take up positions that must destroy the enemy, and that you hold them, that you fortify them so that they cannot be taken from you. And you can certainly believe me: what we possess, we will hold so firmly that, wherever we happen to stand in this war,⁴⁸⁴ nobody else will ever stand.

Besides, this war has enormously expanded since then. In addition to our allies Italy, Romania, Hungary, Finland, and all the other European people, Slovaks, Croatians, Spaniards, and so on, who for their share sent volunteers, like the Nordic volunteers, yet another world power has joined us; a world power that is also constantly suffering defeats.

Since the beginning of their entry, the Japanese have had only failures. Everything the Japanese did was a mistake. If you add up all these mistakes, what you get is something decisive: they have got hold of about ninety-eight percent of the American rubber production; they have acquired the greatest tin production in the world, they have got huge oil wells, and so on. If you keep making such mistakes, then you can be content with this. And vice versa: the others have gained only victories, ingenious, valiant, heroic, well thought-out victories—with their great commanders, like MacArthur and Wavell,⁴⁸⁵ or some other one of these greats, the like of which the world has never seen before. These gangsters are already writing fat books about warlords of the past and, in spite of everything, the people who had no warlords have got further in this war than those so richly blessed with commanders.

Especially today, on this day of remembering the great collapse of our movement—a collapse that to many at the time seemed to mean the end of the party—I can only say: For us National Socialists, this memory must mean a

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tremendous strengthening. It gives us the strength to brave all dangers, never to waver, never to yield, to face need with courage, and to hold fast, no matter how much the enemy presses on. Then you have to place faith in Luther's word: "And if there were only devils in this world, we would still succeed!" Today more than ever, I look to the future with great confidence. After all, we survived the last winter, a winter which, at the time when I spoke to you here last year, had not yet revealed itself in all its terrible danger. At the time, many people were weighed down by the memory of Napoleon's fate in 1812. And now the winter of 1812 was only fifty percent as cold as the winter that we left behind us in the past year.⁴⁸⁶

We are prepared in a different manner this year. Perhaps, one soldier or another might lack something this winter. But, all in all, we are armed for this winter in a different manner. That I can say, even should it turn out to be as harsh as the last.

Not everything that happened to us last winter will happen to us this time. I said once before that a great philosopher once said that a man who is not knocked down by a blow is made stronger by the blow. The storm, which failed to knock us down last winter, has only made us stronger.

No matter where the fronts are, Germany will always parry and attack, and I do not doubt for a minute that our flags will in the end succeed.

If Roosevelt today is attacking North Africa, saying that he must protect it from Germany and Italy,⁴⁸⁷ then there is no need to comment on this untruthful claim by this old gangster. Undoubtedly, he is the most hypocritical one in this whole club that confronts us. But the decisive and final word will not be spoken by Mr. Roosevelt, he can rest assured of that.

We will prepare all our blows—as thoroughly as always—and they will come at the right time. None of the others' blows against us has yet led to success. At one time, there were cheers of triumph, as the first English landed at Boulogne and then advanced. Six months later, there were no more cheers of triumph. Things turned out differently and things will turn out differently here, too. You can be completely confident that the leaders and the Wehrmacht will do everything that must and can be done.

I am firmly convinced that the German homeland above all stands behind the leaders and the Wehrmacht and that, behind me, there is the entire National Socialist Party as a sworn community.

What distinguishes the present time from the past is that, at the time, there was no Volk behind the Kaiser, but that one of the greatest organizations which was ever built up on this earth stands behind me. It represents the German Volk. And what furthermore distinguishes the present time from the past is that there is nobody at the head of the Volk who would leave the country in the critical hour, but instead there is a man at the top who has only known struggle and the one principle: strike (*schlagen*), strike, and strike again!

And there is yet something else that distinguishes today's Germany from that in the past: at the time, it had leaders who did not have their roots in the Volk, since it was ultimately a class state. Today, we are in the midst of completing what grew out of the old war. As I returned from the war, I

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brought the experiences at the front to the homeland. Out of this experience at the front, I built up my National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft. Today, this National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft steps up to the front. You will have noticed from all this how the Wehrmacht is becoming more National Socialist every month, how it increasingly takes on the characteristic features of the new Germany, how all privileges, class prejudices, and so on are increasingly being eliminated, how the German Volksgemeinschaft is more successful here every month, and how, at the end of this war, the German Volksgemeinschaft will perhaps have experienced its greatest trial—this distinguishes today's Germany from that in the past. We owe to this spirit the immeasurable heroism at the front, a heroism of millions of individual soldiers, known and unknown, a heroism of tens of thousands of brave officers, who today increasingly feel themselves to be part of one community with their men. In part, they come from this community.

We have removed all obstacles. Just as anyone can reach any position in the party, insofar as he has the capabilities, just as any post in government, even the highest, is open to anyone, even the poorest of our Volk, since our party has taken the lead, so it is in the Wehrmacht. It is like this not only in theory, in a few exceptional cases here and there, but it is like this today in practice. Today, noncommissioned officers have Knight's Crosses and Oak Leaf awards. Countless officers come from among the men. In the midst of a war, we are building up an army, the like of which the world has never seen before.

And at home, the Volk is working. As I have already told the Reichstag, I must attest to the German homeland one thing: in the year 1917–1918, [there was a] strike in munitions factories—and today, [there is] overtime, hard work. Today, the German worker at home knows that he is forging the weapons for his comrades out there. What is being done in the countryside and the city, what is done by the men and, above all, by the women, that is indeed tremendous.

In one respect, we cannot compete with our opponents: just as the party was once the poorest and won only because of the idealism of its followers, so, naturally, the German Volk is today perhaps the poorest of all people in the world in matters of gold. We have no gold. But what we have is living manpower.

What we have is a sacred diligence and a sacred will. In such a struggle of life and death, this is in the end a thousand times more decisive than gold. Of what use are their vaults of gold now to the Americans, other than that you can use them for making dentures. If they had ten synthetic-rubber factories, then that would be worth more than their entire stock of gold. I have had other things built. However, we did not bring any gold into this war, but rather the prerequisites for leading this fight. In any event, we Germans do not have a tank without rubber tires, but the English do today.

We will survive this war in terms of materiel, and now more so than ever!

In our possession are the raw-material areas that are necessary to survive this war in any circumstance. And if somebody says, "Well, it is certainly hard to tell!"—But, no, it is very easy: do not think, my international critics, that, in

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the east, we stood with our hands in our pockets in front of destroyed railway bridges or tracks, destroyed hydroelectric power stations or ore mines, and just looked at them. No, we worked this year, and how! And this is beginning to pay off. And when the next year comes, then this work will bear fruit all the more.

I can say with pride that it was especially the party that proved its worth in this tremendously. Countless brave party comrades stand out there. As born National Socialist Kreisleiters or Ortsgruppenleiters, they organize huge areas, along with a handful of men. They open these areas up for our economy, for our war economy, for our feeding, and, in a broad sense, for the feeding and maintenance of Europe. After all, this is not a war that Germany is fighting for itself, it is instead a war that is being fought for Europe! And this is why, understandably, we have found so many friends from the north and from the south, who fight partly in our ranks and partly in the independent armies of our allies, which are integrated in this mightiest front in world history.

Therefore, it is our irrevocable decision that when peace comes, and it will come because it must come some day, then this will be a true peace for Europe, and without the tutelage of certain people with fine instincts for idealistic and material values.

For we do not know what type of instinct Mr. Eden has for idealistic values. He has never revealed this. The company he keeps does not speak for this. Above all, the civilization of his country is not of a nature that could perhaps impress us. I do not even wish to speak of the man across the ocean. Their instinct for idealistic values is certainly less than ours. We have in all likelihood given the world more idealistic values than that society frequented by Mr. Eden. The same applies to the countries that have tied themselves to us. In part, they look back onto civilizations in comparison with which the civilization of the Anglo-Saxon island-country is truly infinitely young, not to say infantile.

In regard to material values, I do believe that they indeed have a very fine instinct for this. But we also have it. There is, however, a difference: we will make sure, under all circumstances, that the material values of Europe will in the future benefit the European people instead of an extra-continental, small, international clique of financiers. That is our unshakable and merciless decision.

The people of Europe are not fighting so that, afterwards, a couple of folk can again come along with their "fine instincts," pillage mankind, and leave behind millions of unemployed, only so that they can fill their safes.

We had a good reason why we distanced ourselves from the gold standard. We wanted to eliminate one of the prerequisites for this type of economic outlook and enterprise. And this is certain: Europe will emerge from this war far more economically sound than before.

For a great part of the continent which has previously been organized against Europe will now be put into the service of the European nations.

If somebody now says, "So you want to transplant the Dutch"—I do not want to transplant anyone. However, I do believe that many people are happy

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when they have their own piece of soil that they can work, and when they do not have to labor and struggle so hard, as they have to right now because of the overpopulation of this continent. Above all, they will be happy when they and their people receive a salary for this labor, and it does not lie in some safe or, for all I care, in some bank in London or New York. I therefore believe that the end of this war will also bring about the end of this reign of gold and the end of the whole society that is to be blamed for this war.

The mission of the National Socialist Party is clear to us all. I expect from every party comrade that, just as in the time of struggle, he will support with utmost zealousness the belief in victory and in success. This is perhaps easier today than it was in the past. I have to admire today every single one of my old party comrades, these many men who believed in the small, unknown soldier of the World War. Those men who followed me at the time put their lives on the line for me, gave their lives not only in the Old Reich, but also in the Ostmark, in the Sudetenland, and in other countries, too. I have to admire them.

Before us all stands today the shared mighty great Reich in its struggle of life and death for our entire Volk. Every National Socialist who believed in me in the past can today only be a zealot in the struggle abroad. He must force himself to the same zealous will that we already had at the time. With some enemies you cannot give any quarter. There is only one possibility: either we will fall or they will. We realize this and we are men enough to coolly (*eiskalt*) face this realization.

And this is what distinguishes me from these gentlemen in London and America: if I ask much of the German soldier, so I ask no more of him than I was always willing to do myself. If I ask much of the German Volk, so I do not ask for more work than I myself am willing to do. If I ask for overtime— in my life, I do not even know what overtime is. For every individual is fortunate enough to be able to distance himself from his work for a certain time and then be free.

My work is the fate of the Reich. I cannot distance myself from it. It follows me day and night, ever since I stepped to the head of the nation, ever since the days of drab misery, despair, worries, and collapse. Ever since then, a vacation for me would have been ridiculous. What is a vacation to me? ⁴⁸⁸ My work is Germany, my Volk, its future, and the future of its children. Therefore, I do not ask of anyone more than I am asking of myself and that I am myself willing to do.

I know that my old party comrades represent the core of this movement and that, in memory of the first blood sacrifice we made, they stride ahead of the nation to show the way in an exemplary fashion, and that they are joined by the hundreds of thousands and millions of National Socialist functionaries and members of the connected units, that all our men of the SA and SS march along, that the men of the Labor Front march along, that the men of the Reich Labor Service march along, and so on, in brief, the entire National Socialist German Volk.

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That is what is wonderful today: no longer do we talk into the wind as happened to me back then, but instead every word we call out to the Volk today echoes back at us a thousand times. And if the enemy believes that he can wear us out by some means, then he is mistaken. He cannot make me abandon my goal. The hour will come when I will strike back and I will repay them with interest!

You will remember the long period during which, as party comrades, we had to abide by the law. How often did party comrades approach me at the time and say: "Führer"—at the time, they called me "Chief" or said "Adolf Hitler"—why are we not allowed to strike back, why must we put up with this? I had to force them for years to abide by the law. With an aching heart, I had to exclude party comrades from the movement because they believed that they could no longer follow this order. Year after year, until the hour came when I could call on them again.

It is the same today. Again, I have to watch something happen somewhere for months. You should not think that my heart is not also consumed by fury when I hear about these air raids. You know, I did not do anything for a long time. In Paris, for example, I did not have a single bomb dropped on the city. Before we attacked Warsaw, I appealed five times to them to surrender. I asked them to evacuate the women and children. Not even a negotiator was received by them. Everything was refused, and only then did I decide to do what is permissible under the laws of war.

As England began to bomb our cities, I waited for three-and-a-half months. There were many at the time who asked me: "Why do we not respond, why are we not allowed to strike back? We are strong enough to do it." I waited in the conviction that reason would in the end return. It did not. Believe me, it is no different today. I see everything exactly as it is. Over there, they will see that the German spirit of invention has not been asleep and they will receive an answer that will take their breath away.⁴⁸⁹

I have said this many times before. If, on occasion, I did not speak for some time, then this did not mean that I had lost my voice, but instead that I did not think it useful to speak. And it is the same today. Why should I say a lot now?

Today, in the end, the front has the say. I will speak only on rare instances. For the front's language is so forceful and unique that, at any rate, it commits every individual German. Whoever reads the daily reports of our Wehrmacht and does not zealously avow his faith in his Volk as he hears time and again of these countless heroic acts cannot be helped by speeches.

I do not speak for the benefit of the enemy abroad, anyway. If Mr. Roosevelt says that he is not listening to my speeches—I am not speaking for the benefit of Mr. Roosevelt. I speak to him through that instrument through which it is only possible to speak now. And this instrument speaks loudly and clearly enough. I speak only on rare instances either to the movement or to my own German Volk. There is only one thing I can express in such a speech:

Without exception, man and woman, always remember that this war will decide life and death for our Volk. If you understand this, then every single one of your thoughts and acts will always be a prayer for our Germany!

November 10, 1942

In his speech, Hitler had intimated “retaliation.” The only move, however, he could make to counter the Anglo-American landing in French North Africa was the occupation of the remainder of France, Corsica, and Tunis. It was obvious that, should he hesitate, Allied troops would soon stand in southern France.

The Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria had at first met with no opposition, or belated and ineffective efforts by the Axis powers. Surprisingly, only a few French coastal batteries and warships put up any resistance at all.

Hitler was not deluding himself on the duration of this resistance. His hatred and distrust of France had remained unchanged during his years in power. Never had he seriously considered granting France a peace treaty. Instead, he was always careful to put the French off so that he could later and for all time incorporate all of France into his territory.

Now, too, he primarily sought to keep the French from actively resisting the German invasion. He wished to prevent the French fleet from leaving Toulon for North Africa and joining the Allies.

Although the orders for the occupation of the remainder of France had long been issued and it had been only a question of giving the cue, Hitler invited Laval to Munich for a discussion of the situation, as though nothing had yet been resolved and a favorable outcome of the talks for France might still be possible. By using this trick, Hitler hoped to preserve an element of surprise for his southern attack on France on November 11, the anniversary of the Armistice of 1918.

The talks with Laval at the Führerbau in Munich on November 10 were only a farce.⁴⁹⁰ Ciano, who had come to Munich in the place of the indisposed Mussolini, noted the following:⁴⁹¹

Hitler, Göring, von Ribbentrop, and myself at the Führerbahn. Decisions have been made to move, especially because the position of Admiral Darlan at Algiers is quite ambiguous and leads one to suspect some understanding with the rebels. A conference with Laval is almost superfluous, because he will be told nothing, or almost nothing, of what has been decided.

Laval, with his white tie and middle-class French peasant attire, is very much out of place in the great salon among so many uniforms. He tries to speak in a familiar tone about his trip and his long sleep in the car, but his words go unheeded. Hitler treats him with frigid courtesy. The conversation is brief. The Führer is the first to speak and asks pointedly if France is in a position to assure us landing points in Tunisia. Laval, like a good Frenchman, would like to discuss it and take advantage of the opportunity to obtain concessions from

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Italy. I do not have time to interrupt because Hitler, with the firmest decision, declares that he does not intend to take up at this time a discussion of Italian claims, which are more than modest. Laval cannot take upon himself the responsibility of yielding Tunis and Bizerte to the Axis, and he requests that he be faced with a *fait accompli*; meaning that we draw up a note to Vichy in which it is stated what the Axis has decided to do.

The poor man couldn't even imagine the kind of *fait accompli* that the Germans were about to hand him. Not a word was said to Laval about the impending action—that the orders to occupy France were being given while he was smoking his cigarette and conversing with various people in the next room. Von Ribbentrop told me that Laval would be informed only the next morning at eight o'clock that on account of information received during the night Hitler had been obliged to proceed with the total occupation of the country.

This was the last occupation that Hitler would carry out in his lifetime. As always, he was convinced that his actions were not so much what mattered but his explanations for them.

He composed a long letter to Pétain and a long appeal to the French people. Hitler ought not to have taken the trouble. His windy remarks might have impressed Pétain, but nobody else in the world, not even in Germany. After all, his intentions were clear: by the occupation of southern France he wished to forestall an Anglo-American landing, at least for the time being.⁴⁹² Hitler's letter read as follows:⁴⁹³

Herr Marshal!

Since the day my destiny summoned me to become my people's leader, I have been trying honestly to create a better relationship with France, even seriously sacrificing Germany's interests. If these efforts remained ineffective, it was not my fault. The declaration of war made by France and England on September 3, 1939, hurt me and the German nation all the more deeply because neither England, nor France had the slightest reason to unleash the war. The campaign, so quick and so unfortunate for France, did not, however, make me give up the idea of leaving open the question of creating a better European solidarity, at least in the future. With this in mind, I have not included in the terms of the cease-fire any points that could contradict the goals set in my preamble or that were not absolutely necessary for that purpose.

The German Reich did not, therefore, make use of France's weakness in order to suppress her, but required only what the winner had to require in such a situation, namely, confidence in success, which implies a guaranty that the cease-fire is not a temporary phenomenon but an actual end of the war, and that, in the long run, this cease-fire shall not lead to deterioration of the military position of the Reich as a result of its [Reich's] mildness, in case this war should continue because of the intractability of France's former allies.

Germany has not set forth any demands upon the French navy and has not, even to the least degree, interfered with the sovereignty of the French

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government in its colonial empire.

Hoping to bring war over to [Continental] Europe, England and America have started to attack and occupy French territories in western and northern Africa. France, for its part, is unable to resist this attack for long. Germany and Italy can under no circumstances take a detached view of the cease-fire agreement's acquiring a sense that may in time turn against these two countries.

In more precise observations of the movements of the Anglo-American transportation units, and of a number of reports the authenticity of which is beyond doubt, the German and Italian governments found out that the next goal of the Anglo-American invasion must be Corsica and southern France itself. Thus it was not the fault of Germany and Italy that all the prerequisites and grounds for the cease-fire agreement were eliminated. Under such circumstances, the German and Italian governments came to an agreement to take urgent steps in order resist continuation of the Anglo-American attack.

Under these circumstances, Herr Marshal, I have the honor to inform you, with great regret, that, for the purpose of defense from the danger threatening us and with the approval of the Italian government, I have given orders to my army to occupy the Mediterranean coast by the shortest way through France, and, secondly to join in the defense of Corsica against the threat of attack by the Anglo-American troops.

I was forced to take this step particularly by the action of one French general, who, while in captivity, feigned illness and, taking advantage of the privileges granted to him, managed to escape, and who intended further to serve the Anglo-American invaders and to fight not only against Germany but even against his own country [General Giraud].

Therefore, at this point, Herr Marshal, I can inform you that the advance of the German troops is not aimed at you as head of state and respected leader of courageous French soldiers in the World War, or at the French government, or at all those Frenchmen who wish peace and who want, in the first place, to avoid anything that would make their beautiful country a theater of war.

In the same way, I would like to assure you that the advance of the allied troops in France is not aimed at the French military forces, and that I still cherish a hope that one day we will together defend Europe and Europe's African colonies from the Anglo-American robber-gang.

Lastly, this attack must not be directed against the French administration which, I hope, will pursue its duties as it has until now, because the only purpose of the German attack is to prevent the situation in North Africa from repeating on the southern coast of France. Against this, I feel responsible to my people, and before the whole of Europe at large, not to let it happen, because if this Continent should go up in a new war, it may bring about annihilation of all the European states and, above all, of our common European culture.

I would like herewith to assure you, Herr Marshal, at the moment the situation on the Mediterranean improves and no more threat exists to the interest of the Reich as described in the cease-fire agreement, I am fully determined to remove my troops immediately beyond the demarcation line.

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I would also like to assure you, Herr Marshal, that from now on you and your government can move about the whole of France freely and without any hindrance. Some time ago I was against the idea of moving the government to Versailles, because I feared that, as a result of hostile propaganda, you, Herr Marshal, and your government would have been robbed of freedom, and under such circumstances would not have been able to fulfill your duties. But now, in view of the above circumstances, after the Reich and Italy are forced to act in defense of the interests presented in the cease-fire agreement against the threat of Anglo-American intervention, and also to occupy the borders of the rest of France; there is no longer any reason for the French government to stay in Vichy.

I'd therefore like to take the occasion to inform you about cancellation of previous restrictions. I can understand, Herr Marshal, how difficult it is for you to accept the fate of your country; I can only beg you to think of the fate of my people, who have been obliged to go on making war for years and without guilt on their part, and who are also forced, under the burden of necessity, to make the abovementioned decision.

I am expressing hope that this will not give rise to any new bloodshed between France and Germany, and that, on the contrary, it will become a step forward against extra-Continental violators of peace, and, in this way, that the people of Europe will unite.

So, Germany is fully resolved to defend as much as possible, side-by-side with the French soldiers, the boundaries of your country, and at the same time, the boundaries of European culture and civilization. The German troops shall do everything that depends on them, through their actions and through their attitude to the French people and their soldiers, to serve this purpose. But I would also like to ask you, Herr Marshal, to ensure that the French government, at this hour, issues all the necessary orders, so as to remove tension and guaranty free implementation of this step, which is also urgent in the interest of France.

With expressions of my sincere respect to you, Herr Marshal

Your devoted, Adolf Hitler.

Hitler's appeal to the French people read as follows:⁴⁹⁴

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Frenchmen! Officers and Soldiers of the French Armed Forces!

On September 3, 1939, the British government declared war on Germany without reason or cause.

Regrettably, the instigators responsible for this war succeeded in moving the French government to join this English declaration of war. For Germany, this meant an incomprehensible challenge.

The German government has demanded nothing of France and has asked nothing. I have not made any unreasonable demands on France that could have insulted it.

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The German Volk, which with the blood of its men had to oppose this attack, had never harbored hatred for France. In spite of this, the war that was unleashed brought suffering and unhappiness to countless families in both countries.

Following the collapse of the French-English front, which led to a catastrophe and the flight of the English from Dunkirk, Germany received a request to grant an armistice.

The German Reich did not demand anything in this armistice treaty that could have offended the honor of the French army. However, care had to be taken that the fight would not sooner or later be begun anew by paid agents, in the interest of the British war inciters.

It was not the goal of Germany to humiliate or destroy France or the French Empire. Instead, the goal was the contrary: to bring about by a later, reasonable peace a general atmosphere of mutual understanding in Europe.

Since this time, England, and now also America, have attempted again to obtain a foothold on French territory in order to continue the war on foreign soil, as this has always been in their interest. Once these assaults had failed pitifully everywhere, the English-American attack on the colonies in west and North Africa took place. It was easier to fight there, because of the weakness of the French occupiers, than on the coasts in the west defended by Germany.

The German government has now known for twenty-four hours that, in expanding this operation, the next attack will be directed against Corsica, in order to occupy that island, and against the southern coast of France.

Under those circumstances, I was forced to decide to issue the German Wehrmacht orders for immediate passage through the previously unoccupied territory to positions earmarked for the English-American landings.

The German Wehrmacht does not come as the enemy of the French people or as the enemy of its soldiers. It does not intend to govern these territories. It has only one goal: together with its allies, to repulse any American-English attempt at a landing.

Marshal Pétain and his government are at complete liberty to pursue their responsibilities as before. Nothing stands in the way any longer of a realization of its former desire to move to Versailles in order to govern France from there. The German troops have received instruction to impose as little as possible on the French people by their attitude. However, the French people should consider that, through the attitude of its government in the year 1939, it plunged the German Volk into a difficult war, which has brought great suffering and woe to many hundreds of thousands of families.

It is the wish of the German government and its soldiers, insofar as possible, not only to assume the protection of the French borders jointly with members of the French armed forces, but also to help, above all, to guard the African possessions of the European people against armed attacks in the future.

Only in those instances where blind fanaticism or paid English agents put up resistance to the advance of our units will arms force a decision. I know that countless Frenchmen have the understandable desire to be relieved of the occupation.

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But let them be assured that the soldier would also prefer to be in his homeland, with his wife and children, or his parents, and to be allowed to live and work in peace there. Therefore, the quicker the power is defeated that in the past three hundred years has incited state against state and which has looted France so often in the past and is at present again in the process of looting, the earlier will the wishes of the occupied French territory and the occupying German soldiers be fulfilled together. All outstanding questions will be ordered and resolved in agreement with the French authorities.

Adolf Hitler

The occupation of southern France worked out excellently. French troops put up no resistance, and the French fleet also refrained from leaving port, on assurances of an unoccupied cordon around Toulon.⁴⁹⁵ On Hitler's orders, the Gestapo arrested General Weygand. General Giraud, whom Hitler also wished to place in safekeeping, had already joined the Allies in North Africa.⁴⁹⁶ Marshal Pétain played an inglorious role by allowing himself to be persuaded to remain France's "head of state." The Axis powers encountered no resistance in Corsica, Tunis, and Bizerte.

On occasion, the Allies have been blamed for not occupying Tunis completely that November. However, the English and Americans were different from Hitler and careful not to overdo it in the first flush of victory. For the time being, Morocco and Algeria were enough for them. They were certain of Tunis in any event, since Montgomery and his army were moving in from the east. Therefore, it was only in the Allies' interest that as many German-Italian troops as possible were packed into Tunis. And Hitler actually did them this favor.

In the meantime, Hitler and his staff at the Berghof were proud that things had gone so well with the surprise attack on France. On November 11, Hitler sent Victor Emmanuel the following telegram on his birthday:⁴⁹⁷

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt best wishes for your personal happiness and welfare on your birthday. In loyal remembrance of the Italian armed forces, which fight with us in close brotherhood-in-arms, I tie to this my sincere best wishes for the happy and glorious future of Italy.

Adolf Hitler

On November 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the famous author Gerhart Hauptmann on his eightieth birthday.⁴⁹⁸

On November 16, he awarded the pilot Hanna Reitsch the Iron Cross First Class for services "in the development of German flight instruments." She was the first woman to receive this award.⁴⁹⁹ In

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addition, Hitler presented the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross to the badly wounded General Bruno von Hauenschild at a Bavarian military hospital.⁵⁰⁰

After days of preparing their artillery, on November 19 the Russians started the large-scale assault on the Don, an assault which had long been threatening. The impact of the attack was so great that, already on the first day, the front began to waver at Serafinov. Supposedly, this was due to Romanian troops fighting on this section of the front. However, what difference would it have made had German troops put up a resistance of an additional one or two days there? With a front of this size, Hitler could not possibly operate with echeloned elite units everywhere. He had been happy that he could use Hungarians, Italians, and Romanians north of Stalingrad. Now, all of a sudden, he blamed them for the threatening catastrophe!

A second major attack by the Russians occurred south of Stalingrad at the same time. Obviously, it was connected to the first. News from the front at the Don now appeared so disquieting to Chief of Staff Zeitzler, the man who remained in charge at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, that he phoned Hitler at the Berghof on November 19.⁵⁰¹

The idyll on the Obersalzberg had to be given up. Together with Keitel and Jodl, Hitler returned to East Prussia on November 23. Before he did so, however, he provided encouraging radio messages to the Sixth Army, which was in danger of being cut off.

In spite of this, the Russians managed to unite both their assault armies at Kalach and Leginskaya, and, within five days, to encircle the German army at Stalingrad, following Hitler's example.

In the year 1941, German special reports had proclaimed the "greatest encirclement battles" in world history to have taken place at Belostok (Bialystok), Minsk, Kiev, Vyazma, and Bryansk. Now, it was the Russians who were encircling the Germans! They had learned their lesson well.

The events recalled Charles XII's invasion. At the time, Tsar Peter the Great is said to have told the Swedish king, who had just won the battle of Narva: "My dear brother⁵⁰² Charles! I thank you for the lesson that you have taught me. In three years, we will see each other again!" Three years later, the Russians took back Narva, and, in 1709, Charles XII was defeated at Poltava for good. This time, the Russian military leaders only needed about one-and-a-half years before they could reply to Hitler's "lesson."

November 24, 1942

However, at this time, the supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht did not yet know what awaited him. When General Paulus wired on November 23 that the Sixth Army faced destruction if Hitler did not immediately order “the withdrawal of all divisions from Stalingrad” and a “breakthrough to the southwest,” Hitler replied in a radio message the next day as follows:⁵⁰³

The Sixth Army is temporarily surrounded by Russian forces. I intend to concentrate the army in the area Stalingrad North—Kotluban—Height 137—Height 135—Height Marinovka—Tsybenko—Stalingrad South. The army can rest assured that I will do everything properly to supply it and relieve it in time. I know the brave Sixth Army and its commander in chief and know that they will do their duty.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler thought that he could proceed in the same manner as at Kholm the year before.⁵⁰⁴ Naturally, Göring, who admitted that every time he faced Hitler he “lost heart,”⁵⁰⁵ said yes to the stupid question whether or not it was possible to supply the Sixth Army by air.

On November 24, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to President Carmona of Portugal on his birthday.⁵⁰⁶

On November 25, he ordered Field Marshal von Manstein to take over a newly formed army group in the Don region and to relieve Stalingrad.

Despite the turbulence at the Eastern Front, Hitler did not forget about France. The fourteen days in which he had intended to lull the French Navy and Army to sleep were over. He applied an old principle here:⁵⁰⁷

It is not as though I wanted to force my adversary to fight. After all, I do not say yes to the fight because I want to fight him, but because I want to destroy him. And now come to my aid, ingenuity, so that I may maneuver him into a corner where he cannot strike me while I can strike straight at his heart!

Hitler used the escape of General Giraud and other officers as a pretext to disarm all the remaining French troops and to occupy the naval port at Toulon. The French navy managed to sink most of its ships in time.⁵⁰⁸ German bombers entered the airspace above Toulon at 3:00 a.m. on November 27, 1942. They dropped fluorescent rockets from the skies, laid magnetic mines, and bombed the harbor fortifications. At the same time, German panzer divisions penetrated into the harbor area and engaged in a street battle. The battleship *Strasbourg* was scuttled, and its example was followed by most of the

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other French ships until less than a quarter of the fleet remained. The majority of captains chose to go down with their ships. The code name for the German offensive was "Operation Lila." Hitler had realized an old ambition here: there was no French military power left in Europe. Insofar as this applied to the west, these words of caution from *Mein Kampf* had been heeded:⁵⁰⁹

Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, in order to prevent the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, to destroy it.

Since Hitler believed, however, that it was better to present a different rationale for his actions, he wrote a second letter to Pétain. He felt no shame in luring the senile marshal with the prospect of the rebuilding of a French army. His letter to Pétain of November 26 read as follows:⁵¹⁰

Herr Marshal!

On November 11, 1942, with the consent of Germany's allies and with the aim of ensuring the security of the Reich, I made the decision to occupy the southern coast of France in the war imposed on us by France and England. I hope that this will help clear up the situation in your country, in the interests of Germany and Italy as well as of France.

Looking back on the past, I ought to point out once again that it was not Germany that declared war on France and England in September of 1939; on the contrary, ever since I came to power, I have never missed any opportunity, despite the burden of the Versailles Treaty, to promote the development of genuinely friendly relations with France.

Germany has put forth only one requirement—do not reject the hand of friendship offered by us. Unfortunately, unscrupulous Anglo-American, and especially Jewish, bosses have succeeded behind the scenes in interpreting the New Reich's every gesture at reconciliation as Germany's weakness, and every appeal for peace as a sign of Germany's forthcoming collapse.

While neither the government nor the press of the German Reich ventured to set forth any demands which would be insulting to the honor of France, high-ranking trouble-makers in Paris stood up for splitting up the German Reich, enslaving the German people, abolishing the fundamentals of our social legislation, and, above all, restoring the unrestricted right of the Jewish race to plunder us, a right which had been duly restricted by law.

Herr Marshal! I know you didn't take part in this instigation of war. However, you may know that after the campaign in Poland I repeated my

November 26, 1942

previous declarations, and the German Reich, without making any claims for itself, offered the kind of peace that could contribute to cooperation in Europe.

In the first days of September 1939, after the campaign in Poland was over, the forces that stood for Europe's self-destruction and thus for their own war profits, out-shouted that call for peace and demanded that the war should continue at any price. In this way, the struggle foisted by your government upon the German Reich and upon Italy, allied with the German Reich, had to be settled by arms, rather than by reason.

Despite the victory, unique in world history, I did nothing that might have insulted the honor of France; the armistice agreement sought only to prevent under all circumstances the resumption of conflict. Nor was any subsequent requirement imposed contrary to this principle.

It is known to you, Herr Marshal, that all claims to the effect that Germany intends to take possession of the French fleet or has made explicit demands along those lines are pure inventions, or rather explicit lies spread abroad by English and American parties who are the ones chiefly interested in pushing for this war.

While the German Reich still must bear heavy sacrifices due to the war forced upon it partly by France, the French people have been able to live in conditions of peace, except when they are forced to shed blood by sea and air attacks launched against them by their own allies.

Meanwhile, out of 1.960.000 prisoners of war, the German Reich has gradually released 700.000, an action which, to my mind, is an unprecedented event in the history of warfare.⁵¹¹ The blame for hindering this process must be laid on the radical elements in your country, which have always managed to sabotage genuine cooperation.

It was your own wish, Herr Marshal, to consult once with me to determine and to fix in writing the conditions of such cooperation. I acceded to your wish, and negotiations were conducted in Montoire, which, as I strongly believed, can provide the basis for a general détente.

Unfortunately, only a few weeks later, those in France herself who favor the war succeeded in putting an end to this cooperation, on grounds that appeared infinitely painful to me personally. And I am obliged to mention the public declaration that I allegedly intended to bring [the body of] Napoleon's son to Paris with the sole purpose of inviting you there so that you should fall captive into the hands of the Germans.

I must point out that you, Herr Marshal, have more than once asked me for permission to move to Versailles, and every time I declined that request of yours proceeding from the consideration that the whole world might have misconstrued this, even though erroneously, and imagine that the French government was a puppet of the Germans.

Although this one fact [*sic*] was absolutely contrary to my stand on the peace agreement, I did not draw a corresponding conclusion from it, as I always understood and still understand that in France there are millions of diligent workers, farmers, and other citizens who have nothing in common with those schemes and who are aspiring to peace.

November 26, 1942

I would like to emphasize, Herr Marshal, that I more than once made attempts to invite a member of the French government to meet with me; besides, all our discussions that did take place were fully based on the wishes of the French government. Both talks with Admiral Darlan were also carried out as a result of his insistent request and on your behalf, Herr Marshal.

The landing of American and British troops on the French northwest and north coast of Africa undertaken, as it turned out later, as a consequence of agreements with numerous traitors—generals and officers—annulled the terms of the whole agreement as presented in the preamble of the cease-fire, and so Germany was forced, together with her allies, to take the necessary urgent measures to strengthen security.

Nevertheless, by November 11, I was still unaware of all those preliminaries, which led up to the Anglo-American action. Today I know just as you, Herr Marshal, do, that the invasion [of French Africa] was performed in accordance with insistent demands from those French elements who had once brought about the war and who have not yet disappeared from the social and, above all, the military sphere of France. Another regretful fact is that the French generals and admirals more than once broke their word of honor given to the German authorities.

Herr Marshal, you have to admit, too, that such generals and admirals broke their oath of loyalty to you. Consequently, I have to conclude that any agreement with such elements is absolutely senseless.

I am presenting to you only the proofs of the fact that after the invasion of November 11, 1942, new solemn oaths were sworn, even though only in the form of a word of honor, and they were broken on the same day, a fact which is confirmed in the recently discovered orders.

It is absolutely certain that the Admiral's assurance that the French Navy in Toulon would oppose any attack of the enemy also ended in disappointment for Germany and Italy. The point is that the above declaration was also made on November 11, but an order was issued on November 12 forbidding firing on the British and American troops under any circumstances, even in case of their possible landing. Many other instances of violations of the cease-fire agreement were revealed. Herr Marshal, I can bring to your attention the following:

1. I am sure that you personally, Herr Marshal, did not participate in all that treachery and that you are actually the most victimized party.

2. I have to represent the interests of the people upon whom the war was imposed and who, in their own interests, must fight against those who unleashed that war, and against those who are continuing it now with the aim of exterminating the whole of Europe in the interests of the European and partly non-European Jewish-Anglo-American clique.

3. I am forced to bring this war to an end in the name of those millions of people, not only in my country, who have freed themselves from the grip of ruthless capitalist exploitation and have no wish to remain victims to international exploitation and to the complete extermination of their nations.

November 26, 1942

4. The German people, on whose behalf I am appealing to you, Herr Marshal, have no hatred toward the French people. But being their Führer and representative, I shall not, under any circumstances, tolerate the manipulations of those elements who have brought about this war, thus exposing Germany and the whole of Europe to chaos.

I am therefore against those tendencies and, above all against those persons who wish to hinder any cooperation between the German and the French people, in the future as well, and who have on their conscience the murderous blame for kindling the war, and who apparently believe that the hour has come to create a bridgehead in the south of Europe in order to enable the invasion of forces from outside the continent of Europe.

5. Therefore, having learned about new violations of their word of honor by French officers, generals and admirals who are intending, as has now been proved, to open France and North Africa to the Anglo-Jewish military criminals, I gave orders to seize Toulon immediately, to prevent the ships from sailing to sea or [failing that] to exterminate them, and also to crush all resistance if there is any.

It is not a war against honest French soldiers and officers; it is a struggle against those military criminals who even now keep thinking that there isn't enough bloodshed, and who are seeking for new possibilities to continue and prolong the catastrophe. That is why I have given orders to demobilize all those units of the French army which were instigated by their officers to resist Germany, in defiance of the orders of the French government.

6. As I have already pointed out, these measures, which I was forced to take due to the treacherous behavior of your admirals and generals, are not directed either against France or against French soldiers.

I earnestly hope, in common with our allies, that there is a possibility to return to the French state those French forces whose officers will, at least, obey the head of their own state, to guarantee the conclusion of any further interstate treaties and agreements.

The more painful it may be for you at the present stage, Herr Marshal, the more hopeful and reassuring ought to be the awareness that it is impossible for a state to exist long without a disciplined and obedient army. So, the building of a new navy, army and air force that would blindly obey you, Herr Marshal, will be a great happiness for France and in no way an unhappiness.

I would not like to end this letter without assuring you once more that this step forced upon me does not, in the least, diminish my will to cooperate with France, and, probably, creates prerequisites for the practical realization of this cooperation. I firmly intend to help France, by every means available in the Reich, to regain her colonial territories which were taken away from her by the Anglo-Americans, regardless of some debatable statements to the contrary. Neither Germany nor Italy ever intended to destroy or annihilate the French colonial empire.

Now it is in the hands of the French state to accept the measures forced upon the Germans, so that further bloodshed should not arise and so that at last the prerequisites are created for a really successful cooperation by both parties.

December 4, 1942

Field Marshal von Rundstedt is authorized to give the required orders and conclude agreements in the course of this German action, and he will always be at your disposal, Herr Marshal.

I'm bringing this letter to an end with a hope that it will give a start to cooperation in the course of which we expect from France nothing but loyalty and understanding of the essence of Europe's general destiny.

Herr Marshal, please accept my assertion of my personal respect for you.

Yours

Adolf Hitler

On November 28, Hitler appointed two new state secretaries: Kritzinger in the Reich Chancellery and Klopfer in the Party Chancellery.⁵¹² In addition, he received Rommel and insulted him, as he declared that the African army was headed for destruction and that the German weapons were no match for "the effectiveness of the British bombers, tanks, and artillery."⁵¹³

On December 1, Hitler received the new Spanish ambassador Gines Vidal y Saura at his headquarters. Afterwards, he bade the recalled ambassador Count Mayalde farewell.⁵¹⁴

The surviving record of the discussion of the situation on the evening of December 1⁵¹⁵ contains no significant comments by Hitler on the situation on the eastern front, since it had been relatively calm there on this day.

On December 4, Hitler sent the following telegram to Francisco Franco, the Spanish head of state and generalissimo:⁵¹⁶

On your fiftieth birthday and in my own and the entire German Volk's name, I extend to Your Excellency heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and your future historic work. In a brave and difficult struggle, Caudillo, you have freed the Spanish people from the shackles of Bolshevism and have led it on the way from imminent complete annihilation to a new rise. I sincerely wish that you may be permitted to lead your country to a happy and secure future.

In comradely solidarity and with heartfelt greetings,

Your Adolf Hitler

As mentioned before, Hitler was as generous as Napoleon in distributing "honorific titles" and similar "distinctions." Recently, he had decided that the infantrymen would fight better if they were called "grenadiers" and the tank soldiers "panzer grenadiers." On December 4, he bestowed the title "SS panzer grenadier divisions" on the following SS divisions: *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, *Das Reich*, *Totenkopf*, and *Wiking*.⁵¹⁷

December 11, 1942

On December 5, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to state president Ryti and Marshal Mannerheim on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Finnish declaration of independence.⁵¹⁸

In addition, he awarded the governor of Libya, Marshal Bastico, the German Cross in Gold. This was a somewhat meager award, not surprisingly, since Hitler had apparently already written off Libya.

On December 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Field Marshal von Mackensen on his ninety-third birthday.⁵¹⁹

The director of the art gallery in Dresden, Hans Posse, died on December 8 at the age of sixty-three.⁵²⁰ Hitler ordered a "state funeral."

At the Wolfsschanze headquarters on December 10, Hitler received the head of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands, A. A. Mussert, for a "long and confidential exchange."⁵²¹

On December 11, the first anniversary of the "German-Italian-Japanese Alliance" provided the occasion for several exchanges of telegrams. Hitler himself sent out four telegrams. It was remarkable in this respect that, in the order of these announcements, the Duce had slipped into last place. The telegrams read as follows:⁵²²

To the Japanese Emperor:

On the return of the day on which Germany, Japan, and Italy solemnly announced their decision that, in the closest brotherhood in arms, they would wage the war that the United States and Great Britain had forced on them to the final victory, I would like to convey my sincere greetings to Your Majesty. Herewith, I remember the glorious battles of our allied armed forces, which guarantee our victory and a happy future for our people.

To Victor Emmanuel:

On today's anniversary of the German-Italian-Japanese alliance, I ask Your Majesty to accept my best wishes for the struggle of the Italian arms, along with my sincere and heartfelt greetings. Filled with faith in the shared final victory, I also herewith express my conviction that our people, as well as the Japanese people, will be granted a happy future in peace following the victorious conclusion of this struggle.

To Prime Minister General Tojo:

On today's day of commemoration, which finds the forces of the Tripartite Pact united in the closest brotherhood in arms in the struggle for a new and just world order, I send Your Excellency my sincere greetings. The glorious successes that the allied armed forces secured against the common enemy last year are a sure guarantee that, in Europe and East Asia, the struggle against the Anglo-American challenge will be crowned by the final victory of the

December 12, 1942

Tripartite Pact. In this imperturbable knowledge, I send you my sincere best wishes on this day for the future success of Japanese arms.

To the Duce:

On this day, when the alliance of the Axis powers with the Japanese empire celebrates the first anniversary of its conclusion, I think of you and Fascist Italy in loyal comradeship and heartfelt solidarity. In history, victory has always been imparted to those people who risked everything in the fight for a just ideal against an obsolete world order. And this is how Germany, Italy, and Japan will emerge from the present decisive struggle as the victors. In this incontestable knowledge, I also send you, Duce, my heartfelt greetings on this occasion.

On December 12, Hitler signed a series of domestic ordinances. One decree established an advisory board for the German Reichsbahn, which was made up of eighteen members “to be named by the Reich government.”⁵²³ Another decree dealt with appointments to disciplinary courts.⁵²⁴

One important decree concerned the legal status of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. It had greatly lost in significance over the years. As was already apparent in the “Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag” of April 26,⁵²⁵ the military and police would now take center stage! Hitler’s NSDAP decree of December 12 was not intended to give the party a new lease on life. On the contrary, by becoming a corporation under public law, the NSDAP was even more at his mercy than before. The decree read as follows:⁵²⁶

I

The rights and duties of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party shall derive from the tasks that I shall set for it and its resulting organizational position.

II

Party law shall exclusively determine the inner organization of the party.

III

The party shall participate in legal relations in accordance with the regulations applying to the state, insofar as special arrangements have not been, or will not be, made for it.

December 12, 1942

IV

I rescind the provisions of Paragraph 1, Section 2, of the law on securing the unity of party and state of December 1, 1933 (Reich Law Gazette I, page 1016)⁵²⁷

V

The regulations necessary for the implementation of this decree will be issued by the head of my party chancellery in agreement with the Reich treasurer of the NSDAP, and the Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery.

The Führer Adolf Hitler

At a lunchtime discussion on December 12, Hitler spoke about Stalingrad in a characteristic manner.⁵²⁸ His stubborn insistence on holding the city was not merely a manifestation of his principle: "What we once possess we will never again surrender!"⁵²⁹ After all, he had had to abandon this maxim before, for example at Moscow and in North Africa. Rather, his attitude concerning Stalingrad had come from the realization that: "If we give it up, we will never win it back!" He told Chief of Staff Zeitzler the following:

All in all, I have made up my mind, Zeitzler. We must not under any circumstances give it [Stalingrad] up. We will never win it back. We know what this means. I cannot start any surprise operations. This time, regrettably, it is too late. Things would have gone faster if we had not stopped at Voronezh⁵³⁰ for so long. Perhaps, they could have slipped through at the very beginning. But to think that you can do it a second time by going back and leaving the materiel behind is ridiculous.

We cannot possibly replace what we have there.

If we abandon it, then we are actually abandoning the whole objective of this campaign. To think that I can get this far again next time is crazy. Now, in the winter, we can use the forces to build a deadlock position (*Riegelstellung*). The other side has the possibility of bringing up materiel by rail and, when the ice breaks, he has the Volga at his disposal for transportation. He knows that everything hinges on this. We will not come back here. Therefore, we must not leave here. Too much blood has already been spilled.

Actually, Hitler was planning to go on a few days of vacation in the later part of December. For this purpose, he arranged for one of the customary appeals to officer candidates at the Sportpalast in Berlin on December 18, where he would deliver a standard speech.⁵³¹ Since Christmas was approaching, he planned to spend some time at the Berghof and possibly also with Mussolini and Antonescu at Klessheim.

However, in view of the catastrophic military situation at Stalingrad and in North Africa, Hitler was afraid to speak before the officer

December 18, 1942

candidates—coward that he was. As usual in such situations, he decided to use Göring as a dummy and let him deliver this unpleasant speech.⁵³²

Instead of his vacation stay, Hitler decided to “sacrifice” himself and remain in unsurpassed “selflessness” at his headquarters in order to deal with this “business,” that is, the relief of Stalingrad. On December 12, Hitler told his generals the following:⁵³³

That is why I feel that it would be appropriate to lead a thrust from south to north first in order to break up this whole business and open it up individually, and only then to continue a thrust to the east. All that is still in the distant future. For right now, it is a question of trying to free the forces for this. Of course, it is decisive how things go for the Italians today. I do not know whether, in the circumstances, I can leave here at all, Jodl. Naturally, I can cancel everything.

If I deal with this business, then I shall call off Berlin. We will see today and tomorrow.

“Things” did not go well for the Italians on that day, that is, for the Italian troops at the Don. The Russians put them into retreat.

After initial successes, the relief operation pushing to the east, which had been started on December 12 by Manstein and his newly formed Army Group Don, got stuck.

On December 15, Hitler finally canceled his trip for good. He invited Ciano and Cavallero to his East Prussian headquarters. The Duce was in ill health and did not feel up to such a long journey.⁵³⁴

On December 18, the Italians arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, which was located in a “humid forest,” as Ciano remarked.⁵³⁵ For two days, Hitler talked insistently to them and claimed that he would be able to hold Stalingrad and North Africa while throwing new troops into Tunis. At the same time, he made advances to them regarding France. However, the Italians were already up to their necks in difficulties. If the Allies controlled North Africa, then the war would soon come to the Italian motherland.

On Mussolini’s orders, Ciano made an attempt to speak with Hitler about a peace settlement with the Soviet Union. It was all very well for Ciano to talk. Peace with the Soviet Union? It was highly unlikely that, following the experiences with Hitler in the years 1939–1941, the Soviet Union would be willing to negotiate with him. Hitler ignored Ciano’s arguments altogether. Instead he reproached him on the attitude of the Italian troops on the eastern front, whose lack of resistance had supposedly made possible the Russian breakthrough at Stalingrad.

December 21, 1942

On December 19, Laval arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. As the envoy Schmidt remarked, he again had to listen to “France’s list of sins.” Ciano noted:

After two days on the train they first set him [Laval] at a tea table, then at a dinner table, and did not let him open his mouth. The moment he tried to speak the Führer would interrupt him and deliver a long dissertation.⁵³⁶

Hitler issued this communiqué on the talks:⁵³⁷

On December 18, the Führer received the royal Italian foreign minister at the Führer headquarters. Together with the Italian chief of staff Marshal Cavallero, Count Ciano is in Germany for a short stay. On December 18 and 19, the Führer discussed with Count Ciano and Marshal Cavallero all questions regarding the joint conduct of the war by Germany and Italy. The political and military discussions at the Führer’s were attended by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, and the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel. The meeting at the Führer headquarters was marked by the determined will of the Axis powers to deploy all forces to gain the final victory.

On all questions discussed there was a complete unanimity of views. The unshakable friendship and brotherhood-in-arms of the Führer and the Duce, and their two people, bestowed on the discussions with Count Ciano and Marshal Cavallero a particularly heartfelt feeling.

Count Ciano and Marshal Cavallero were accompanied on their visit to the Führer headquarters by the royal Italian ambassador in Berlin, Dino Alfieri; the German ambassador in Rome, von Mackensen; the political coworkers of Count Ciano, and officers from the Italian army, air force, and navy.

On December 19, the Führer received the French head of government, Pierre Laval, for a lengthy discussion of France’s current problems at his headquarters in the presence of Italian foreign minister Count Ciano, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, and Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop.

On December 21, Manstein’s relief operation, called *Wintergewitter* (Operation Winter Thunderstorm), had to be given up. While the Fourth Panzer Army under General Hoth had advanced within forty-five kilometers of Stalingrad, the Russian resistance had become so strong that new Russian breakthroughs had to be feared.⁵³⁸ There remained the possibility of a breakout to the west for the Sixth Army, but Hitler categorically refused to grant permission.

On November 8, Hitler had already reinforced the occupation forces on Crete. In his opinion, Crete would bear the brunt of the next Anglo-American attack. He was very much preoccupied with these

December 29, 1942

matters. On December 28, he issued Directive No. 47, which read as follows:⁵³⁹

I. The situation in the Mediterranean region makes an offensive possible in the foreseeable future against Crete, against the German and Italian bases on the Aegean and the Balkan Peninsula. It should be taken into account that the offensive will be supported by rebellions in the western Balkan countries.

An increased influence of Anglo-American forces upon Turkey demands an increased attention in this direction also.

The directive contained detailed instructions for the individual military commanders about the appropriate countermeasures.⁵⁴⁰ Actually, Hitler ought to have evacuated the areas in question, as he had once sarcastically proposed by claiming that he wished to spare the English "the difficulties of a landing."⁵⁴¹

On December 29, Hitler decided to unite Army Group A and Army Group Don under Manstein's command.

The year 1942 ended. The "decision" in Germany's favor had not come about, despite Hitler's prophesies. Instead, a number of countries had declared war on Germany, for instance Mexico on May 22, Brazil on August 22, and Ethiopia on December 14. The German Wehrmacht had been forced to go on the defensive along all fronts. The struggle in the south of the eastern front and in North Africa had become hopeless. Disastrous strikes by the Royal Air Force continued to rain down on major German cities, and the Luftwaffe was unable to prevent this. The oceans were no longer ruled by German U-boats but by the Allied fleets. Such was the situation at the beginning of the new year.⁵⁴²



LV Heydrich's funeral

Photo: Publisher's archives

THE YEAR 1943

Major Events in Summary

Three years earlier, Hitler had declared: “May the year 1940 bring about a decision.”¹ Twelve months later, he had still prophesied: “The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history.”² Another twelve months after that, he had still felt that a “decision” was imminent and had asked the Lord for His assistance in bringing it about.³

At the beginning of 1943, he was more modest in his prophecies. This was not a surprise in view of the catastrophic situation in Stalingrad and North Africa. Hitler stated only that National Socialist Germany was “determined to end this fight with a clear victory.”⁴

Following the destruction of the German armies in Stalingrad and Tunis, he hardly felt like launching any new offensive. After a number of delays, however, only Operation Citadel with the goal of Kursk was started on June 5. Because of strong Soviet resistance, the operation had to be called off after only one week. Hitler was content that he managed to maintain the front just as it was in the spring of 1942, at least until the fall of 1943.

Although Hitler had failed to secure the oil fields of Maikop and Grozny, he was not about “to liquidate the war.”⁵ Even though he was on the defensive along all fronts, he still intended to fight down to “the last battalion.”⁶ At home, too, Hitler was eager to remain in power. Therefore, he declined to summon the Reichstag, which had the legal power to demand his resignation. On two occasions in 1943, Hitler ought to have summoned the Reichstag:

1. The extension of the Reichstag’s legislative tenure. While the Reichstag had been elected for a four-year period on April 10, 1938, Hitler manipulated⁷ it so that its tenure did not officially begin until January 30, 1939. By January 30, 1943, a further extension of the tenure would have required a Reichstag decision with a two-thirds majority.

2. The extension of the Enabling Act, which expired on May 10, 1943.⁸

Hitler proceeded in complete disregard of the Constitution in both cases and, in an arbitrary act, he extended both the Reichstag's tenure and the duration of the Enabling Act by himself.⁹

Even the "Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag" of April 26, 1942,¹⁰ which had freed him from observing existing laws in personal affairs, did not give him the right to make such highhanded changes in the constitution, especially where the competence of the Reichstag itself was concerned.

However, neither the Reichstag president Göring nor any other Reichstag deputy seemed to be disturbed by this. Nevertheless, Hitler continued to be haunted by his fear of a possible Reichstag meeting. When he heard of the vote of no confidence against Mussolini in late July, he ordered Himmler to make sure that "such possibly surfacing dangers are to be prevented through the strictest measures by the police."¹¹ This meant that all Reichstag deputies were placed under continuous police surveillance.

Hitler was troubled not only by the Reichstag, but also by the existence of persons who might be considered to be his potential successors. There was good reason for his concern. Following the disaster at Stalingrad, Field Marshal von Manstein had publicly stated his intention to recommend that Hitler resign as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht.¹² At first, Hitler considered removing von Manstein. However, he did not dare to make a move against him at this time.

Instead, he tried to defame all his prospective successors in the military or political sphere: Göring, Schirach, and Rommel. He did so indirectly by measures that tended to humiliate them in public and directly by influencing Goebbels, who was responsible for focusing public opinion.¹³

Hitler slowly began to exclude Göring from the conduct of government affairs as "president of the ministerial council." On September 1, 1939, he had thoughtlessly named the Reichsmarschall as his successor, although only in the event of his death. Now Hitler took care of day-to-day business with the help of his complaisant secretaries: Lammers, Keitel, and Bormann. In spite of this, he still felt that Göring was a "dangerous man." As president of the Reichstag, Göring had the power to summon the Reichstag at any time. Therefore, Hitler sought to belittle him in the eyes of the public by blaming him for the "failure" of the Luftwaffe, which was actually due to the superiority of the Allied air forces.

At one point, Hitler had removed Schirach from Berlin because of his alleged ambitions to succeed him.¹⁴ Even with Schirach in Vienna, Hitler still felt that he represented a threat. He constantly criticized him, claiming that he had become “*verwienert*” (gone soft—Viennese style).¹⁵ and “unreliable.” He tried to “force him aside” by suggesting a diplomatic career and even wanted him placed on trial by the Volksgerichtshof.¹⁶

In March, Rommel, whose popularity had been a thorn in Hitler’s side from the start,¹⁷ was recalled from the front in Africa against his will. Hitler sent him on a vacation in order to create the impression with the soldiers and the public that Rommel had abandoned his troops in Tunis and run to safety.

Hitler kept himself busy with such tricks and precautionary measures in 1943 and was indifferent to the military catastrophes in Stalingrad and Tunis. He tried to appear in public as little as possible. Only three times did he speak on public occasions: on Heroes’ Memorial Day (March 21), at Lutze’s funeral (May 8), and at the commemoration of the Munich putsch (November 8). There was also one radio broadcast about the collapse of the Italian government on November 10, when Goebbels practically had to force him to go to the microphone. In addition, Hitler delivered addresses before Reichsleiters and Gauleiters in February, May, and October, before leaders of the economy in June, and before officer candidates in November.

Undoubtedly, the gravest event of 1943 for Hitler was the collapse of Mussolini and Fascism. His theory of 1919—friendship with England and Italy—broke down completely, even regarding his second ally. Of course, this could not be allowed to happen! Thus, Hitler had Mussolini kidnapped in Italy. He wanted to keep the weak Duce and the body of the Fascist Party alive artificially so that his alliance theory of 1919 would not die.

All in all, the year 1943 was a bleak one for Hitler. Since he wished to remain “steadfast in face of the impossible,”¹⁸ he was happy that he managed to hang on. In the meantime, the Allies were taking up the positions whence they would deal the decisive blows against Hitler’s Reich in 1944 and 1945.

On January 14, Churchill and Roosevelt met in Casablanca to discuss future cooperation with Russia, China, and the representatives of “Free France,” de Gaulle and Giraud. At a press conference, after ten

days of discussions at “Villa No. 2,” they emphasized their call for the “unconditional surrender” of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

After the war, there was a tendency, at least in Germany, to attribute too much importance to the Casablanca Conference.¹⁹ Especially the members of the German resistance movement claimed that the call for Germany’s “unconditional surrender” had made it impossible for them to move effectively against Hitler.

It is not the purpose of this work to investigate whether the German resistance movement ever had the necessary willpower and the opportunity of moving against Hitler. However, the reference to the Casablanca Conference is in much the same line as the claim that the outcome of the Munich Conference had prevented action by the German generals against Hitler.²⁰

As mentioned earlier,²¹ from the point of view of the defeated, any type of surrender is unconditional. It is not the defeated who puts up conditions, but the victor who dictates them. If the defeated refuses to accept them, then the fight continues until either he surrenders “unconditionally” or he is destroyed.

Following Germany’s capitulation in 1918, the Reich government of the Weimar Republic tolerated the official claim by German Nationalists and the military that the German Army had been close to securing the final victory in 1918, when the “November criminals” had committed treason by signing the armistice agreement without being forced to do so.

This belief, which virtually became Germany’s state doctrine from 1933 on, caused the western powers to insist on “unconditional surrender” from the start. This meant that at the end of the Second World War, the German Wehrmacht would publicly have to declare its defeat and place itself at the mercy of the victor.

This decision by the western powers did not come about as a result of the Casablanca Conference. From the start, the statements by Allied statesmen were clear on this point.

On October 3, 1939, Chamberlain [said] before the lower house [of Parliament] the following: “We are not willing to accept from the present German government even the slightest promise.”²²

In a broadcast on October 1, 1939, Churchill declared the following:²³

The Empire Crumbles

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.

In another broadcast on June 22, 1941, Churchill stated the following:²⁴

But now I have to declare the decision of His Majesty's Government—and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, eventually, concur—for we must speak out now at once, without a day's delay. I have to make the declaration, but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every trace of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us away—nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air, until with God's help we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated the people from his yoke. Any man or state who fights against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe..

On December 11, 1941, President Roosevelt sent the United States Congress the following message:²⁵

The long known and the long expected has thus taken place. The forces endeavoring to enslave the entire world now are moving toward this hemisphere.

Never before has there been a greater challenge to life, liberty, and civilization.

On December 8, speaking expressly about Japan but implicitly about Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, President Roosevelt had said to Congress the following:²⁶

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

The call for unconditional surrender was not intended to mean that the victors were unwilling to respect the law or grant the defeated their rights or that they would arbitrarily treat the people of Germany, Italy, and Japan afterwards. This was also stated in no uncertain terms at Casablanca. The statement to the press there read as follows:²⁷

The President and the Prime Minister, after a complete survey of the world war situation, are more than ever determined that peace can come to the world only by a total elimination of German and Japanese war power. This involves the simple formula of placing their objective of this war in terms of an unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy and Japan. Unconditional

surrender by them means a reasonable assurance of world peace for generations. Unconditional surrender means not the destruction of the German populace, nor of the Italian or Japanese populace, but does mean the destruction of a philosophy in Germany, Italy and Japan which is based on the conquest and subjugation of other people.

The other claim, that, before Casablanca, there had never been an “unconditional surrender” in world history cannot be substantiated. There is, for example, Hitler’s treatment of the states which he conquered. The occupied territories in Poland and Russia were literally raped. They were not granted any life of their own. A completely arbitrary reign was instituted in Norway, Holland, and the Balkans, with the intention of incorporating these areas into the German Reich. In May 1940, it was Hitler who explicitly demanded an “unconditional surrender” by the Belgian king Leopold.²⁸ Keitel told the French intermediaries who came to the Forest of Compiègne in June 1940 that they had to accept “unconditionally” all German demands and sign the armistice.²⁹

The call for Germany’s and its allies’ unconditional surrender only repeated the goals that had been articulated earlier. It was not the only or most decisive outcome of the Casablanca Conference. Far more important was the solidarity demonstrated between the Anglo-American powers and the other states fighting against Germany, the Soviet Union and “Free France.”

In reality, Casablanca did not change anything, not even for the Germans. Hitler’s conduct of the war was not influenced by it. The German generals behaved no differently after Casablanca than they did before Casablanca. The German resistance movement grew more active in 1943 and 1944 and made several ill-fated attempts on Hitler’s life, even though Casablanca had supposedly tied their hands.

It would be more appropriate for members of the former German resistance movement if they simply admitted that they did not have any single man who dared to oppose Adolf Hitler openly.

In Germany, there were hundreds and thousands of people who had no influence, like the Scholl³⁰ siblings, and who, nonetheless, were ready to lay down their lives and to help in whatever way possible to free Germany of the tyrant. Many low-ranking officers likewise risked their lives in this cause. However, in Germany’s leading circles, there was nobody who was willing to place his life on the line, when he met the Führer face to face.

January 1, 1943

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's New Year's Proclamation for 1943 began with the following words:³¹

Führer Headquarters, January 1, 1943

German Volk! National Socialists! Party Comrades!

For the fourth time, destiny forces me to direct my New Year's Proclamation to the German Volk at war. In these four years, it became clear to the German Volk that this fight, which was forced on us by our old greedy enemies, as so many times before in German history, is truly a question of life or death. When, in earlier centuries, dynastic disputes filled the world with the clamor of war, then the results and consequences of such a struggle were often quite limited for the victor and for the defeated.

In spite of this, after the decay of the first German Reich during many centuries, our Volk—because of its internal fragmentation and its resulting impotence—fell from its former position of commanding respect in Europe and, for a long time, became a cultural fertilizer for the outside world. Countless millions of Germans were forced to leave their homeland in order to earn their daily bread elsewhere. Although they were not conscious of this, they helped to build up that continent that now tries to invade Europe a second time.

That the United States was attempting “to invade” those parts of Europe occupied by the Germans was not all that surprising, since Hitler had declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941.

The following section of Hitler's appeal contained the usual “party narrative,”³² which pointed to the First World War, international Jewry, and Wilson's Fourteen Points. What was new was that Hitler now claimed that the German Volk had caused the present confrontation because it had believed “Wilson's untruthful, hypocritical phrases” in 1918 and thereby prevented the collapse of the “hostile environment.” Hitler declared as follows:

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Had the German Volk continued to wage the struggle with iron determination, instead of believing Wilson's untruthful, hypocritical phrases in the year 1918, then the hostile environment would already have collapsed at the time.

That this did not happen not only brought unspeakable economic misery over our Volk and tore millions of Germans from the homeland but it also was the cause of this present war. Because we know that in 1939 London and Paris thought that the German Volk would shortly lay down its arms again of its own accord, as it did once before. The German Volk and the rest of the world should know, however, that this event was unique in German history. If English and American Jews tell us that it is the intention of the Allies to take its children away from the German Volk, slaughter millions of young men, split up the German Reich, and make it the defenseless victim of its capitalist or Bolshevik environment for all time,³³ then they do not need to tell us this, because we already know it anyway. Now this outside world does not seem to realize that National Socialist Germany is not suited for such an experiment, that it will neither be defeated nor will it capitulate. Instead, filled with the spirit of the greatest times in our history, it is determined to end this fight with a clear victory. The strongest guarantor of these sentiments and the strength of will necessary for this is the National Socialist Party with its organizations and, above all, the Volk educated by it.

We have the right to believe in this victory, thanks to our own strength, the courage of our troops, the loyalty and work of our homeland, and thanks to the activities of the allied brave nations in Europe and Asia.

If the German Wehrmacht and the allied states have managed in the past year to drive back even further the Bolshevik fronts threatening Europe, then the German homeland, with its men and women in the cities and in the countryside, has by the same token accomplished something unique under the most difficult circumstances. The German and allied soldiers, as well as our German economy, have not only enormously expanded the Lebensraum of fighting Europe, but they have also already opened it up for themselves to a great extent.

It was possible to secure food for us, thanks above all to the work of the German peasant and the German peasant's wife. The millions who work for our industry have not only supplied our armies with the necessary materiel but they have also created the conditions for starting our armament as planned on a much larger scale. We have been informed often enough about what America plans to do in this respect through the windy babble of its main warmonger.³⁴ We are also aware of what it can actually do and has actually accomplished. What Germany and Europe will in the end accomplish will not remain concealed from our enemies in the coming year.

A review of this year of great successes and mighty battles obliges the German homeland to think of its soldiers first. Wherever they stand, they add new pages of honor to the annals of German history. The glorious battles they have fought are made public by special announcements and Wehrmacht reports. However, the homeland cannot fully appreciate what they have to

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suffer and bear. And to this front of fighters also belongs that front of men and women who work as helpers at the front or behind it. Especially in the east, unimaginable things are demanded of them and done by them. Alas, by taking upon themselves these worries, privations, sacrifices, and sufferings, they spare the Reich much greater misfortune. They protect it and guard it against the horrors of a war which the homeland has only begun to experience even during the heaviest bombardments.

The start of the New Year obliges me to thank the homeland and the front, in the name of the German Volk, for their heroism and the work that has been done. For I am only one of the many members of this Volk. What raises me above the throng of my Volksgenossen is only the honor to be allowed to be their Führer. For the rest, their suffering is my suffering, just as my pride and joy will one day be the pride and joy of the entire Volk. The individual must and will pass away, as in all times, but the Volk must live on. That we will dedicate all our forces to it in this coming year, this will be our pledge on January 1, 1943. Only then we may dare to ask our Lord, as always, that He continue to grant us His assistance. The winter may be difficult, but it cannot hit us any harder than it did last year. Afterwards, the hour will come when we will line up again and concentrate our forces to secure freedom, the future, and the life of our Volk. Some day, one power will be the first to fall in this struggle. We know that it will not be Germany. The German Volk will hold the battlefield this time. And then, finally, that long peace will come that we yearn for, for the great building up of our Volksgemeinschaft, which will be the only worthy expression of thanks to our dead heroes.

Adolf Hitler

The order of the day which Hitler issued to the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht at the beginning of the new year was again very long and listed all sorts of “decisive” victories. This was definitely a sign that something was amiss! Indeed, the German Volk had not been told about the encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. This order of the day read as follows:³⁵

Soldiers!

When I addressed my last New Year’s Proclamation to you, a winter had set in along our front in the east which resembled a natural disaster.

What you soldiers of the eastern front had to go through at the time, you know yourselves. At night, when I worried and lay awake, my thoughts were with you. That we managed to avoid the Napoleonic collapse that was meant for us, we owe as much to your bravery and soldierly expertise as to your loyalty and steadfastness.

My fighters of the eastern front, you have saved Germany and, beyond this, all of Europe during that winter—and, with you, the soldiers of our allies who fought at your side. While in an endless struggle against the forces of nature and the treacherousness of the enemy you doggedly held the European front in the

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east, preparations had already begun in the homeland for taking up the struggle in the spring.

You have accomplished great things in the year 1942. The Crimea was conquered and cleared. Dangerous breakthroughs by the enemy at countless locations along the front were thwarted. In the three battles of Kharkov, the threat to our southern flank was eliminated, and the enemy was crushed. A new offensive of mighty proportions took the last remnants of the Ukraine from him, as well as his coal areas along the Donets. In this huge area, which reaches up to the Volga, you now fight side by side with the troops of our allied nations. You know how difficult this struggle is and will be, and how often the scales will appear to tilt in favor of our enemy, but the German victory will stand at the end, because during this year the German homeland has forged new weapons, and more so than ever before. What was prepared in many years of work is now beginning to run at full capacity in order to provide you, my soldiers, not only with better but also with more weapons and ammunition. As fighters, you are already superior to every enemy. Nevertheless, not only as your supreme commander but also as a former soldier, I know how much bitterness, suffering, fear of death, and valor is connected with even the most glorious victory. For in the end, it is the man, as fighter and soldier, who decides the battle of arms. Even the best weapon is worthless in the hands of a coward.

While you, my soldiers of the eastern front, paid a heavy toll in blood, and with you all the men and women deployed by the organizations helping you, who were so often forced to take up a rifle or machine gun themselves, the German soldier along all fronts has done his duty to the utmost.

From northern Norway to the Spanish border, the German divisions await our enemies' attack. We can only guess whether they will come and when they will come. However, we know that they will be beaten no matter when or how they will come. In a few hours, Dieppe showed the English that a landing by the enemies on the continent will only lead to their lightning destruction. They will experience the same at any other location. While our allies are fighting a heroic struggle, especially in North Africa, traitorous French generals and admirals have broken the armistice. By violating solemn promises and words of honor even toward their own head of state, they have attempted to hand over the French colonial empire to our enemies, which, as the victor, we had left to France.

In agreement with the Duce, the remainder of France was thereupon occupied in a few days, the southern French Mediterranean coast was set up for the joint defense, the French army and fleet were disarmed, and we took possession of Tunis and Bizerte.

Thereby, we took up those new positions that are important, even decisive, for the conduct of the war in North Africa.

My Soldiers, by setting up and holding fronts so far away from Germany, you are not only protecting Europe together with our allies but also your own homeland, the German Reich. The accomplishments of our navy in this struggle are unique in history. Submarine and surface craft are destroying so

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many of the enemies' warships and merchant marine that they cannot build new ships fast enough. The Luftwaffe and all its units are doing their utmost, as you have experienced or seen yourselves in the course of countless missions in this war. You soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS who are directly subordinate to me —you remain the backbone of this entire gigantic struggle. Your bravery, loyalty, sense of duty, and steadfastness are the basis of the final victory. The grenadiers and riflemen of the regiments of the infantry and panzer divisions of the army and the units of the Waffen SS have not only suffered the greatest losses, they have also accomplished the most.

If, at the beginning of this new year, we firmly resolve never to retreat from our enemies, but instead to fight them until the final victory is ours, then we do so primarily in the memory of our dear comrades who have already given their lives for this victory. However, we do so also thinking of the German Volk, its present and future. Countless newspapers and public speeches announced what our enemies plan to do with our Volk. You know yourselves what the enemy in the east will do with us in case he wins. Our enemies will find out for themselves what we are determined to do in view of this. By thinking of our dead at the front, we also think of the bravery of the homeland. It is worthy of its soldiers. All attempts by the enemy, his heinous attacks on women and children, places of cultural significance, and peaceful homes, did not demoralize the German Volk. On the contrary, they were imbued with that hatred which is necessary in order to wage such a fight with prospects of success. Even as we were driven into this war, we did not know this hatred—especially insofar as our western enemies were concerned. We never demanded anything of them that could have offended or insulted them. We did not demand anything that belonged to them. Our only wish was to live in friendship with them. Our soldiers fought heroically after England and France declared war on us but this hatred was still not there in the German Volk. The ruins of our old cathedrals, numerous dead and wounded women and children, the well-planned attacks on our military hospitals, and so on, only they brought about this change of heart in the German Volk. Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill taught Germany how to hate. Thus, the German Volk today works with grim wrath in the countryside and in the cities in the single determination that, this time, the war will end in such a manner that Germany's enemies will no longer feel like attacking us again for the next hundred years.³⁶ And those nations which have tied their destiny to that of Germany face the same question of life or death. May God have mercy on Europe, if the Jewish-Bolshevik-capitalist conspiracy succeeds. Europe would be lost forever and in the middle of it is your homeland, my soldiers, the homeland for which you are fighting.

The year 1943 will perhaps be difficult, but it will surely be no more difficult than past years. If the Lord gave us the strength to survive the [last] winter, then we will survive this winter and the next year all the more. One thing is certain: at this point there will³⁷ be no more compromises in this struggle. What Europe and the rest of the world need is not a situation in which every twenty or twenty-five years the Jewish-capitalist vultures can turn against the peacefulness and, above all, social building of a new world, but instead a

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long resting period of uninterrupted development. Above all, Germany needs the conditions for the building of a National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft that is no longer threatened from the outside. If this state and the rest of Europe then possess within their borders the basis for secure nutrition and possess those raw materials without which human civilization today is inconceivable, then your sufferings, my soldiers, will not have been in vain. One day, new generations will come to the graves of our fallen comrades to thank them for the sacrifices they made for the life of posterity.

Because we are fighting for the life and freedom of our nations, and not for money or business, we believe that we may again ask the Lord to grant us His blessings in the coming year, as in the past.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's wordy New Year's Proclamation was ill-suited to create enthusiasm in Germany or the allied states. Ciano wrote the following:³⁸

I did not like very much Hitler's message to the German people and the one he sent to the armed forces. They reveal a great deal of concern, which is logical, but it is not wise to announce it to a public which is already puzzled.

The official communiqué on Hitler's exchange of New Year's telegrams with other heads of state was as brief as it had been the year before.³⁹ The number of possible addressees for his telegrams had again decreased after Mexico and Brazil had declared war on Germany.

Hitler was still capable of seeing through a shakeup of diplomatic personnel on January 1:⁴⁰ he recalled Ambassador von Stohrer from Madrid, General Ott from Tokyo, and the envoy Prinz zu Wied from Stockholm. He appointed the following replacements: von Moltke as ambassador in Madrid; Stahmer as ambassador in Tokyo (he had previously been in Nanking); and Thommsen⁴¹ as envoy in Stockholm. Embassy Counselor Erich Kordt (first Bern, then Tokyo) was appointed chargé d'affaires in Nanking.

At the same time, the public was informed that Hitler had created a new military award: a white ribbon with the inscription "Crete." Veterans of the battles on Crete in May 1941 were to wear the ribbon on their lower left arms.⁴² In all likelihood, this was meant as an encouragement to the soldiers at Stalingrad, to whom Hitler might one day also award a ribbon with "Stalingrad" emblazoned on it.

On January 4, Hitler received Speer at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. They discussed the "Armament Drive 1943."⁴³ The Führer decided that it was no longer necessary to show special consideration to the French in the further recruitment of specialists and helpers in

January 10, 1943

France. The drive should be handled with vigor, and sharper measures to promote "recruitment" were permissible.

On January 7, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the queen and empress of Italy, Elena, on her seventieth birthday.⁴⁴

On January 8, Hitler received the Bulgarian war minister, General Richov, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The question discussed was Bulgaria's readiness for defense against Turkey.⁴⁵

On the same day, the Russians proposed an honorable surrender to the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. Colonel General Paulus forwarded the conditions to the Führer headquarters by radio. Naturally, Hitler categorically forbade their acceptance.⁴⁶

On January 10, the Russians, under the command of Colonel General Rokossovski and his chief of staff Lieutenant General Malinin, began a new offensive against the encircled German army. The artillery attack, which was of particular significance,⁴⁷ was led by Artillery Marshal Voronov.

That day, Hitler received Antonescu and his entourage at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The situation at the eastern front was becoming decidedly more worrisome for the Romanians than for the Germans. Should the Russians continue their advance, the Romanians would naturally be the first to see what the consequences of this advance would be. Not surprisingly, as Ciano noted in his diary, the Romanians were beginning to waver and suddenly seemed to be keen on reaching an understanding with the Hungarians.⁴⁸

Of course, Hitler did not forget to blame the Romanians for the situation at Stalingrad, but Antonescu was not about to put up with anything of the kind. Schmidt reported the following:⁴⁹

When Hitler tried to blame the Romanians, along with the Hungarians and Italians, for the Russian breakthrough of the front, which had led to the encirclement of the Stalingrad army, Antonescu energetically protested against this and strongly criticized the German leaders, that is, indirectly Hitler, and, as it appeared to me, with the very apt arguments of an old general-staff officer.

The following communiqué was published on the meeting:⁵⁰

On January 10, the Führer received the state leader⁵¹ of Romania, Marshal Antonescu, at his headquarters. The discussion, which was characterized by the spirit of friendship and the battle-tested brotherhood in arms of the two nations, was attended, on the German side, by Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop and, on the Romanian side, by deputy prime minister Mihai Antonescu, who accompanied the Romanian state leader.

January 15, 1943

For the German side, Field Marshal Keitel, chief of staff General Zeitzler, and General Jodl participated in the military talks, in which, for the Romanian side, war minister Division General Dobre and the Romanian chief of staff Division General Steflea took part. The talks touched on all questions of deployment by both nations and the determined continuation of the war against the common enemies to a total victory of our arms. A complete agreement of opinions on the further conduct of the war in the political, military, and economic realms was noted.

On January 9, the Japanese-puppet Chinese government declared war on England and America. Germany barely took note of this event. Not even the usual exchange of telegrams on such an occasion took place.

On January 12, Göring and Rosenberg celebrated their fiftieth birthdays. Through Keitel, Hitler presented Göring with a “skillfully crafted document on his nomination as Reichsmarschall.” Schaub handed Rosenberg a handwritten letter from the Führer and conveyed his “heartfelt congratulations.”⁵² On the same day, Hitler appointed Franz Hueber, who had previously served as undersecretary of state in the Reich ministry of justice, president of the Reich Administrative Court.⁵³

Ever since the end of November, Hitler had concealed the encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad from the German public. He had acted as though nothing had changed at Stalingrad. On January 10, he had the OKW report say: “In Stalingrad, local activities by assault parties.”

On January 14, in view of the rapidly progressing Russian offensive, Hitler gave up this tactic. He decided to transform the Battle of Stalingrad into a “heroic epic.” The OKW report of January 14 mentioned “heroic, heavy fighting in the Stalingrad area.”

On January 15, Hitler tried to encourage the commander in chief of the Sixth Army to hold out. Since he had already promoted Paulus to colonel general on November 30, he now awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross, as the “178th soldier and commander of an army.”⁵⁴ The German public was still not informed that the entire Sixth Army was encircled in Stalingrad and that its destruction was just a matter of time. Twenty German and two Romanian divisions, which had numbered from two hundred fifty thousand to three hundred thirty thousand men in November,⁵⁵ were cut off.

January 20, 1943

On January 19, Hitler received the Spanish party minister Arrese at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a lengthy discussion in “the spirit of the sincere friendship between Germany and Spain.”⁵⁶

On January 20, the Führer headquarters made it public that Ribbentrop and Ambassador Oshima had signed an agreement on economic cooperation between Germany and Japan. A corresponding treaty between Italy and Japan had been concluded in Rome. The purpose of this treaty was simply to improve the mood in Germany and Italy. After all, what use were agreements on economic cooperation if one needed a submarine to establish routes for traffic between the parties to the treaty? Even this heartfelt final communiqué from the Führer headquarters could not change this fact:⁵⁷

Following the conclusion of the German-Japanese Economic Agreement, the Führer received the imperial Japanese ambassador, General Oshima, and entered into a heartfelt, lengthy discussion with him.

On January 21, Hitler had a wreath placed at the grave of Professor Troost in Munich. Furthermore, he sent a congratulatory telegram to the poet Wilhelm Schäfer of the Rhineland on his seventy-fifth birthday.⁵⁸

On January 20, the Russian defender of the city of Stalingrad, General Rodimtsev, had driven a wedge between the German troops, splitting them into two camps. On January 24, the Russians sent a negotiator under a flag of truce to Paulus with renewed demands for a surrender. The German general forwarded them by radio to Hitler, asking him to “approve immediately surrender in order to save the remaining lives.” Hitler replied as follows:⁵⁹

I forbid surrender. The army holds its position down to the last soldier and the last bullet. Through its heroic perseverance, it makes an unforgettable contribution to the erection of a defensive front and to the salvation of the occident.

The Sixth Army continued to receive this order of the day by radio from the Führer headquarters:⁶⁰

If the German soldier considers holding out further to be senseless, he should remember that the Führer knows best. The moment may come when the soldier believes that he is forced to continue the fight although resistance does not make sense any longer. In such a situation, the troops must know: the Führer knows what situation his soldiers are in. He will manage it. We must only obey. Ours is not to ask why; ours is to blindly obey.

January 27, 1943

This was the pure Hitlerian style known from his appeals to officer candidates. The Führer knows best! The Führer knows what situation his soldiers are in and the “difficulty” of the hour. He knew all this, as he had stated one year ago:

I went through the whole gamut of human responsibility myself: as a common soldier, as an unknown and nameless man who undertook to conquer a state, as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, and, above all, as the commander in chief of the army. I know everything. I know how difficult it can be at times!⁶¹

It is another question whether it was any consolation to the starving, freezing, and bleeding soldiers at Stalingrad that the Führer knew all this!

Hitler was more interested in continued elimination of the Reichstag at this point than in Stalingrad. It was high time that he did something. The Reichstag’s tenure expired on January 30. On January 25, Hitler signed—with the term “Der Führer,”⁶²—the law on the extension of the tenure of the Greater German Reichstag, in violation of the constitution.⁶³

The Reich government has decided the following law, which is herewith made public:

I

The tenure of the presently existing Reichstag is extended until January 30, 1947.

II

The Reich minister of the interior decrees the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation of this law.

On January 27, Sauckel ordered, “based on special authorization by the Führer,” that all men from sixteen to sixty-five years of age and all women from seventeen to forty-five years of age report to the employment office for work in the defense of the Reich.⁶⁴

Having attended to these affairs, Hitler again turned to the problem of Stalingrad. The complete destruction of the Sixth Army appeared more certain by the hour. It was mostly a question now of postponing its collapse until after the anniversary of the seizure of power on January 30. As mentioned earlier, Hitler wanted to make a modern heroic epic out of Stalingrad and hold up the fight of the king of Sparta, Leonidas, against the Persians as an example. In a conversation with the Italian ambassador Alfieri, he compared the German army at Stalingrad with the three hundred Spartans at the Pass of Thermopylae.⁶⁵ The army

January 30, 1943

would show “the world the true spirit of National Socialist Germany and its loyalty to the Führer.”

It was not a very good idea to use Leonidas as an example. Contrary to a widespread belief in Germany, the sacrifice of Leonidas and his three hundred men at Thermopylae did not do any good. After they had been slaughtered, the Persians marched on as though nothing had happened. Had Leonidas and his men surrendered, the outcome would still have been the same. History teaches us that the outcome of such “battles to the last breath” is at best a heroic epic.

However, the “expert on history,” Hitler, was far from this realization. He told Göring all about Leonidas, because it was Göring, after all, who had to deliver the commemorative address in Berlin on January 30. Hitler was too great a coward by nature to show himself in public in view of the situation at Stalingrad. Göring had to step into the breach, just as in September 1939, when the inopportune declaration of war by England came in spite of Hitler’s prophecies. At the time, Hitler had preferred to “vanish” and go to the front rather than answer to the public.⁶⁶

On January 29, 1943, the Reich minister of the interior announced the following:⁶⁷

The usual flag ceremony on the day of the national uprising will not take place this year.

At 1:00 p.m. on January 30, Göring spoke in the Honors Hall of the Reich Ministry of Aviation on the tenth anniversary of the seizure of power. The speech was broadcast by all radio stations and was also heard in Stalingrad.⁶⁸ Göring said that “tired old men and sixteen-year-old boys” were fighting for the Soviet Union: “I am convinced that these are the last reserves which can be squeezed out, because this toughness is no longer any toughness but pure barbarity because a human life means nothing to the Bolsheviks.” Göring went on to analyze the struggle of “Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans” at the Pass of Thermopylae.

At that time, too, the invasion by the hordes was broken by the Nordic man. . . . And, one day, the history of our days will read: “If you come to Germany, tell [the Germans] that you saw us fighting at Stalingrad,⁶⁹ as the law for the security of our Volk commanded!”

At the end of his speech, Göring almost quoted verbatim what Hitler had already told so many officer candidates:⁷⁰

January 30, 1943

There is a certain logic in world history. Do you believe, my comrades, that destiny—I mean Providence, the Almighty—lets an unknown man rise up, a man without a name and without wealth, a simple fighter from the World War, then guides him through endless confusion, lets him become greater and greater, and, all of a sudden, all this should be senseless?

That Providence sent the German Volk a man of such greatness in the Führer—and our ancestors addressed such great leaders by the correct name, “you heaven-sent man”—and that he managed to fashion the strongest nation in the world out of the German Volk, which once was fragmented and impotent, then these are guarantees which give us the right to believe in victory. And now, I turn to all soldiers, from the field marshal to the recruit: the situation can never become so bad for us that we do not have the strength to overcome it!

Göring was not to be envied in his task in this speech. While he was simply repeating Hitler’s ideas, he had to give them the true ring of conviction and act as though what he said was his own sacred faith. It was easier for Goebbels that afternoon, since he simply had to read out a proclamation at the Sportpalast in Berlin at 4:00 p.m. No matter how mediocre this proclamation was, there was no question who had authored it: Hitler.

The document was boring, without vim and vigor. Hitler simply listed all supposed and actual successes of the past. He used phrases and claims which the public had heard countless times before: any weakling could handle victory, but only the strong could deal with reverses of fortune. He barely mentioned Stalingrad. Only one sentence alluded to the tragedy unfolding there: “The heroic struggle of our soldiers at the Volga should serve as a reminder to everyone that he must do his utmost in Germany’s struggle for freedom, for the future of our Volk, and, in a broader sense, for the preservation of our entire continent.”

Hitler’s Proclamation began with these words:⁷¹

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For the tenth time, the day returns on which Reich president, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, entrusted me with the responsibility of leading the Reich. The fourteen-year-old struggle for power by the National Socialist movement, which had developed from a very small beginning and has now become by far the strongest party in the Reich with the legal right to form the government, thereby found its successful conclusion.

A “party narrative”⁷² followed, in which Hitler discussed Wilson’s Fourteen Points, fourteen years of Marxism, fourteen million unemployed, and the National Socialist Party’s domestic achievements

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from 1933 to 1939. He spoke in great detail about his numerous "peace offers":

From the inner strength of our Volk that was gained through that [struggle] arose the first possibility of resolving tasks abroad. During these long years, I made practical offers to the world time and again on reasonable limits for armament and loyal cooperation. Future historians will one day reach the conclusion that never before were peaceful proposals by a man met with greater hatred than mine.

The capitalist and Bolshevik parties interested in the exploitation of people began to hate the new Germany in relation to the degree that it began to become an example for the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts, social and economic problems. International Jewry in particular heated up its campaign against the new Germany, which was not willing to bow to international stock-exchange interests, nor to be intimidated by Bolshevik threats. In spite of this animosity, we managed to make greater progress every year. We also obtained a peaceful revision of the Diktat of Versailles and a restoration of German vital rights. Only after the rejection of all my proposals for joint disarmament, did I order and carry out the creation of the new German Wehrmacht.

It is only today, on the tenth anniversary of the assumption of power, that we fully realize what might have become of Germany and Europe, had Providence not effected the transfer of power to National Socialism through the Reich president, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, on January 30, 1933.

After all, the Germany of the classes would not have remained as it was. Its political and economic decay would have led inevitably to an increasing impotence in contrast to the surrounding world. In the same period, Bolshevism had already been engaged for ten years in a planned armament of truly gigantic proportions in preparation for its attack on Europe. What would have become of the German Volk and Europe, had the German Wehrmacht not raised its shield before Europe at the last minute on June 22, 1941! Who believes that ridiculous guarantees or likewise irrelevant paper declarations by Anglo-American statesmen would have saved the world faced with an attack by a power which, as American correspondents plainly put it today, has for twenty years pursued the goal of attacking Europe, as in the times of the migration of the people and the Mongolian invasions, destroying its culture, and, above all, exterminating the European in order to win slaves for work in the Siberian tundra.

Aside from Germany, which state would have been capable of confronting this danger? If, since 1941, the greater part of Europe has rallied to Germany in the struggle against the threats from the east, then this was only possible because, in 1933, this Germany received the political, moral, and material prerequisites for waging this struggle, which today decides the fate of the world. Just as there used to be only two possibilities at home: either the victory of the National Socialist revolution and, therefore, the planned social rebuilding of the Reich, or the Bolshevik coup d'état and therefore the destruction and enslavement of all, there are only two alternatives today: either Germany, the

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German Wehrmacht, the allied countries, and, thereby, Europe will win, or a Central-Asian-Bolshevik wave from the east will sweep over the oldest civilized continent just as destructively as has already been the case in Russia. Only withdrawn dreamers can seriously believe the Jewish fibs that some sort of British or American paper declaration could have prevented such an international catastrophe.

When, in the year 1939, France and England declared war on Germany without any reason⁷³ and thus unleashed the Second World War, they unconsciously did good by unleashing this greatest conflict in history precisely at that moment when the Reich stood at the pinnacle of its power. As we know today, this war had long been decided on by the rulers in the Kremlin. With every new year, things would have become more difficult.

All other events pale in comparison with the greatness of this gigantic struggle. Should the new Central Asian rush on Europe succeed, then the present world would crack, just as the old one cracked when confronted by the Hun invasion. Mankind's work over thousands of years would again have been in vain. Chaos would take the place of the most thriving continent on earth. Its culture would be replaced by inconceivable barbarity.

What has been achieved since the year 1933 in the economic, cultural, and political realms pales, in spite of its greatness, in comparison with the task that we face today. Even if National Socialism had achieved no more than what lies behind it, it would already belong among the greatest phenomena in world history, but Europe would still be lost.

The wonderful development of our movement, from a few men in the beginning to the day of the seizure of power and from then until now, is conceivable and understandable only as the expression of the will of Providence. It wants to give the German Volk and, beyond this, all of Europe the opportunity to confront successfully this greatest danger of all time. It is therefore up to us to understand the meaning of this war, and to wage the fight which was forced on us with determination, until this continent can be regarded as saved for good.

The reverses of fortune which the individual might suffer are nothing compared with what all would have to suffer if the barbaric hordes of the east were allowed to sweep over our part of the earth. In earlier times, German knights set out for distant lands in order to fight for the ideals of their faith; today, our soldiers fight in the vastness of the east in order to save Europe from destruction. Every single human life that falls in this fight will give life to future generations.

For as long as I felt it was possible, I extended my hand to the rest of the world for peace, time and again. After the rejection of my last peace offer in July 1940, I realized that any repetition would be interpreted as weakness, since the responsible agitators in this war did not desire peace under any circumstances.

The conspiracy of international capitalism and Bolshevism is not an absurd phenomenon but a natural condition. The driving force in both cases is that race whose hatred has torn mankind to pieces time and again throughout the

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millennia, corrupted it inside, exploited it economically, and destroyed it politically. International Jewry is "the ferment of the decomposition of people and states" today as in antiquity. Things will remain this way, unless the people find the strength to rid themselves of this germ.

In this mightiest struggle of all time, we cannot expect that Providence give us victory as a present. Each and every people will be weighed, and what is judged too light will fall. On September 1, 1939, I declared that, come what may, neither time nor the force of arms will defeat the German nation.

The past ten years were therefore not only filled with tremendous accomplishments in peaceful work in all spheres, cultural progress, and social recovery, but also by military deeds of unique greatness. The victories that the German Wehrmacht and its allies have gained in this war are without equal in history. In view of the realization that there will not be victors and defeated in this war but only survivors and annihilated, the National Socialist state will continue the fight with the same zealotry that the movement has called its own from the moment when it began to take power in Germany. I have already said on January 30, 1942, that any weakling can bear victories, but it is fate that first tests the strong by its blows. Last winter, the Jewish leaders of the plutocracies already rejoiced about the collapse of the German Wehrmacht, which had become inevitable in their eyes. Things developed differently.

They may hope for the same again this winter. They will live to see that the force of the National Socialist idea is much stronger than their yearning. The longer the war lasts, the more this idea will unite this Volk, give it faith, and increase its achievements. This idea will inspire everybody to fulfill his duty. It will destroy whoever attempts to shirk his duties. It will wage this fight until a clear result is obtained, a new January 30, namely, the unambiguous victory.

When I look back today on the results of our work in peacetime during the past ten years, then I get a feeling of profound gratitude toward those who, as comrades in arms and colleagues, played so rich and decisive a part in this work. I must thank no less the millions of unknown German men and women who placed their diligence and abilities at our disposal in the factories, offices, farms, and in the countless institutions of our public and private life.

However, since September 1, 1939, we owe this gratitude primarily to our soldiers, marshals, admirals, generals, and officers, in particular to the hundreds of thousands and millions of unknown *Unterführers* and soldiers. The proud deeds of glory of our army, navy, and *Luftwaffe* will enter history crowned by the laurel wreath of immortality. Present and future are barely capable of estimating the sufferings of the unknown grenadier. From the north to the African desert, from the Atlantic Ocean to the expanses of the east, from the Aegean to Stalingrad resounds an epic song which will survive the millennia.

That the homeland remains worthy of these unique and particularly difficult deeds is a commandment of its honor. As up to now it made enormous contributions to the war effort in the city and in the countryside, so the total work of the nation must still be increased.

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The heroic struggle of our soldiers at the Volga should serve as a reminder to everyone that he must do his utmost in Germany's struggle for freedom, for the future of our Volk, and, in a broader sense, for the preservation of our entire continent.

It is the duty of the National Socialist Party to be the leader of the homeland, as its members in all branches of our Wehrmacht compete with one another in exemplary bravery. It was the will of our enemies to threaten peaceful cities and villages with means of terrible destruction. It is already proved today that while they can destroy houses and men, they cannot break the spirit, which is only made stronger by this. What many German men and women were not aware of at the beginning of this war, they have in the meantime realized: the struggle, which was forced on us by the same enemies as in the year 1914, will decide whether our Volk will live or be destroyed.

The Almighty will be a just judge. It is our task to fulfill our duty in such a manner that we prove ourselves to Him as the Creator of the world, in accordance with His law on the struggle for existence. Without ever despairing, we will spare neither life nor work in order to preserve the life of our Volk for the future. Then, the great hour in this struggle will come, in which our Volk will be freed of its enemies on the outside. A new life will begin to bloom on the sacrifices of the dead and the ruins of our cities and villages. We will then continue to fashion that state in which we believe, for which we fight and work: the Germanic state of the German nation as the eternal and identical homeland of all men and women of our Volk, the National Socialist Greater German Reich.

It will have for all time the strength that is necessary in order to protect the European family of nations in the future against the dangers of the east. Beyond this, the Greater German Reich and the allied nations will have to secure jointly those Lebensräume that are indispensable to securing the material existence of these people.

Adolf Hitler

While the Sixth Army at Stalingrad continued to fight its desperate and hopeless battle on January 30, Hitler busied himself with the following matters on this day:

1. He named SS Gruppenführer Kaltenbrunner to succeed Heydrich as chief of the security police and the SD.⁷⁴

2. He dismissed Raeder as commander in chief of the navy and promoted him to the newly created, though unimportant, post of "inspector admiral." The communiqué on this move read as follows:⁷⁵

Today the Führer received the commander in chief of the war navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, at his headquarters. In recognition and appreciation of his historic service in the building of the new war navy and its conduct in the Greater German fight for freedom, he named him inspector admiral of the war navy of the Greater German Reich. Upon request of the Grand Admiral, the

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Führer arrived at this decision in order to relieve him of the day-to-day administration of the war navy, while retaining him as his senior adviser in questions of naval policy.

At the same time, the Führer promoted the commander of the U-boat fleet, Admiral Dönitz, to the rank of grand admiral and appointed him commander in chief of the war navy.

After this change in command, it was clear that the future expansion of the navy was a thing of the past. Hitler's main interest in the future obviously lay with the U-boats.

3. Effective February 1, Hitler promoted Colonel Generals von Kleist, von Weichs, and Busch to the rank of field marshal.⁷⁶

4. He sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Bulgaria on his birthday.⁷⁷

5. He sent the following telegram to Ley:⁷⁸

I reciprocate in a heartfelt manner the greetings sent to me by telegraph from the representatives of the working German Volk who were assembled at a conference of the Reich Labor Chamber in Berlin. I sincerely thank them for the untiring work they have done in the factories up to now. Together with all soldiers of the Wehrmacht, I am firmly convinced that, also in the future, we can rely on the dedicated and dutiful efforts of all working German men and women in the homeland.

Adolf Hitler

6. He sent this telegram to Victor Emmanuel:

My heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty for the congratulations relayed to the German Volk and to myself on this day's commemoration. I join to my thanks my sincere best wishes for Your Majesty's welfare and for the future of the friendly and allied Italian people.

Adolf Hitler

7. And finally, he sent this telegram to Mussolini:

For the warmhearted congratulations, which you have relayed to me in your own name as well as the name of Fascist Italy, on today's tenth anniversary of the National Socialist seizure of power in Germany, my heartfelt thanks to you, Duce. On this day, it is with particular gratitude that I think of the friendly and firm solidarity that unites the Italian and German people in their shared ideologies and in the concentrated force of their arms. In zealous determination and the unshakable belief in our victory in this shared fateful struggle, I send you my comradely greetings.

Adolf Hitler

Assuming that the tenth anniversary of the seizure of power would be as grandly celebrated as the twentieth anniversary of the March on

January 31, 1943

Rome, a special delegation of the Fascist Party had come to Germany, headed by the vice-secretary of the National Council, Tardini. They were sent on to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, where Hitler received them in the presence of Ribbentrop and Bormann on January 31.⁷⁹

On the same day, the following was made public:⁸⁰

The Führer has promoted Colonel General Paulus, the commander of the glorious Sixth Army and heroic defender of Stalingrad, to the rank of field marshal.

At the same time, the Führer promoted artillery general Heitz, the commanding general of an army corps fighting in the fortress Stalingrad, to the rank of colonel general.⁸¹

In addition, a long list of officers, whom Hitler had also promoted, was published. A number of them were also fighting in Stalingrad.

These promotions were not intended simply as comfort for those faced with death or a recommendation for Valhalla. Hitler was appealing to the family-minded officers: was it not easier to die, if you knew that your dependents would receive a higher pension?! As Rommel's example showed,⁸² Hitler speculated correctly. However, as events soon proved, he was mistaken in the case of Stalingrad.

While Paulus accepted by wire his promotion to field marshal, he allowed himself to be taken prisoner by a Soviet second lieutenant a few hours later, along with numerous generals and staff officers, in the cellar of the "Univermag 2" department store at Stalingrad's Red Square. Infantry General Strecker, who commanded the group of German soldiers in the north of Stalingrad, had his men continue the fight for two more days before he surrendered on February 2. In addition to Paulus, a total of twenty-four German and two Romanian generals⁸³ and hundreds of staff officers were captured in Stalingrad.

Undoubtedly, Hitler had expected the German generals in Stalingrad to behave like Admiral Lütjens at the sinking of the *Bismarck*.⁸⁴ He thought that if Stalingrad was lost, they would prefer to go down with the ship, bare their chest to receive the last bullet from the attacking enemy, or commit suicide. In this respect, however, Hitler was confusing the navy's code of honor with that of the army. While the commanders of warships "must" go down with their ship, the same rule did not apply to the army. Not since the creation of the modern German army in the seventeenth century had there ever been regulations forbidding the commander of an encircled combat group or fortress to go into captivity.

January 31, 1943

Although the German generals in Stalingrad were willing to let their soldiers fight to their last breath if necessary, they themselves, almost without exception,⁸⁵ decided to go into captivity. This was in keeping with military tradition. After all, there exists a type of solidarity between generals of all nations.⁸⁶ The German generals were treated with remarkable courtesy by their victorious colleagues, especially considering the conditions in Russia. In any event, they received far better treatment than the common soldiers captured at Stalingrad.⁸⁷

A great-grandson of Bismarck, Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, who had been shot down over Stalingrad on August 30, 1942, as an inmate of Camp No. 27 at Krasnogorsk, located twenty-five kilometers southwest of Moscow, witnessed from his hospital bed the arrival of the Stalingrad generals in the prisoner-of-war camp. He noted the following:⁸⁸

An orderly comes into our room and tells us of the arrival of the Stalingrad generals and of three hundred of the Sixth Army's officers in our camp. I have too little strength left to be disconcerted by news that I would have thought impossible only four weeks ago. One of my roommates takes a knife and carves a hole through a layer of ice on the window several centimeters thick. Some of my comrades help me sit up a bit and I manage to throw a glance out of the window to the main trodden path in the camp. What I see there is both grotesque and unreal at the same time: The officers are moving into their quarters—monocles and medals glitter—fur coats and walking sticks—the generals' cuffs in startling red—felt-lined leather boots on their feet—energetic gesturing—sweeping movements—undaunted laughter. A few gray spots mar this picture of colorful elegance: the bent figures of old campmates. Clad in ragged Russian cotton jackets or torn German uniforms with rags bound around their feet instead of proper shoes, they shuffle along, their eyes fixed on the ground, their haggard faces void of any sign of life.

We hear that the generals and the three hundred officers from Stalingrad journeyed to Krasnogorsk in a special train, sleeping on beds with white linen sheets. Eyes wide with incredulity and astonishment, we old campmates hear about the condensed milk, the butter, the caviar on white bread served to them on the transport. This notwithstanding, a few of the new arrivals have already been infected with typhoid.

I can make out heaps of enormous pieces of baggage, some of them obviously custom-made for the special Mercedes models furnished to only the most high-ranking of the military commanders. The pitiful scarecrow figures of those dragging the luggage into the generals' quarters nearly collapse under this weight.

Of course, Hitler was outraged by the capture of the generals at Stalingrad. At first, he even questioned the correctness of the news and the authenticity of the published photographs.⁸⁹

February 3, 1943

At a noontime discussion of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on February 1, he was no longer able to control his anger:⁹⁰

They surrendered a perfectly formal ceremony! Instead, they should have formed a circle and shot themselves dead with their last bullet. When the nerves give out, there is nothing left anyway except "I couldn't take any more" and shoot oneself. One can also say: A real man must be able to shoot himself, just as, in the past, officers used to throw themselves upon a sword, seeing that the matter was lost. This is quite understandable. Even Varus ordered his slave, "Kill me now!"

In this war, no one will become a field marshal any more.⁹¹ This will happen only after the war is over. One mustn't praise the day before the evening has come.

I feel such great pain to think that the heroism of so many soldiers can be wiped out by a deed of one spineless weakling—and now the man is going to do it. He comes to Moscow, and now imagine: a rattrap!⁹² He signs everything there. He will make confessions and declarations. You will see that they will take the way of spinelessness and go to the end, to the lowest depth.

What is life? Life is people. Some of them die, but those who survive are the people. But how can one fear that second which may free him from the sorrows of life, if only he is not held back by his sense of duty in this trouble?

He [Paulus] will be speaking on the radio in the nearest future. You will see for yourselves. Seydlitz and Schmidt will speak on the radio. They will be locked up in the rat cellars and will break down in a day or two and will speak up at once.

In spite of this, Hitler apparently attempted to exert influence on Paulus even in captivity and to silence him.⁹³ While radio broadcasts in the rest of the world reported on the capture of the German generals at Stalingrad, Hitler decided to conceal this fact from the German public. He preferred the version of their heroic death, "shoulder to shoulder with the officers, noncommissioned officers, and men of the Sixth Army." These tactics met with little success, however. Like wildfire, news of the capture of Paulus and twenty-four other generals spread through Germany. Not even party heads or policemen dared to try and stop those spreading the news. Obviously, they also had been listening to foreign radio stations. Hitler's final communiqué of February 3 succeeded only in completely discrediting him. It reads as follows:⁹⁴

Führer Headquarters, February 3, 1943

The High Command of the Wehrmacht announces:

Fighting in Stalingrad has ended. True to its oath of allegiance to fight to the last breath, the Sixth Army under the exemplary command of Field Marshal Paulus has succumbed to the superiority of the enemy and unfavorable

February 3, 1943

circumstances. Its fate is shared by an anti-aircraft division of the German Luftwaffe, two Romanian divisions, and one Croatian regiment, which fulfilled their duty to the utmost in loyal brotherhood in arms with their comrades of the German army.

It is not yet the time to describe the course of the operations that have led to this development. One thing can already be said today, however: the sacrifice of the Sixth Army was not in vain. As the bulwark of the historic European mission, it defied for many weeks the assault by six Soviet armies.⁹⁵ Completely surrounded by the enemy, it tied down strong enemy forces for several more weeks of heavy fighting and great privations. Thereby, it gave the German leaders time and opportunity to take countermeasures on whose success the fate of the entire eastern front depended.

Faced with this task, the Sixth Army held out even after the Luftwaffe was no longer capable, in spite of its great efforts and heavy losses, of furnishing sufficient supplies by air due to the duration of the encirclement and the development of the operations. The possibility of relief at that point had become increasingly unlikely and finally completely disappeared.

Surrender demanded twice by the enemy met with proud rejection. Beneath the swastika flag, which flew on top of Stalingrad's tallest ruins and could be seen from afar, the final battle took place. Generals, officers, noncommissioned officers, and men fought shoulder to shoulder down to the last bullet. They died so that Germany might live. Their example will do good far into the future, despite all untruthful Soviet propaganda. The divisions of the Sixth Army are already in the process of being formed anew.

Hitler's behavior in the case of Stalingrad had been unwise from the beginning. At first, he had boasted that the German troops would "rush on Stalingrad and will take the city." Only six weeks later, he had said that he did not want a second Verdun and would only deploy "very small assault parties."⁹⁶ After that, he had kept silent for months about the encirclement of the Sixth Army by the Russians. This had been followed by his ill-fated attempt to make a heroic epic out of the battle for Stalingrad.

While Stalingrad was no doubt a milestone in Hitler's decline, it was neither the first nor the decisive one. Ever since September 3, 1939, to be precise, Hitler had suffered one great diplomatic and military defeat after another.⁹⁷ What was new about the Stalingrad debacle was that Hitler no longer attempted to transform a defeat into a victory, as he had done on earlier occasions.

February 6, 1943

2

On February 3, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to the Finnish state president Ryti on his birthday⁹⁸ and to the Italian heir to the throne and his wife on the birth of their daughter Beatrice.⁹⁹

On February 5, a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday followed.¹⁰⁰

On February 6, Field Marshal von Manstein was expected at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He had told his entourage that he intended, in view of the Stalingrad disaster, to suggest to Hitler that he lay down the high command of the army. Hitler was well informed about von Manstein's intention.¹⁰¹ However, this did not unduly upset him. In contrast to his fear of Obergruppenführers and the Reichstag, he did not fear marshals and generals. Instead, they were afraid of him. And they would heel if he remembered to grant them awards or bonuses from time to time. Not only were marshals extraordinarily well paid, they also received huge donatives on their birthdays,¹⁰² and so on. In addition, they were the recipients of a monthly bonus, payment of which could be suspended if they failed to perform satisfactorily. Later, when the marshals were back in line, they would again receive these financial rewards.

Hitler calmly expected von Manstein's visit. He knew how to handle marshals. He had dealt with von Hindenburg, Mackensen, Pilsudski, and Pétain, and so he did not think von Manstein was a challenge.

When the field marshal arrived at the Führer headquarters on February 6, Hitler received him with great politeness.¹⁰³ He immediately dominated the conversation and took the wind out of his visitor's sails by "generously" assuming responsibility for the disaster at the Volga.

February 7, 1943

I alone bear the responsibility for Stalingrad! I could perhaps say that Göring gave me an incorrect picture of the possibilities for the Luftwaffe's providing aerial supplies and, thus, roll off at least part of the responsibility onto him. But he is my successor, whom I have appointed myself, and that is why I cannot burden him with the responsibility for Stalingrad.

It was truly touching how Hitler tried to protect Göring. In view of such "soldierly decency," as he called it, von Manstein capitulated and no longer dared to mention his suggestion regarding the army command!

Hitler wished to "bear the responsibility" for Stalingrad? Who was going to hold him responsible: history or the German Volk? Since 1932, Hitler had constantly operated with such phrases as "bearing the responsibility."¹⁰⁴ In 1943, however, he had eliminated the only institution which could actually hold him responsible: the German Reichstag. He had seen to it that its deputies would never meet again.

Since von Manstein no longer felt like questioning Hitler's command of the army, he wanted at least to advise Hitler to appoint a new chief of staff with greater powers than before. Now that the Führer had gained an upper hand, von Manstein's proposal was ill-received. Hitler immediately began a lengthy tirade, talking about the "great disappointments" that he had suffered with Blomberg and Brauchitsch. Again Göring—as well as Blomberg—had to serve as explanations for Hitler's refusal to vest more authority in any general. Hitler declared that it would break his heart to appoint a chief of staff to a position where he would practically outrank Göring (!).

Von Manstein was relieved when Hitler finally dropped the topic of chief of staff in order to address the military situation of Army Group South. Nothing changed as a result of this conversation between Hitler and von Manstein, neither as regards the army command nor the general staff.

However, this meeting served as a good preparation for Hitler's talk before Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on February 7. He did not need to fear these party leaders who were permanently appointed as civil servants any more than the generals. Most of them had good incomes as Reich governors, Oberpräsidenten, ministers, or other state functionaries. The type of revolutionary, questioning spirit, which Hitler feared so much among the Obergruppenführers, was no longer to be found among the comfortably settled Reichsleiters and Gauleiters. No matter how ill-at-ease they were

February 15, 1943

about Germany's deteriorating situation, they were not about to revolt against their employer, Adolf Hitler.

Following a two-day working conference,¹⁰⁵ the heads of the party came to the Führer headquarters in East Prussia, where they lined up to shake the Führer's hand. The following communiqué was published concerning Hitler's address:¹⁰⁶

Upon the Führer's invitation, the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters came to see the Führer, following their conference, at his headquarters, on February 7.

In the course of the get-together, the Führer spoke about the military and political situation before the assembled heads of the party. In his address, which was characterized by great determination and absolute confidence in victory, the Führer expressed his conviction that the difficulty of the times, and the spirit of the Volk which developed from it, would lend the German nation tremendous strength and make it invincible.

The visit to the Führer headquarters by the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters ended with the party heads' glowing declaration for the greatness of the task set the German nation in this most difficult struggle.

News of the formation of a new cabinet in Italy reached Germany. Ciano's removal from the foreign ministry and appointment as ambassador to the Holy See were its most salient features. At the Führer headquarters, these developments were assessed mainly in the context of foreign policy. However, they were actually signs of a serious internal crisis.¹⁰⁷

On February 8, Colonel General Kurt Haase, commander of an army, died in Berlin. Hitler ordered a state funeral,¹⁰⁸ which was preceded by a state ceremony at the Zeughaus in Berlin.

Furthermore, Hitler awarded the Goethe Medal to Kammersänger Heinrich Schlusnus on the baritone's twenty-fifth anniversary with the State Opera in Berlin.¹⁰⁹

The Finnish state president Ryti was reelected on February 15.¹¹⁰ Hitler sent him a congratulatory telegram.

The situation along the eastern front was becoming increasingly dangerous. This was especially true of the southern sector. The OKW report of February 15 admitted the "planned evacuation" of Rostov and Lugansk. After initial reservations, Hitler had finally agreed to the retreat from the Caucasus in the direction of the "Kuban bridgehead." For the time being, this prevented a new encirclement of German troops. In the meantime, the Russians had moved into the Donets area and had taken Kharkov.

February 19, 1943

Hitler now tried to convince himself and his entourage that possession of the Donets region was decisive and its reconquest a prerequisite for the final victory. After all, the Soviet Union could not exist without the industries there and would collapse. In Hitler's eyes, it was therefore imperative to goad Army Group South and Fourth Air Fleet to new great deeds. For this purpose, he pulled out all stops, summoning his powers of persuasion and control.

A prelude to this undertaking was the appointment of Colonel General Freiherr von Richthofen, the chief of the Fourth Air Fleet, to the rank of field marshal on February 16. While Hitler had said that he would not appoint any more field marshals in this war,¹¹¹ he apparently did not feel bound by this promise.

The next step was his three-day stay at the Army Group South's headquarters.¹¹² At 2:00 a.m. on February 17, he left the Rastenburg airport aboard his four-engine Condor plane. A few hours later, he landed at an airport east of Zaporozhye. Jodl and Zeitzler among others accompanied him. At the airport, Hitler was welcomed by von Manstein and the newly appointed field marshal, von Richthofen. Hitler and his entourage set up quarters in von Manstein's office building.

In the course of discussions of the situation during the next three days, Hitler insisted on the reconquest of the entire Donets region and the city of Kharkov. He wanted to deploy SS divisions under Sepp Dietrich in this undertaking. Finally, however, he had to admit that it was crucial to take and secure the Dnieper crossing in the south and Pavlograd first. On February 19, Field Marshal von Kleist and Colonel General Ruoff also attended these talks.

Hitler's undertaking culminated in a proclamation to the soldiers of Army Group South and the Fourth Air Fleet, which was issued at 11:20 a.m. on February 19 and read as follows:¹¹³

Soldiers of Army Group South and the Fourth Air Fleet!

The outcome of a battle of decisive importance to the world depends on you! Thousands of kilometers away from the borders of the Reich, the fate of the German present and future is being decided. You must bear the main burden of this struggle.

At the beginning of the winter, wide gaps developed in the front. You are aware of what allowed this to happen.¹¹⁴ Only because of that, the enemy whom you defeated in so many battles was able to oppose you temporarily with superior forces.

In spite of this, my soldiers, together with the comrades from Army Group A and Center, led by your self-sacrificing commanders and inspired by your

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courage, you have accomplished things that are unheard of, faced with these Bolshevik masses and the inclemency of the winter. The German Volk follows your battles. All its thoughts are with you because it knows that you are its only protection. I know how difficult your struggle is, how great your sacrifices are. I feel with you and, through my work, I try to express my gratitude for your heroism.

The entire German homeland is being mobilized. Down to the last man and the last woman, everything is being placed in the service of your struggle. At the anti-aircraft weapon, our youth is defending our German cities and places of work. Ever new divisions are starting to move. Previously unknown, unique new weapons are on the way to your fronts.

I know that what I demand of you is very difficult. However you must doggedly defend every square meter of soil in order to give me time to deploy the units and new weapons. Even if the Russian is still advancing today, the time will come, like last winter [*sic*], when his advance will inevitably be slowed down by the dirt and mud, and he will be far away from his lines of communication.

That's why I have flown to you, so that all means are brought to bear in order to facilitate your defensive combat and to transform it into a victory in the end.

If every single one of you helps me to do so, then we will succeed this time also, as before, with the help of the Almighty.

Therefore I have confidence in your bravery, your persistence in the face of the enemy, and your sense of responsibility for the fate of our dear homeland and our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

For the first time since Stalingrad, Hitler was addressing the soldiers of a large section of the front in this proclamation. For the first time, he used different tactics here. By referring to "previously unknown, unique new weapons," he wished to increase the staying power of the troops in spite of a hopeless situation. He thought that this morale-boosting slogan would make them believe in a miracle: a last-minute intervention and a German victory.

Hitler left Zaporozhye after he had ordered Army Group South to launch new attacks. It was high time for his departure since the Russians had secured a breakthrough at the Zilzinikovo station. Their tanks were closing in on the airport so that they could almost have fired on him.

While Hitler was in Zaporozhye, Goebbels delivered his speech on "total war" at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 18. He acted as though total war was only now beginning, whereas in reality the war had all along been fought as a total war.¹¹⁵ In this speech, Goebbels copied Hitler's often-rehearsed Punch-and-Judy-show questioning of the

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audience. He asked it a number of questions, to which they had to reply by shouting “Yes! (*Ja*)”¹¹⁶

On February 21, following his return to the Werwolf headquarters in Vinnitsa, Hitler named Colonel General Guderian inspector general of the panzer forces. Guderian was apparently again in Hitler’s good graces and was made directly subordinate to him.¹¹⁷ His appointment was to underline Germany’s determination in the fight.

Had Hitler wished to, he would have been able to attend the commemoration of the party’s foundation in Munich on February 24. He could have flown there without any problem. However, as in the previous year, he was too great a coward to allow himself to be seen there in person, only three weeks after the Stalingrad tragedy. Instead of going to Munich, he wrote a rather poor proclamation. His slogan was: Just as in the days of struggle at home, the present crisis would in the end be transformed into victories for him. The proclamation read as follows:¹¹⁸

Party Comrades!

Party comrade Adolf Wagner, who conveyed my greetings to you in the past year, has been seriously ill for many months and is unable to attend the present rally. I have therefore asked party comrade Esser, who as one of my first comrades in arms attended the foundation assembly of the movement, to tell you in my name what I, because of the circumstances, am unable to tell you for the second time now.

The German Wehrmacht, which fought excellently this winter, as it has done since the beginning of this war, is involved in a bitter struggle against the danger to the world instigated by the banking houses of New York and London together with the Bolshevik Jews in Moscow.

I myself am in the east and therefore unable to join you on this day. Nevertheless, my thoughts are with you, more so this year than ever before. After all, what fate would have awaited our Volk and all of Europe, had not those theories of the National Socialist revolution been proclaimed in this hall on February 24, 1920, theories which took hold of the German Volk and gave it the necessary force not only to restrain the Jewish danger to the world today, but also to crush it in the end!

The *Sturmlied* of our unforgettable, dear old Dietrich Eckart is again proving to be a trumpet-call in these months. It can wake up people, open their eyes to the fate that would await all of us in the present and our children in the future—and beyond this, all European people—if we do not succeed in bringing about the failure of the devilish plan of the Jewish international criminals.

You are all aware of the circumstances,¹¹⁹ which allowed the enemy in the east, similar to the forces of nature last winter, to reverse in the course of this winter a part of those successes secured by the heroism of our soldiers in the

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summer. However, you also know that the path along which our party has traveled has likewise not been a secure or comfortable way to success. Instead, we suffered countless difficulties and setbacks, which the same enemies dealt to us and against whom we must fight today—against the whole world.

As I proclaimed the party program in this hall in the year 1920 and my resolution to destroy with zealously the enemies of our Volk, I was a lonely and unknown man. Germany had suffered its most profound humiliation. The number of those who believed in its restoration was negligible, and there were even fewer who still hoped for this to happen in our generation.

The few followers who joined me at the time were opposed by the almost crushing superiority of the enemy. For every hundred National Socialists, there were millions of opponents, partly blinded, partly seething with hatred. And that is not to count those men of little faith who always wait first for the success in order to march then on the victorious side with a brave heart.

What a difference compared with the struggle of today! No matter how great the coalition of our enemies is, as a power it is less than the strength of the alliance of those people who oppose the Bolshevik-plutocratic destruction. The struggle of the National Socialist movement was often in a position in which only the most fanatical of its faithful could still believe in a victory, while its otherwise shrewd opponents were already firmly convinced that they had killed the idea and the party. Nevertheless, our movement was born again each time; it overcame every setback and emerged stronger than before from every crisis. The party was always upheld by the unbending decision not to capitulate under any circumstances and not to give up the fight in any case, until the conspiracy of our enemies at home was crushed and eliminated.

My party comrades! I taught you this fanaticism. Please rest assured that I am today inspired by the same fanaticism, which will never leave me as long as I live. You also received this faith from me, and rest assured that this faith is stronger in me today than ever before. We will break and crush the power of the Jewish international coalition. Mankind in its struggle for its freedom, life, and daily bread, will gain the final victory in this struggle.

Just as in the time of our struggle for power, every attack by our enemies and every one of their apparent successes made me more dogged in my determination not to stray from the path that sooner or later had to lead to the victory, so too I am today suffused by the same will to persevere to the bitter end in the task which destiny has given me.

I have a right to believe that Providence has chosen me to fulfill this task. For without its blessings, I, as an unknown man, would never have been able to set out on the path leading from this hall across so many hurdles and through so many attacks to the takeover of power and, finally, to this struggle which has been crowned by victories the like of which have never been seen in world history, but who has also been weighed down by many worries which would have broken many weaker characters.

However, I was blessed by Providence in having a sworn community around me in such hours, a community which in devoted faithfulness always

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regarded the common fate as its own and which always stood loyally by me, as its Führer in this struggle, and will always stand by me.

As I address this message to you, I do so out of the same profound gratitude as in the past year. In you, my dear party comrades, I have found not only the first representatives of the National Socialist ideology but also of the National Socialist attitude, an attitude which has proved its worth in such an unheard-of manner in particular in times of great trial. The bourgeois opportunists failed to understand this as did the masses of our old parties, indoctrinated by Jewry. Why should this be different today?

There is only one difference: today, the gigantic throng of the German Volk stands behind the new Reich. The Volk is unconditionally determined to accept the new Reich idea, which is inspired by the National Socialist world of thought. The party has become the unshakable incarnation of this power. Today it is the internal guarantor not only of victory, but also of the preservation of our Volk in the future. It must fulfill its second great historic task—especially during these months and perhaps in the coming years, too—which is to shake up the German nation constantly, make it aware of the magnitude of the danger, reinforce the sacred faith that will overcome, give strength to weaklings and mercilessly destroy saboteurs. It will work to enlighten in those cases where enlightenment is desired, break terror with ten-times-greater terror, exterminate traitors no matter who they might be and what disguise they are using to realize their intentions against the people (*volksfeindliche Absichten*).

Even if the elite of the National Socialist movement's men confronts the enemy today and fulfills its duty as soldiers in an exemplary fashion, the old fighters remain the strongest zealots in the assertion of the German will to life. Year after year, they are joined by a new age group from Germany's youth, totally educated in accordance with National Socialist principles, forged together by the ideas of our Volksgemeinschaft, and willing to move against anyone who should dare to sin against our fight for freedom. And just as in the time of the party's struggle for power, our female party comrades, our German women and girls, were the most reliable supports of the movement, so now again the multitude of our women and girls form the strongest element in the struggle for the preservation of our Volk.

After all, thank God, not only the Jews in London and New York but also those in Moscow made clear what fate might be in store for the German Volk. We are determined to be no less clear in our answer. This fight will not end with the planned annihilation of the Aryan but with the extermination of the Jew in Europe. Beyond this, thanks to this fight, our movement's world of thought will become the common heritage of all people, even of our enemies. State after state will be forced, in the course of its fight against us, to apply National Socialist theories in waging this war that was provoked by them. And in so doing, it will become aware of the curse that the criminal work of Jewry has laid over all people, especially through this war.

As our enemies thought in 1923 that the National Socialist Party was defeated for good and that I was finished with in the eyes of the German Volk

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because of my trial, so they actually helped National Socialist ideology to spread like wildfire through the entire German Volk and convey the essence of Jewry to so many million men, as we ourselves would never have been able to do under normal circumstances. In the same manner international Jewry, which instigated this new war, will find out that nation after nation engrosses itself more and more in this question to become finally aware of the great danger presented by this international problem.

Above all, this war proves the irrefutable identity of plutocracy and Bolshevism, and the common ambition of all Jews to exploit nations and make them the slaves of their international guild of criminals.

The same alliance we once faced as our common enemies in Germany, an alliance between the stock exchange in Frankfurt and the "Red Flag" in Berlin, now again exists between the Jewish banking houses in New York, the Jewish-plutocratic class of leaders in London, and the Jews in the Kremlin in Moscow.

Just as the German Volk successfully fought the Jewish enemy at home as a consequence of this realization and is now about to finish it off for good, the other nations will increasingly find themselves again in the course of this war. Together, they will make a stand against that race that is seeking to destroy all of them.

Just as the Jews rejoiced about each supposed setback that we suffered during our struggle within the Reich, and just as they confused their feverish hopes with the hard facts, so they believe today, just as they did last winter, that they will shortly reach their thousand-year-old goal. However, just as they did last year, they will also suffer a terrible disappointment this time. On the contrary, the German Volk will now all the more summon and deploy its forces to a degree never before seen for a war in the history of mankind.

We will not hesitate one second to ask for contributions in this fateful struggle from those countries responsible for the outbreak of this war.¹²⁰ We regard it as a matter of course that foreign lives cannot be spared at a time that demands so many difficult sacrifices of our own lives. In indissoluble, loyal association with our allies, we will carry out a mobilization of the spiritual and material values of Europe, the like of which our continent has never seen before in its millennia-old history. This is necessary in order to secure an independent ethnic life for all of Europe, a life which has been the basis not only for our great shared culture but also for the material existence of this continent.

My old party comrades, I greet you as always with an overflowing heart. I thank you for having made it possible for me at the time to start out successfully on the path that was a prerequisite for the salvation of the German Reich and for all of Europe. My thoughts are with you at this hour, just as they always are. During these months, weeks, and days, my duty forces me constantly to think and work, and prepare the coming turn of events for those who as the fighters of our Volk, together with our allies, are fashioning the fate of the world: our brothers and comrades, the German soldiers especially at the front in the east, where the future of Germany and Europe will be decided. The outcome must and will be our victory!

March 1, 1943

On February 24, Hitler issued Order No. 7.¹²¹ According to this order, military superiors were entitled to shoot “disobedient personnel on the spot.” He decreed as follows:

The harsher the times, the harsher the means by which a superior forces his will through. I therefore demand that every superior—officer, noncommissioned officer, and, in extraordinary situations, any brave man—force the carrying out of his orders and the maintenance of discipline and order, if need be by force of arms, and shoot disobedient personnel on the spot. That is not only his right but also his duty. Should the superior fail to do this, he risks placing himself in the same situation. It is wrong to await a later punishment by order of the court. Action must be immediate. I will at all times protect such energetic leaders against possible legal consequences¹²² of their actions and demand the same of all higher-ranking superiors. Therefore, I will mercilessly take action against all superiors who fail to protect their authority by all means and with the full force of their person. They will receive the same punishment as the guilty parties against whom they failed to take action. I want this to be made public as my strict order time and again, especially in difficult situations.

Adolf Hitler

On February 25, Hitler instructed von Ribbentrop to present a personal message to the Duce. While it was extraordinarily lengthy, the message contained no mention of Stalingrad.¹²³ Instead, it stressed supposed successes by the German U-boats and expressed his determination to continue the war in the east until the enemy was destroyed, because of “the will of Providence.”¹²⁴

I regard it as a blessing from Providence that I was chosen to lead my Volk in such a war.

On March 1, Hitler congratulated the emperor of Manchukuo in a telegram on the anniversary of his ascent to the throne¹²⁵

The next day, Hitler exchanged telegrams with King Boris. His telegram read as follows:¹²⁶

My sincere thanks to Your Majesty for the congratulations transmitted to me by wire on the anniversary of Bulgaria’s accession to the Tripartite Pact. Inspired by firm confidence in our final victory and a just new world order, I reciprocate your greetings and send you my heartfelt best wishes for the prosperity of the Bulgarian nation, which has been tied to us in friendship for many years, and for your personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

In early March, Hitler came to the decision that his domestic opponents, even if they originated from within the Wehrmacht, should

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be disgracefully hanged. The ordinance of March 4 evidenced this decision:¹²⁷

I authorize the plenipotentiary empowered to confirm death sentences by court-martial to decide whether punishment shall be dealt out in the form of shooting, beheading, or hanging.

Adolf Hitler

On March 4, Goebbels announced at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Ufa film company in Berlin that Hitler had awarded the Eagle Shield of the German Reich to the company's founder, Hugenberg.¹²⁸

The surviving records of the discussions of the situation, which took place at the Werwolf headquarters¹²⁹ on March 4 and 5, do not contain anything remarkable, aside from Hitler's continual scolding of Rommel and Kesselring. He was angry with them because things continued to get worse at Tunis. Rommel in particular became a target. Hitler claimed that Rommel's recent, highly unfavorable assessment of the situation was "completely different from the one he had given earlier." Apparently, this tirade was intended to prepare the grounds for Rommel's dismissal.

On March 7, Hitler received Speer at the Werwolf headquarters.¹³⁰ He discussed the so-called "800,000-man program" with him.¹³¹ He made several derogatory remarks about the commander of the replacement army, General Fromm. He claimed that he was incapable of "generously" implementing the plan. He complained about the "lack of prominent heads in the Wehrmacht" in general.

On March 8, Goebbels arrived at headquarters. Hitler received him together with Speer at 2:00 p.m.¹³² Goebbels was naturally delighted to see the Führer again. He appeared to him "in excellent health," although "somewhat tired, but otherwise quite active."¹³³

Goebbels reported on the latest air raid in Berlin in great detail. This caused Hitler to attack Göring, which in turn brought him back to the topic of the generals. He launched a tirade, which Goebbels summarized as follows:

The Führer has nothing good to say about the generals. They deceived him whenever they could. Besides, they were uneducated and did not know anything about the trade of war, which was the least you could expect. You could not blame the generals for not possessing any type of higher culture, since they were not trained for this. However, that they were so ill-informed about purely material questions in the war did not speak in their favor. Their training had been wrong for generations.

March 8, 1943

In order to please Hitler, Goebbels contributed a few “examples from his own experiences” to this tirade. Afterwards, they discussed the eight-hundred-thousand-man program. Hitler then commented on the situation as follows:

The debacle of this winter must indeed be attributed to the complete failure of our allies. We have the front back in order now. The Führer does not want to see the allies on the eastern front any longer. It is clear to him that only our own soldiers can deal with Bolshevism.

Afterward, Hitler engaged Goebbels in a four-hour-long private conversation. At first, Goebbels tried coherently to present his “views on the air war in general.” This was not a good topic for Hitler. He promptly cut Goebbels short.

The Führer barely let me finish. He immediately declared that this was the care which haunted him even at night.

Actually, Hitler was no more preoccupied by the Allies’ air war against major German cities than by other emergencies. The only concern which caused him sleepless nights was how to remain in power at home for the longest time possible and how to keep his foreign enemies as far away as possible from his headquarters!

Hitler went on to attack the Luftwaffe generals, especially Göring, but also Bodenschatz and Sperrle.¹³⁴ He then turned to the topic of the Italians:

The Führer is very angry about the Italians because they have not really accomplished anything. They are not cut out for the eastern front, they are not cut out for North Africa, they are not cut out for U-boat warfare, they are not even cut out for their anti-aircraft guns at home. The Führer asks, and rightly so, why they are waging war in the first place.

That was a question which the Italians were asking themselves by now. After all, they were doing so only because of Hitler’s alliance theory of 1919 and his “friend” Mussolini!

Hitler’s next targets were Sauckel and Governor General Frank. Only Goebbels himself as the only one present received compliments.

My measures regarding the total war receive the Führer’s full approval. In this respect, he talks about my last speech at the Sportpalast¹³⁵ in a manner most flattering to me. He calls it a psychological and propagandist masterpiece. He had carefully studied it from beginning to end and he had read the foreign commentaries on it. He had arrived at the conclusion that we had landed a major blow here. He was enthusiastic about its effectiveness.

March 8, 1943

The Führer fully approves of my anti-Bolshevik propaganda. This is our number-one act. He also approves of my tactics in letting Bolshevik victory reports be published abroad unchallenged. Let Europe get the creeps.

After Hitler had joked about Raeder's "sanctimonious Christianity," he began to complain about his state of health. Of course, this only meant that he intended to go on another vacation and was seeking to justify himself in front of Goebbels.

At the moment, he [the Führer] was truly worried only about his health. He does not know whether he will survive this war physically intact.

Understandably, under the circumstances, Hitler had to go rest for an hour. At dinner, he was obviously refreshed. He praised Sepp Dietrich, whom he called "one of our first-class troop leaders," and of whom he still expected "many wonderful things." In the event of a revolt, he would send him to the Reich's capital and set a warning example there. He tried to tone down this unexpected expression by saying that he feared a revolt by foreign workers in the city.

Should some of the foreign workers attempt to revolt in Berlin, then the Führer wants to send the Leibstandarte to the Reich's capital. It will set a warning example there so that whoever loves such excuses won't feel like it [revolting] anymore. The Führer then went on about the army generals, for whom he feels only contempt. He also agrees with the view: just imagine these gentlemen in civilian clothes and you lose all respect for them. Keitel wrings only a smile from the Führer.

These tirades were beginning to embarrass even Goebbels. He noted in his diary: "The experiences which the Führer had with the army generals have embittered him utterly. Sometimes he even becomes unfair now and condemns decent officers wholesale."

Late at night, news of a terrible air raid on Nuremberg reached the Führer headquarters.¹³⁶ Hitler made a big scene in front of Goebbels and Speer. He had General Bodenschatz dragged out of bed in order to reproach him for the failure of the Luftwaffe and the leaders of the air war. Goebbels noted the following:

This midnight talk ended in quite a row. Speer and I have a hard time trying to keep things down. Our new friendship with Göring is put to the test for the first time. In spite of everything, I felt that I had to defend him, since his authority must be maintained at any event. Bodenschatz is very grateful to me for this.

March 10, 1943

Once Hitler had calmed down following the theatrics, he engaged Goebbels in an “intimate discussion” until three o’clock the next morning. Goebbels noted the following on the March 9 early morning talk:

As I say goodbye to him, he is very touched. I have gained tremendous strength again and now I know again what I have to do.

On March 10, Hitler flew to see von Manstein at Zaporozhye.¹³⁷ The position of Army Group South had vastly improved in comparison with his first visit from February 17 to 19. Pavlograd had been taken, and the SS troops had rapidly advanced in the direction of Kharkov.

In the course of the talks, Hitler declared the following:

...giving up the Donets region to the enemy even temporarily is completely out of the question. If we lose this area, we will not be able to sustain our own war production. For the enemy, the loss of the Donets region would mean a twenty-five percent decrease in the production of steel. Beyond this, the significance of the manganese ore finds at Nikopol for us defied words. The loss of Nikopol [a city on the Dnieper River southeast of Zaporozhye] would mean the end of the war.¹³⁸ Furthermore, neither Nikopol nor the Donets region could do without the power plant at Zaporozhye.

When Goebbels heard about Hitler’s visit to Zaporozhye, he was not happy about it.¹³⁹

In the evening, I hear from the Führer headquarters that the Führer again traveled to the front. He is again visiting von Manstein in order to convey his appreciation for the conduct of the operation in the south up to now. I do not like this at all. The Führer does not seem to know how mean von Manstein was to him.¹⁴⁰ If he does know it, then he is again behaving too good-naturedly toward the military.

On the next day, Goebbels was told a different story by Hitler:¹⁴¹

The Führer made a visit to the southern front and was very favorably impressed. In comparison with his last visit, the mood there could be called truly fantastic with both the officers and the common soldiers.

When Hitler returned from Zaporozhye to his Werwolf headquarters on March 10, he met with Rommel, whom he had ordered back from Tunis, in the evening.¹⁴² Rommel was not ill in the least. On the contrary, he had come in the hope that he would be allowed to remain the commander in chief of the Army Group in North Africa. Should he be unable to hold the position at Tunis, he planned to retreat

March 12, 1943

with his troops to Sicily and Italy, whence he would lead the defense of the southern areas.

However, Hitler was keen on eliminating Rommel without eliciting public notice. Rommel's popularity had been a thorn in his side from the beginning.¹⁴³ He had had enough of Rommel, who had completely disregarded his telegram of November 4, 1942, in which he had demanded of him to lead his troops either to victory or to death. Hitler realized that North Africa and Tunis would ultimately be lost but he did not want another German field marshal captured by the enemy. No matter how hard Rommel tried to retain command over his Army Group, his arguments did not get him anywhere. Rommel himself described his conversation with Hitler as follows:

There was nothing to be done. I was supposed to go to a health resort. In the course of later operations in the direction of Casablanca, I would take command again.

Hitler's reference to a future conquest of Casablanca was truly ridiculous. He could just as well have promised Rommel the command in the taking of Washington.

On March 11, Hitler awarded Rommel the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds in order to assuage the pain of his dismissal. The public, however, was not informed of this.¹⁴⁴

On the same day, Göring arrived at the Werwolf headquarters. He had spent a few days in Rome, conferring with Mussolini and the high command. As usual, Göring did not dare give Hitler bad news and so he described the situation as far better than Rommel had. Hitler and Göring agreed that "Tunis could be held in any event."¹⁴⁵

On March 12, Hitler issued a decree on the postponement of Heroes' Memorial Day. Since the celebration had been scheduled for March 14, he did so rather late. He did not even feel that it was necessary to explain the postponement. Thus, this decree was possibly the shortest "of all time".¹⁴⁶

Führer Headquarters, March 12, 1943

Heroes' Memorial Day shall be celebrated this year on March 21.

Adolf Hitler

March 16, 1943

The reason for this delay was Hitler's intention to await the reconquest of Kharkov so that he could then speak "with a clear conscience" at the festivities in Berlin.¹⁴⁷

On March 13, Hitler flew from Vinnitsa to Rastenburg. On the way, he stopped over in Smolensk. There he visited the headquarters of Army Group Center and discussed the situation with Field Marshal von Kluge.¹⁴⁸ Afterwards, he joined the officers for lunch in the officers' mess before returning to his plane by car.

Colonel von Tresckow¹⁴⁹ took advantage of the occasion to place a British-made bomb in Hitler's plane. The fuse failed, however, and the Condor plane landed without any problems at Rastenburg.

This incident proved that the life of innocent people counted little in the Third Reich. This is not the place to discuss whether tyrannicide is morally justifiable or not. Theologians and philosophers may decide this. It is only a question of the following facts here:

Hitler felt himself perfectly justified in sacrificing millions of innocent persons for the sake of his ideas. At least in one respect tyrant and assassins agreed—they all wished to stay alive until five minutes after twelve. Not one of the assassins risked or sacrificed his own life in the concrete attempt on Hitler's life. Instead, those who sought to eliminate him did not hesitate to blow up innocent men. After all, the crew of the plane could certainly not be held responsible for Hitler's crimes. However, the resistance fighters obviously felt that, for the sake of the noble goal of eliminating Hitler, the crew's lives could well be sacrificed, since thousands of men were dying each day at the front. This was how far the confusion of terms on both sides had already been carried in the Third Reich by this time.

On March 14, SS troops under the command of Sepp Dietrich took Kharkov. In a very good mood, Hitler telephoned Goebbels from the Wolfsschanze headquarters.¹⁵⁰

On the same day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on the Slovak national holiday and awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in Gold.¹⁵¹

On March 16, the population in areas endangered by imminent air raids was informed about the following award that Hitler dedicated to it:¹⁵²

In appreciation of the brave behavior of the entire population during air raids in the homeland war zones, the Führer has ordered that the badge awarded to wounded soldiers for injuries and damage caused by enemy air raids

March 21, 1943

can also be awarded to all German men, women, and children, in accordance with the same principles applying to soldiers deployed in the actual war zone.

On March 17, the public was informed that Hitler had awarded Professor Wilhelm Kreis, whom he called “one of the greatest master builders of the present,” the Eagle Shield of the German Reich on his seventy-fifth birthday in appreciation of his contributions to the new design of the Reich’s capital and the war cemeteries, the “heroes’ memorials of this war.”¹⁵³

On the evening of March 20, Hitler arrived in Berlin and immediately conferred with Goebbels.¹⁵⁴ He acted as though he “was mostly preoccupied right now by the air war.” He immediately began to rail against the Luftwaffe generals. With regard to the situation on the eastern front, he appeared to be content. Nevertheless, he made several nebulous statements on the situation, as Goebbels recalled:

Of course, the Führer does not know exactly how long the Soviet Union will still manage to hold out. But he is of the opinion that once this colossus begins to sway, he will witness a collapse of historic proportions.

The Führer is happy that, as I reported to him, most of the Jews have been evacuated from Berlin. In any event, the Jews will be the losers in this war, in one way or another.

At the end of the talk, Hitler again began to complain about his state of health, about which there “was regrettably not the best news” to report. He was trying to tell Goebbels that he absolutely needed to take another vacation at the Berghof.

On March 21, Hitler received Sepp Dietrich at the Reich Chancellery and presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords for the reconquest of Kharkov.¹⁵⁵

On the occasion of the celebration of Heroes’ Memorial Day that day, Hitler delivered a relatively short speech in the Lichthof of the Zeughaus in Berlin at 1:00 p.m. The tenor of the address was that “the danger is over now.”¹⁵⁶ It read as follows:

For the fourth time, we are celebrating our Volk’s Heroes’ Memorial Day in this hall. The postponement of the date took place because I believed that only now I would be able to leave my places of work¹⁵⁷ with my conscience at ease, having been tied down for many months. Thanks to the sacrifices and the heroism of our soldiers at the eastern front, it has now been finally possible to overcome the crisis into which the German army was plunged by an undeserved fate, to stabilize the front, and to initiate those measures which will secure success and final victory for us in the coming months.

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Under the circumstances, it was possible today to rescind the ban on vacations, which has been in force for many months, in order to allow our brave men to rejoin their loved ones in the homeland increasingly in the coming months. That makes it easier for me, in an emotional sense, to be here on this day.¹⁵⁸

Had it truly been necessary to explain to our Volk the seriousness of this gigantic confrontation of life and death on land, at sea, and in the air, then the past winter would have sufficed to eliminate the last lingering doubts. The steppes of the east have once more unleashed their millions on Europe. They were driven onward by that power that has always organized wars in order to profit from them and, especially in our times, thereby places capitalist interests and Bolshevik instincts in the service of the same goal.

To decide how great the danger was that this oldest civilized continent in the world would be overrun this winter will be left to later historical research. The unfading credit that this danger is over now goes to those soldiers whom we are commemorating today.

Only a glance at Bolshevism's gigantic preparations for the destruction of our world is sufficient to let us realize with horror what might have become of Germany and the rest of the Continent, had not the National Socialist movement taken power in this state ten years ago, and had it not begun the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht with the determination that is so peculiar to it, following many fruitless efforts for disarmament. After all, the Germany of Weimar with its Centrist-Marxist-democratic party politics would have been swept away by this Central Asian invasion as a straw would be by a hurricane.

We realize with increasing clarity that the confrontation that has taken place in Europe since the First World War is slowly beginning to look like a struggle which can only be compared with the greatest historic events of the past. Eternal Jewry forced on us a pitiless and merciless war. Should we not be able to stop the elements of destruction at Europe's borders, then this continent will be transformed into a single field of ruins.

The gravest consequences of this war would then be not only the burned cities and destroyed cultural monuments, but also the bestially murdered multitudes, which would become the victim of this Central Asian flood, just as with the invasions by the Huns and Mongols.

What the German and allied soldiers today protect in the east is not the stony face of this continent or its social and intellectual character, but its eternal human substance, whence all values originated ages and ages ago and which gave expression to all human civilizations today, not only to those in Europe and America.

In addition to this world of barbarity threatening from the east, we are witnessing the satanic destructive frenzy of its ally, the so-called West. We know about our enemies' war objectives from countless publications, speeches, and open demands. The babble of the Atlantic Charter is worth as much as Wilson's Fourteen Points in contrast with the implemented actual design of the Diktat of Versailles.

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Just as in the English parliamentary democracy the warmonger Churchill pointed the way for later developments with his claim in 1936, when he was not yet the responsible leader of Great Britain, that Germany had to be destroyed again, so the elements behind the present demands for peace in the same democracies today are already planning the state to which they seek to reduce Europe after the war.

And their objectives totally correspond with the manifestations of their Bolshevik allies, which we have not only known about but also witnessed: the extermination of all continental people proudly conscious of their nationality and, at their head, the extermination of our own German people.

It makes no difference whether English or American papers, parliamentarians, stump orators, or men of letters demand the destruction of the Reich, the abduction of the children of our Volk, the sterilization of our male youth, and so on, as the primary war objective, or whether Bolshevism implements the slaughter of whole groups of people, men, women, and children, in practice.

After all, the driving force behind this remains the eternal hatred of that cursed race which, as a true scourge of God, chastised the nations for many thousands of years, until they began to defend themselves against their tormentors in times of reflection.

I am not saying this for the benefit of the German Volk. It does not need encouragement today in its moral attitude. For over a thousand days, the front has proved its silent heroism. At its side today stands the German homeland, with large parts of the Reich having become war zones themselves. Not only does it work to furnish our soldiers with weapons. No, it is forced to wage its own struggle. In tolerating and bearing the enemy's destructive frenzy, women and even children display a heroism that can often no longer be differentiated from that of the front.

As far as the so-called "neutral world" is concerned, the prerequisites for the arrogant, almost meditative, almost didactic contemplation of events, are so popular that there has been the willingness to sacrifice those who protect it from finding out what harsh reality is like. After all, one thing is certain: at such a time, nations can only exist in the long run if they take a clear stand. We should therefore be grateful to our enemies. With their own hands, they eliminate the spirit of false objectivity in the German Volk and put these natural instincts in its place: a glowing love for the homeland and our Volk, across all barriers of origin and birth, and a burning hatred of the enemy. The fires in our cities and villages will increasingly harden the determination of our Volk, which is no longer clouded by cosmopolitan sentiments, but nurtured by the recognition of a deadly threat and inspired by a grim fanaticism, willing to eliminate this threat once and for all in Europe and in our own Volk. And I will repeat my prophecy of long ago, that, at the end of this war, it will not be Germany and its allied states that will have become the victims of Bolshevism, but instead those countries and nations, which the Jews increasingly have in the hollow of their hands, that will one day collapse and meet their end by the Bolshevik poison to which they are the least immune because of their outdated

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social orders. It will not be the National Socialist and Fascist regimes that will have been torn to pieces, but an old empire that will have been unraveled into rags. The sin against your own and kindred blood will one day lead to misery and misfortune that will cry to heaven in these countries.

To commemorate the heroes has at all times been the right of him only who need not be ashamed in front of them. Not only has the winter this year failed to produce defeatism in the German Volk, it has led to an even greater mobilization of all its forces. They are constantly being deployed at present. The production of war matériel constantly increases. Millions of men stream to the front: young soldiers, freed men, and recovered soldiers. In addition, older men and young boys will operate the defensive weapons in the homeland; hundreds of thousands of women and girls¹⁵⁹ will assist them in this. And so the German Wehrmacht is being more and more transformed into a fighting nation. National Socialism which long ago defeated its enemies at home in a bitter struggle—without ever even considering compromise—will today and in the future deal with the enemies of the Reich abroad, as its leading force. The Reich is being supported in this by the allied nations, which from Europe to East Asia are also determined to defend the substance of their blood and the values of their cultures. Above all, it has comrades in arms in those nations which realize that their own future is possible only within the framework of an order which successfully opposes Bolshevism as a devilish instrument of destruction.

The more final this confrontation is and the more uncompromisingly it is waged, the longer will be the ensuing peace, which our continent in particular needs for the healing of its wounds. However, the essence of this new age will not be determined by those men who failed to recognize the worth of the past peace, who agitated for war in their spiritual blindness, who thereby brought ruin to their nations, but by those statesmen who already understood before the war how to secure for their nations a high degree of social and cultural accomplishment, despite their modest earthly possessions. Therefore, the future of the truly civilized nations will not be Jewish-Bolshevik nor Jewish-capitalist. Instead, it will increasingly strive to realize, in the service of the national interest everywhere, a true Volksgemeinschaft as the highest ideal. All the more so after the war, the German National Socialist state, which pursued this goal from the beginning, will tirelessly work for the realization of a program that will ultimately lead to a complete elimination of class differences and to the creation of a true socialist community.

Thus, the five hundred forty-two thousand dead that this Second World War has up to now claimed¹⁶⁰ will not have fallen in vain. Instead, they will live on eternally in our ranks as the undying heroes and pioneers of a better age. May the Almighty, who has not denied us His blessings throughout these trials and Who has thereby reinforced our inherent strength, also grant us His assistance in the fulfillment of what we must do for our Volk, what we owe it, until the victory. We again bow reverently before our dead comrades, their family members in mourning, the murdered men, women, and children in the homeland, and all the sacrifices of our allies.

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After the speech, Hitler toured a special exhibition in the Zeughaus, where pictures and trophies from the central section of the eastern front were on display.

On this occasion, a member of the resistance movement allegedly intended to kill Hitler.¹⁶¹ Major Freiherr von Gersdorff, a staff officer with the Army Group Center, later claimed that he would have willingly sacrificed his own life by blowing himself up next to Hitler. It would surely have been easier to draw a gun and shoot him. Of course, the assassin would then have been killed by Hitler's escort.

However it was difficult in the first place to procure two English time bombs, which the assassin had in his coat pocket in order to blow himself up close to Hitler in the course of the tour. However, the fuse of the time bomb needed ten minutes, and Hitler stayed only eight minutes.¹⁶²

The usual ceremonies at Unter den Linden took place following the tour of the exhibition: the placing of a wreath at the monument, the reviewing of the guard, the talks with wounded men, and the parade. Afterwards, Hitler again vanished into the Berghof. In the course of the next few days, the military discussions of the situation began there anew.¹⁶³

On March 29, two of the "state funerals" ordered by Hitler took place. At the state ceremony for the German ambassador in Madrid, von Ribbentrop delivered a speech at the Landeshaus in Breslau and laid a wreath from the Führer. The ambassador, Hans Adolf von Moltke, had died at the age of sixty, as a result of "appendicitis." At the state ceremony for the Reich sport leader, SA Obergruppenführer (!) Hans von Tschammer und Osten, Goebbels delivered an address at the Reich Chancellery and laid a wreath from the Führer. The SA Obergruppenführer had died of "pneumonia" at the age of fifty-six.¹⁶⁴

Hitler had scheduled a series of receptions for statesmen from the German satellite states for the month of April. Some took place at the Berghof, others at Klessheim Castle near Salzburg. These receptions furnished him with an excuse for not being at his headquarters in East Prussia.

Naturally, the outcome of these talks was negligible. Schmidt aptly called them the "Salzburg shadow plays."¹⁶⁵ However, this did not bother Hitler in the least. After all, all he needed was an excuse for staying at the Berghof.

April 7, 1943

At this “headquarters” on April 1, Hitler received the commander of the Italian Eighth Army deployed on the eastern front, in the presence of Keitel. He awarded Colonel General Gariboldi the Knight’s Cross.¹⁶⁶

In the presence of von Ribbentrop on April 3, Hitler met King Boris at the Berghof. The heads of state had “a long and heartfelt discussion, which was characterized by the spirit of the traditional friendship between Germany and Bulgaria.”¹⁶⁷

On April 7, Hitler received Dönitz and presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross “in appreciation of his unique services in the waging of U-boat warfare.”¹⁶⁸

Mussolini and his entourage were Hitler’s guests at Klessheim Castle from August 7 to 10.¹⁶⁹ The Italians had grave worries. The fight for Tunis was almost over. Undoubtedly, the Allies would soon move to land in Italy. Mussolini felt that a quick peace in the east was the only way out. “It seems impossible to me to defeat Russia,” he said, “therefore, it is better to conclude a compromise peace in the east in order to get our hands free to fight the west.”

That was a good idea in theory. But how could Germany get a “compromise peace,” when the Russians had reason to fear that Hitler would only use it to attack the Soviet Union anew at the next opportunity?! At any rate, Hitler immediately cut his friend Mussolini short. He kept talking for a number of days until he felt that the Duce would toe the line again. He later told Goebbels about their meeting:¹⁷⁰

As the Führer told me, he made the Duce pull up his socks again in the four-day talks. The Führer made an all-out effort. By rallying all his mental energy, he managed to get Mussolini to toe the line again. He underwent a complete transformation during these four days, which was noted with astonishment by his entourage. When he got off the train, the Führer thought that he looked like a broken old man; when he went back, he was a man in high spirits and anxious for action. That his internal regeneration continues, we can tell from his present policy.

The official communiqué on the visit was wordy. No matter how long it was, it contained just words:¹⁷¹

The Führer and the Duce had a meeting from April 7 to 10, 1943. The Duce was accompanied by the chief of the Italian general staff, Army General Ambrosio, the state secretary for foreign affairs, Bastianini, officials from the Italian foreign ministry, and officers from the Italian high command.

Together with the Führer, the following persons attended the meeting: Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop, the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel, the commander

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in chief of the navy, Grand Admiral Dönitz, and the chief of the army general staff, General Zeitzler.

The extensive discussions dealt with the general political situation and all questions regarding the joint conduct of the war. Complete agreement was reached on all measures to be taken.

The Führer and the Duce expressed anew their and their people's grim determination to wage this war by a supreme effort until the final victory and until the complete elimination of all future dangers threatening the European-African area from the west and the east.

The common objectives, pursued by the Axis powers in the defense of European civilization and for the right of nations to free development and cooperation, were again confirmed. The victory of the nations allied in the Tripartite Pact will secure a peace for Europe, which will guarantee cooperation among all nations based on their common interests and a just distribution of economic goods of the world.

The talks between the Führer and the Duce and the discussions of their assistants were characterized by a spirit of great warmth.

On April 10, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to the Bulgarian prime minister Filov on his sixtieth birthday and to Ante Pavelich on Croatia's national holiday.¹⁷²

On April 12, Antonescu arrived in Salzburg for two days of talks. Unlike Mussolini, he was convinced that the war against the Soviet Union had to be continued. "A supreme effort against the east," was what he asked for. His attitude was not surprising, since the Russians were beginning to move in on him, just as the Anglo-Americans were on Mussolini. The communiqué read as follows:¹⁷³

On April 12, the Führer received the state leader of Romania, Marshal Antonescu, for a two-day visit. The talks, which were attended by the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and Field Marshal Keitel, concerned the general political situation and questions of the general fight against Bolshevism and the Anglo-American plutocracies allied to it.

The talks were conducted in the spirit of the German-Romanian friendship and the unshakable brotherhood in arms of the nations allied in the Tripartite Pact. The Führer and the state leader of Romania confirmed their firm determination to continue the fight against Europe's enemies by a supreme effort until a victory without compromise is gained. The Romanian people will fight side by side with the people of the Axis powers until final victory. By means of this historic contribution to the liberation of Europe, it will create the basis for the future of the Romanian nation.

On April 14, a big press campaign in the German media reported on the bodies found near Katyn¹⁷⁴ In early April, the remains of around ten thousand Polish officers were discovered in the forest of Katyn, close to

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a highway connecting Vitebsk and Smolensk.¹⁷⁵ Upon Hitler's urging, Goebbels launched an anti-Russian campaign blaming them for the horrors of Katyn¹⁷⁶ He confided in his diary, however, the following:¹⁷⁷

Regrettably, German ammunition was found during the unearthing of the remains at Katyn. An explanation has yet to be found. . . . In any event, as of now it is necessary to treat this information as strictly confidential. If our opponents get wind of this, then we can forget the whole Katyn affair.

On April 16 and 17, Horthy was Hitler's guest at Klessheim Castle. In addition to political and military matters, the talks mostly concerned the apprehension of Hungarian Jews and their transport to concentration camps, that is, extermination camps. Horthy did not want to deal with this problem, and so Hitler felt forced to explain to him the necessity of the extermination of the Jews in the following manner:¹⁷⁸

If the Jews do not want to work there, then they will be shot. If they cannot work, they will go to seed. They must be treated like the tuberculosis bacillus, which can infect a healthy body. This is not cruel if you consider that even innocent creatures of nature, like the rabbit and the deer, are shot so that they cannot do harm. Why should you be more kind to these beasts, which want to bring us Bolshevism? Nations which do not fight off the Jews go to seed. The decline of the once so proud Persian people is one of the most famous examples of this. Today, they lead as pitiful an existence as the Armenians.

Goebbels noted the following on Hitler's talks with Horthy.^{179, 180}

Horthy did not hear many kind words from the Führer. . . . The Hungarian state is completely infiltrated by Jews. In his talks with Horthy, the Führer did not succeed in convincing him of the necessity of stronger measures. Horthy himself and his family are very much tangled up with the Jews and he will continue to put up a fierce resistance against actively attacking the Jewish problem in the future. He lists quite valid humanitarian arguments, which do not, however, apply in this context. There can be no talk of humanitarianism regarding the Jews. Jewry must be thrown to the ground. The Führer made an all-out effort to convince Horthy of his views; however, he succeeded only partially in this.

The official communiqué was more upbeat:¹⁸¹

On April 16, the regent of the Hungarian kingdom, Nikolaus von Horthy, arrived for a two-day visit at the Führer headquarters. The Führer discussed questions with the regent regarding the general political situation and the fight against common enemies. The talks at the Führer's, which were also attended by Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop, and the military discussions between Field Marshal Keitel and the Hungarian chief of staff, Colonel General

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Vitez Ferenc Szombathelyi, were characterized by the spirit of the traditional German-Hungarian friendship and brotherhood in arms.

The Führer and the regent expressed their firm determination to wage the fight against Bolshevism and its Anglo-American allies unwaveringly until the final victory. The Hungarian people, who have already witnessed the horrors of Bolshevism once,¹⁸² will fight side by side with their allies in the Tripartite Pact until the complete elimination of the threat against our people and will make a supreme effort in liberating Europe and securing the Hungarian nation.

On April 18, Hitler decreed several changes in personnel in the diplomatic corps.¹⁸³ The former state secretary in the foreign ministry, Freiherr von Weizsäcker, became ambassador to the Holy See. The envoy Adolf von Steengracht replaced him as state secretary. Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff, who had been the last German ambassador in Washington, was appointed ambassador in Madrid. Undersecretary Ernst Woermann was reassigned to Nanking.

On April 19, Hitler received Vidkun Quisling at the Berghof. The communiqué read as follows:¹⁸⁴

In a long discussion, characterized by complete mutual trust, the questions of the struggle for Europe's future were discussed. There was mutual agreement that we should stand together in the fight for the continued existence of European culture, the freedom and independent life of the nations of the European continent, and the shared Greater Germanic (*grossgermanisch*) objectives. By a supreme effort, this fight should be waged until its victorious end and the complete elimination of the Bolshevik danger.

On the German side, the discussion was attended by Reichskommissar Terboven, senior department head Neumann, the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery Lammers, the head of the party Chancellery Reichsleiter Bormann, and Reichsführer SS Himmler.

The following communiqué was published on Hitler's birthday on April 20:¹⁸⁵

The Führer spent his birthday today without any ceremony or birthday receptions. The present members of the headquarters and the members of his closest personal staff congratulated the Führer.

A summary statement was published on the continuously shrinking list of foreign heads of state who still sent Hitler congratulations on his birthday. No names were listed. Only Hitler's exchange of telegrams with King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini was made public:¹⁸⁶

My heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty for the friendly congratulations transmitted to me on my birthday today. I tie to this my sincere best wishes for

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the welfare of Your Majesty and for the happy future of the allied Italian nation.

Adolf Hitler

I truly rejoiced when I received your comradely congratulations on my birthday today, Duce. In the unshakable knowledge that Germany and its allies will gain the final victory and will thereby create the basis for a just new order, I send you my thanks and my heartfelt best wishes for yourself and for the Italian people led by you.

Adolf Hitler

On April 22, Hitler had this expression of thanks to the public published:¹⁸⁷

I have received so many congratulations on my birthday from all Gaus of the Reich and abroad that I cannot reply to them individually. I therefore express my sincere thanks to all who have thought of me in this manner.

On the same day, Hitler received Speer at the Berghof. He told him that he was “convinced more than ever that total war represented the great salvation.”¹⁸⁸ He would not allow himself “in any way to be pushed off the chosen track.” At the end of the conversation, Hitler spoke disparagingly of Schirach. He feared that he “had been caught by the tentacles of the Viennese reactionaries” and no longer had “a clear view of the interests of the Reich.” Of course, Hitler was simply trying to tell Speer that Schirach could no longer be considered as a possible successor to the Führer.

On April 23, Hitler received Tiso. The communiqué on their meeting at Klessheim Castle read as follows:¹⁸⁹

The Führer and Dr. Tiso had a discussion characterized by a spirit of warmth on the questions of the European fight for the freedom of our people against Bolshevism and against the Anglo-American plutocracies. In the talks, which were attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and, on the Slovak side, by Prime Minister Dr. Tuka, Interior Minister Sano Mach, and General Catlos, the comradeship and friendship which have always characterized the relations between the Reich and the Slovak people was confirmed again. Slovakia fights with the brave units of its army at the side of the German armies and summons up all its strength, together with the Tripartite powers, for the final victory.

On April 24, Hitler warmly congratulated Raeder in a personal letter on his birthday.¹⁹⁰

On April 25, Hitler established the Demyansk Shield in “commemoration of the many-months-long heroic defense of the

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combat zone of Demyansk against a numerically superior enemy.” Like other similar medals (Narvik Shield, Kholm Shield, Crimean Shield), it was to be worn on the left upper sleeve.¹⁹¹

On April 27, Hitler received Ante Pavelich at Klessheim Castle. The following communiqué was published on the talks:¹⁹²

The Führer had a discussion with the Poglavnik on the political and military situation in the joint fight of the Axis powers against Bolshevism and the Anglo-American plutocracies. The talks, which were attended by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Croatian foreign minister Budak, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Begig, were conducted in the spirit of the heartfelt understanding and friendship of the Reich for the young Croatian state and its brave people. Dr. Pavelich expressed the determination of the Croat people to defend the freedom of independent Croatia on the side of the Axis powers and summon up all its strength for a victory without compromise by the Tripartite powers over the common enemies.

The meeting at the Führer headquarters was also attended by the German envoy in Zagreb, Kasche, and by the German plenipotentiary in Croatia, Glaise von Horstenau.

Goebbels confided the following sobering remark on the meeting to his diary:¹⁹³ “Things are going topsy-turvy in Croatia. Pavelich was indeed at the Führer’s: such a visit can, however, only strengthen his prestige abroad.”

Pierre Laval visited on April 29. Unlike the other communiqués on visits that April, this one made it perfectly clear that Laval had been treated like a simple subordinate who was receiving orders. It read as follows:¹⁹⁴

On April 29, the Führer received the French head of government, Pierre Laval, at the Führer headquarters in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the Italian state secretary for foreign affairs, Bastianini. In the course of the discussion, all participants demonstrated complete understanding of all the questions which arose between Germany and Italy on the one hand and France on the other. It was investigated with complete objectivity what part France would have to bear in the efforts and sacrifices that the Axis powers had taken upon themselves in their fight against Bolshevism and the allied Anglo-American plutocracies and for the building of a new Europe, and what type of advantages would result for France from this participation.

Still on the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese emperor on his birthday.¹⁹⁵

On April 30, Hitler congratulated von Ribbentrop on his birthday.¹⁹⁶

May 4, 1943

On May 1, Hitler received a telegram from Emperor Hirohito, who was still convinced of the significance of this so-called “national holiday of the German people.” Hitler replied in this telegram as follows:¹⁹⁷

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for the best wishes transmitted to me on the national holiday of the German Volk. In complete agreement with Your Majesty on the unshakable determination to destroy the common enemy, create a new just order in the world through our victory, and secure a lasting peace, I respond with my sincere best wishes for the personal welfare of Your Majesty and a happy future for the brave Japanese nation.

Adolf Hitler

Hardly anybody in Germany took note of this “national holiday.” The only contribution which Hitler made was the appointment of a miner Konrad Grebe as “pioneer of labor.”¹⁹⁸

Now that the series of visits by statesmen from the satellite states was over, Hitler had no more excuses for staying at the Berghof any longer. However, he did not feel like leaving the comfortable, intimate atmosphere of the Berghof for his dreary headquarters in the Rastenburg Forest. In general, he took little interest in the going-on on the eastern front. He did not even feel up to launching the relatively limited offensive Operation Citadel, that is, the reconquest of Kursk. However, something had to happen. And so Hitler came up with the idea of inviting the generals involved in the operation (Field Marshals von Manstein, von Kluge, Colonel General Guderian as inspector general of the panzer troops, and Colonel General Jeschonnek as Luftwaffe chief of staff) for talks in Munich on May 4. This gave him the opportunity of suggesting a postponement of the operation until June 10.¹⁹⁹

Hitler referred to a presentation by Colonel General Model on the necessity of bringing up strong panzer forces to the attack sector. Although all of the generals present in Munich voiced reservations regarding the postponement, Hitler did not change his mind. He made only one concession, saying that he “would think it over again.” A week later, on May 11, he issued the formal order, which postponed Operation Citadel until the middle of June!

On May 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese-controlled Chinese president Wang Tching-wei on his birthday.²⁰⁰

SA chief of staff Lutze had been seriously injured in a car crash on May 2 and had died the following day.²⁰¹ Hitler ordered a “state funeral” for May 7. On this occasion, he moved his “headquarters” to the Reich

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Chancellery for a few days. On May 6, he had a first discussion with Goebbels there, on which Goebbels noted the following:²⁰²

The Führer regards the situation at Tunis as pretty hopeless. It is impossible to get supplies through. If we could manage to get supply transports through to Tunis at regular intervals, than it might be possible to hold the position for an at present unforeseeable length of time. However, this plan is frustrated by the vigilance of the English, who will not let our ships pass.

In the east, the Führer is thinking about launching a limited offensive soon in the direction of Kursk. However, he might want to wait and see whether the Bolsheviks will not try to beat us to it. Then, of course, the circumstances would be more favorable than if we take the initiative.

In this conversation, Hitler, as so often, attacked Göring and complained about his [Hitler's] state of health. This saddened Goebbels:

It is regrettable that the Führer must do everything himself, whenever a prominent man fails. Slowly the work load is becoming too much even for him so that he can barely bear up under it. He complains to me about his health being somewhat delicate; this is also something which cannot stand the pace in the long run.

The funeral ceremony for Lutze took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery at noon on May 7. Goebbels delivered the eulogy. Afterwards, Hitler himself spoke, saying that after all Lutze had been granted a death that put "a manly end" to his life. If you cannot die on the battlefield, then apparently the next best thing was to die in a car crash! Hitler completely forgot that eminent German authorities to whom he enjoyed referring all the time, such as Frederick the Great, von Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and so on, had died peacefully in their sleep.

Hitler's speech read as follows:²⁰³

In a time when the war demands of our Volk the painful sacrifice of so many men, women, and regrettably even children, it takes a particularly heavy toll of blood from our National Socialist Party. There are members and sympathizers of our movement in all formations of the army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS, and they fulfill their duty in an exemplary fashion. From the National Socialist Reichstag to the higher age groups of the Hitler Youth, the numbers of our movement's dead represent a far higher percentage of the total than the average of the rest of the Volk.

Alas, the war not only claims our men and women, it also brings truly saddening misfortune. It is particularly tragic for me to have to witness almost every year how the one or other irreplaceable fighter, coworker, and fellow designer of our new Reich is called to join the flock of those whom the poet of the National Socialist revolutionary song has accompany us in spirit. After the

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plane crash that took the unforgettable and irreplaceable party comrade Dr. Todt from us, it is a car crash this time that robs the SA of its chief of staff and me personally of a man who was always loyally attached to me.

What can be said about the life story of this old National Socialist fighter has been said by the speaker before me, who was one of his oldest friends. I met the SA Führer Viktor Lutze for the first time in Westphalia in 1925–1926. Since then I have become attached to him and his family not only through the common fight but also in a profound personal friendship. Nevertheless, on this day, I wish to commemorate primarily the man who unconditionally tied his own destiny to mine, who throughout the years was such a loyal and unshakable comrade in arms for me that, in a most bitter and painful hour, I felt I could entrust the leadership of my SA to him, as the most competent man.

As one of my most staunch supporters, he fulfilled his mission and developed the SA into an instrument which was capable of carrying out all the great tasks which I set for it in the course of the year.

My SA chief of staff, Viktor Lutze, was a soldier all his life. Because of this way of thinking, he had the fervent desire to be allowed to go to the front himself, a request which he made to me and which I was unable to grant. Nevertheless he has now died in a manner which puts a manly end to his life as a National Socialist.

I want to express my profound gratitude to you, my dear Lutze, before the movement, the SA, and the entire German Volk, for your loyal fight. From the mighty struggle, in the midst of which we find ourselves today and to which you so richly contributed through your life's work, will one day emerge the goal which once led us to each other and for which we fought over many decades in a sacred faith and with the greatest devotion: the Greater German Reich, secured by its own power against its enemies and supported by a true Volksgemeinschaft! In the annals of history, the name of Chief of Staff Viktor Lutze will live on eternally as one of the founders of the new Reich.

My dear Mrs. Lutze, you have my heartfelt sympathy on the death of your husband and your child. I wish both your sons a speedy recovery.

I believe that I cannot secure a worthier future significance for the highest medal that our party can award than by awarding it to the first pioneers of the new Reich and, thus, to the deceased. Through this, it is ennobled for all those who will one day have the honor of bearing it while alive.

Following the funeral ceremony, Hitler asked the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters to join him for lunch. Afterwards, he lectured all the party leaders, including those from the SA, SS, and Hitler Youth, on "speeding."²⁰⁴

The Führer voices sharp criticism and bitterly reproaches them [for speeding]. As a consequence of Lutze's car crash, he orders all party cars not to exceed speeds of eighty kilometers per hour.

May 7, 1943

In the afternoon, Hitler presented the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters with his view of the situation.²⁰⁵ He went far back, defending Charlemagne's policies at great length, recalling the conquests of Genghis Khan, and speaking about the Turkish wars. He praised Stalin for killing Tukhachevsky²⁰⁶ in 1937 and thereby having taken care of the opposition in the Red Army. You could tell from what Hitler said how much he would have loved to follow Stalin's example.

Hitler then raged against his allies, who were supposedly responsible for the unfavorable developments in the east. That is why he had decided "to let the war in the east be waged exclusively by German troops. The Romanians proved themselves to be the best; the Italians were second-best, and the Hungarians were the worst." And anyway, it was necessary "to liquidate as quickly as possible that junkyard of small states (*Kleinstaatengerümpel*) which still exist in Europe today."²⁰⁷

Hitler had used almost the same words in mocking the allies of Imperial Germany.²⁰⁸ Now he was forced to use them against his own allies! Hitler's speech was a repetition of his well-known theory: there had been a great crisis at home in the year 1932 and still the victory had been his in the end; things would be no different abroad, since the enemies were the same (with the English resembling the German Nationalists, and the Russians recalling the German Communists). Goebbels, of course, was enthusiastic about this speech and noted the following:

The Führer again went through the parallels between 1932 and today in great detail. They are indeed astonishing and quite convincing. Everything from back then is repeating itself today. Just as we gained the victory in the year 1932 only through a stubbornness, which, at times, looked like insanity, so this will be the case again today.

In addition, Hitler also dished up a new theory: the advantage of fighting "interior lines" (*innere Linie*). Germany would profit from this in its conduct of the war because the enemy had to attack "on exterior lines." German propaganda was forced to make the best of this theory during the following months. Goebbels noted as follows:

As far as the war itself is concerned, the Führer expressed his view that it is essentially a question of the transportation problem. Because of the impossibility of overcoming the problem of movement, we lost Stalingrad.²⁰⁹ Because of the impossibility of overcoming the problem of movement, we are now witnessing a serious military crisis in North Africa. Whoever has the organizational means of solving the problem of movement in this war will win.

May 7, 1943

We are superior to our enemies insofar as they must attack on exterior lines, while we defend ourselves on interior lines.

At the end of his speech, Hitler stressed that there was no danger of a revolt:

The Volk will never think of it. There are no Jewish leaders. Criminals will not be unleashed on the Volk in a difficult crisis, but instead they will be lined up against a wall.

This denial proved, on the contrary, that a possible revolt was on Hitler's mind.

May 10, 1943

3

On May 8 and 9, Hitler had a number of talks, mostly concerning questions of a personal nature, at the Reich Chancellery. He spoke with Goebbels, Bormann, Ley, Frick, Funk, Rust, and Frank. Then he also received Rommel.²¹⁰

Neither in his speech before the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters, nor in the course of his discussions with the above individuals, did Hitler make any mention of his intention to extend the Enabling Act secretly without summoning the Reichstag and announcing it in the press. In Berlin on May 10, Hitler signed this decree which represented a blatant violation of the constitution. It was published only in the *Reich Law Gazette*, under the innocent heading: "Decree by the Führer on Governmental Legislation." It read as follows:²¹¹

Führer Headquarters, May 10, 1943

In consideration of the formal expiry of the law of March 24, 1933 (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 141) on May 10, 1943, I order the following:

The Reich government will continue to exercise the powers bestowed on it by virtue of the law of March 24, 1933. I reserve for myself the obtaining of a confirmation of these powers of the Reich government by the Greater German Reichstag.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler included the mention of a possible confirmation by the Reichstag in order to silence potential critics, but he had no intention of allowing the Reichstag ever to convene again.

On May 10, he also issued the following appeal from Berlin for the fourth Winterhilfswerk of the German Red Cross:²¹²

Führer Headquarters, May 10, 1943

German Volk!

Another winter has passed which has imposed difficult battles and heavy burdens on our soldiers. And again it goes to the credit of our men in the east

May 10, 1943

that they have successfully overcome a crisis by which any other armed forces in the world would have been broken. How great the physical and spiritual demands on our soldiers were cannot be appreciated by the homeland. It is due only to their heroism that they not only stopped the attack by the enemy in the end, but also forced him back through heavy counterattacks. Much is being asked of the German homeland as well, in terms of labor duties and willingness to sacrifice. Alas, all these sacrifices pale in comparison with the privations and sufferings which our soldiers must bear for a second [*sic*] time in the east.

Such accomplishments are only conceivable due to the love for your own Volk, which will be saved, and for your own country, which will be spared the horrors of war. After all, it is the German Volk, its women and children, for whom our men risk their life time and again at all fronts of this mighty struggle. Alas, the German homeland has also become brave. The war has been carried to its cities, market towns, and villages. Still, its privations and sacrifices cannot be compared with the superhuman hardships that our soldiers face in fighting at the various fronts, especially in the east. Therefore it is the duty of the homeland, its debt of honor, to show them that, regardless of the difficulties which it must bear itself, it never for one second forgets its soldiers at the front. Above all, it will not neglect to undertake whatever is necessary for the healing of its fighters' wounds in order to harden in practice the National Socialist German Volksgemeinschaft through the activation of a common spirit of sacrifice.

Therefore, I call on the German Volk for the fourth time to reaffirm its common bonds through its readiness to sacrifice for the Kriegshilfswerk of the German Red Cross and thus to offer that type of thanks to our soldiers that they so richly deserve. Just as the German rose above himself as a soldier this winter, I expect that the homeland will surpass itself in the new Kriegshilfswerk of the Red Cross.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler awarded councilor of state Paul Pleiger, the general manager of the Hermann Göring Works, the War Service Medal's Knight's Cross.²¹³

Following the fall of Tunis and Bizerte, fighting in North Africa was now rapidly nearing its conclusion. On May 10, Hitler undertook a feeble attempt to encourage the German troops to put up a "heroic" fight to their last breath. However, he exercised far greater restraint in his telegram to Colonel General von Arnim, who commanded the German-Italian units, than in those to Rommel in November and to Paulus in January.²¹⁴ It read as follows:²¹⁵

I express my thanks and greatest appreciation to you and your heroically fighting troops, who in loyal brotherhood in arms with our Italian comrades are defending every foot of African soil. Together with me, the entire German

May 11, 1943

Volk is following the heroic battle of its soldiers in Tunisia with admiration. It is of supreme importance to the overall success of this war. Your all-out effort and the attitude of your troops will set an example for the entire Wehrmacht of the Greater German Reich and will enter as a special page of glory into the German history of war.

Adolf Hitler

This radio message from Hitler was very wisely not published until the surrender of the troops. After all, nobody in Germany knew that Arnim was now in command instead of Rommel. Where was the Desert Fox [Rommel], anyway?

On May 7, Goebbels had already noted the following in his diary with dismay:²¹⁶

It will naturally be difficult to explain to the Volk why Rommel is no longer in Africa. Rommel is placed in an extraordinarily awkward situation. He had the Oak Leaf with Diamonds, which the Volk does not know either. He has been at the Semmelring Pass for several weeks now, and nobody has any inkling of this. Everybody believes him to be in Africa. If the truth comes out now that catastrophe is near, then nobody will believe this anymore.

Rommel would undoubtedly be compromised. Hitler had labored to bring this about for many months. Therefore, he had no qualms about issuing the following notification by the high command of the Wehrmacht on May 11, shortly before the fall of Tunis:²¹⁷

Field Marshal Rommel was in Germany as the English launched their great offensive against the positions at El Alamein in October 1942. His long stay in Africa had proved so injurious to his health that medical treatment, which had been put off time and again, could no longer be postponed. Following the first news of the English attack, the Field Marshal immediately broke off the treatment, which he had barely begun, against the urging of his doctors, and returned to Africa.

After the landing of the Anglo-American armed forces in French North Africa, he prolonged his stay with his army, a stay which he had initially planned to be only temporary. By constantly attacking a far superior enemy, the field marshal led the army back to Tunisia in an evasive maneuver of a historically exemplary nature. Since the state of health of the field marshal had deteriorated, the Führer decided, in concurrence with the Duce's wishes, to order Field Marshal Rommel, after he had taken up position at Gabes, to return immediately to Germany for the restoration of his health.

On March 11, 1943, Field Marshal Rommel reported to the Führer headquarters. In appreciation of his unique services in the two-year campaign in North Africa, the Führer awarded him the Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. The health of Field Marshal

May 14, 1943

Rommel is presently improving. After his complete recovery, the Führer plans to entrust him with a new mission.

On May 13, Colonel General von Arnim surrendered. So did the commander of the First Italian Army, General Messe, who had been promoted to the rank of marshal shortly before. The Allies took two hundred fifty thousand soldiers prisoner, about half of whom were Germans, along with eleven generals.

The German final communiqué of May 13 read as follows:²¹⁸

The heroic struggle of the German and Italian units in Africa found an honorable end today. The last resistance groups in the area around Tunis, which had been without water and provisions for days, had to stop fighting after they had used up their entire supply of ammunition. They were defeated by the lack of supplies, not by the attack of the enemy, who often enough was forced to recognize the superiority of our arms in this theater of war also.

The Africa corps of Germany and Italy have, in spite of this, fulfilled to the utmost the mission assigned to them. Their resistance—which disputed the enemy every foot of ground in a many-month-long, bitter struggle—tied down strong enemy forces in North Africa and caused the enemy heavy losses in men and matériel. The relief of other fronts secured hereby and the time that was won greatly benefited the leaders of the Axis powers.

Hitler forbade this final communiqué to be broadcast by radio stations in Germany, in the hope that it would thus attract less attention. Goebbels criticized this in his diary as follows: “I really do not think that this was necessary. Faced with such a great military crisis, we ought not suddenly introduce new methods in our information policy which might tempt the Volk to regard our guilty conscience as the reason for this.”²¹⁹

On May 14, following the loss of North Africa, Hitler abandoned his plan to make a flanking movement across Spain and Portugal in order to attack the Anglo-American forces (Operation Gisela).²²⁰

During the next few days, Hitler issued a series of rather confusing decrees from Berlin. They were realized only in part. Goebbels enumerated and commented the following in his diary:²²¹

1. Hitler’s decision to have the English prisoners of war discreetly unchained; they had been kept in chains ever since October 1942.

“We can no longer risk a prestige fight with the English on the question of chains, since the English now have more German than we have English captives under lock and key.”²²²

May 20, 1943

2. Hitler's instruction "to form an anti-Bolshevik legion with the English prisoners."

3. Hitler's order to direct "evacuations from the air-war zone in the west for the time being to the occupied French territories, especially the province of Burgundy."²²³

4. Hitler's decree ordering all speeches intended for broadcast to be "presented in writing" to him before they were aired.²²⁴

On May 19, Hitler received the president of the Finnish women's organization *Lotta Spaerd*, Mrs. Fanni Luukkonen, at the Reich Chancellery. He awarded her "the Star of the Order of the German Eagle in appreciation of the excellent deployment of the Finnish Women's Organization in the common fight against Bolshevism."²²⁵

On the same day, Hitler met with Keitel and Generals Warlimont and Buhle at the Reich Chancellery. They discussed security measures to be taken against British landings on Mediterranean shores, especially in the Balkan region.²²⁶ The complicated and time-consuming measures, which were necessary in order to reinforce the German troops on the Peloponnese, made it clear how problematic Hitler's claim of the advantages of defending "interior lines" was.²²⁷

On May 20, Hitler had a discussion with Sonderführer (special leader) von Neurath²²⁸ on Germany's future attitude toward Italy. This topic was the reason for Rommel's presence at the talks, which were also attended by Keitel and other prominent persons. After all, Hitler planned to place Rommel in command in Italy "in case that a mess (*Schweinerei*) happened" there.²²⁹ Von Neurath reported on the unstable situation in Italy following the loss of North Africa. Hitler showered abuse on Italy, which he thought was to be blamed for everything.

After all, had Italy made a declaration at the time [1939], in which it declared its solidarity with Germany and to which it was obliged by treaty, then war would not have broken out; then the English would not have started it, and the French would not have started it.

I saw quite well what Fascism is in Rome. It could not prevail against the courtly world. A reception by the court—I would not even mention it anyway—is a nauseating sight by our standards. But also at the Duce's, and why? Because the whole courtly world figures in this. Ciano is like that, too. I was supposed to escort Countess Edda Ciano to the table. All of a sudden that Philip²³⁰ barges in with his Mafalda, and all of a sudden the whole program is upset. A great flurry of excitement. So I have to take Mafalda as my lady partner at table. What's Mafalda to me? As far as I am concerned, Mafalda is simply the wife of a German Oberpräsident—and that's it!

May 22, 1943

As far as I am concerned, the crucial question is: In what state of health is the Duce? That is what is decisive for a man who must make such difficult decisions. Second, what does he think are Italy's chances, let us say, in the event of a waning of the Fascist revolution or with the royal house? Those are the two problems. Either the royal house succeeds the Fascist revolution—what does he think are his people's chances then—or what does he think are their chances if the royal house takes over power by itself? All that is difficult to say. He said something at the table in Klessheim, when we were together. He suddenly said: "I do not have a successor to the Fascist revolution. I can find somebody as head of state, but there is no successor to the revolution." That is really very tragic.

As was evident from these statements, Hitler was quite aware of the course which events in Italy might take.

Hitler had not been seen at his two headquarters in the east, in Rastenburg (Wolfsschanze) and in Vinnitsa (Werwolf), for over two months. And he still did not feel like going back there. After the debacle at Tunis, he feared the reproachful glances of the generals. He preferred to return to Eva Braun at the Berghof.

Goebbels noted in his diary the following:

The Führer has . . . postponed his trip to Vinnitsa. Acting upon a sudden impulse, he returned to the Obersalzberg. For the time being, he wants to recuperate a little there in order to arm himself in terms of health for the coming weeks and months. That is the best thing he can do right now. The Führer intends to let the Bolsheviks attack first.²³¹

For Goebbels, Hitler's reference to his "health" sufficed to justify his return to the Berghof. However, the Führer needed to come up with a better excuse for the rest of his entourage. Before leaving Berlin, Hitler arranged for another discussion of the situation on either May 20 or May 21.²³² He claimed that Prince Philip of Hesse had recommended a new meeting with the Duce either at the Brenner Pass or at Klessheim Castle. Although Hitler headed south for the Berghof, this meeting naturally never took place.

On May 22, Hitler exchanged telegrams with King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini on the fourth anniversary of the German-Italian alliance. This exchange was the last of its kind. Hitler's telegrams read as follows:²³³

On today's day of commemoration, the fourth anniversary of the solemn signing of the friendship and military treaty between our two people, I ask Your Majesty to accept, along with my heartfelt greetings, my and the German

June 1, 1943

Volk's best wishes for the happiness and future of Italy and the struggle of its arms.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

On the return of the day on which our two countries entered into an indissoluble community of struggle and fate by the conclusion of the Pact of Friendship and Alliance four years ago, I send you my most sincere and warm greetings and best wishes, also in the name of the entire German Volk. With a feeling of heartfelt solidarity, I on this occasion think of the heroic fight of the Italian armed forces in the great joint struggle for the freedom and the future of our people, and express my unshakable conviction that, at the end of this confrontation of great world-historical impact, the risks and the sacrifices which had to be made will find their greatest and final reward in the glorious victory of our just cause.

Adolf Hitler

On May 25, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram "to the president of the Argentinian nation," Ramón S. Castillo, on the country's national holiday.²³⁴

On May 27, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Japanese emperor on the death of Admiral Yamamoto:²³⁵

Your Majesty!

Profoundly impressed by the heroic fight of your commander of the fleet, Grand Admiral Isoroko Yamamoto, and in recognition of his historic service in the joint struggle of our arms, I have awarded the fallen hero the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaf and Swords.

Hitler also wanted to use this gesture as a lesson for the German Generals Paulus and von Arnim, who wished to continue to live in spite of their defeats at Stalingrad and Tunis. Had they committed suicide, Hitler would naturally have awarded them a medal, too.

On May 28, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on his country's national day.²³⁶

On June 1, Hitler awarded the newly formed Forty-Fourth Infantry Division the name "Reich Grenadier High and Mighty German Division." Schirach announced this decision at a celebration in the Concert House Hall. The decree read as follows:²³⁷

In recognition of the heroic deployment of the officers, noncommissioned officers, and men in the Greater German freedom fight, I award the name "Reich Grenadier High and Mighty German Division" to the Forty-Fourth Infantry Division. I connect with this the conviction that the members of the newly raised division will prove themselves worthy of their comrades who

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remained behind in Stalingrad and will help all the more to bring Greater Germany's fight for its freedom and its future to a victorious conclusion.

Adolf Hitler

On June 2, Hitler attended a meeting of leaders of the German armament industry at the Platterhof on the Obersalzberg.²³⁸ First Speer gave a report on "increasing production figures." Then Hitler spoke.

The Führer expressed his heartfelt gratitude and total appreciation to the participants. He said that these outstanding successes had to be attributed primarily to German technology's being invigorated by the leadership of Reich Minister Albert Speer and by new ideas, as well as to industrial responsibility being energetically controlled by the Führer himself.

In appreciation of his "unique accomplishments," Hitler presented Speer with the newly created "Fritz Todt Ring."

On June 4, Marshal Mannerheim celebrated his seventy-sixth birthday. No congratulatory telegram by Hitler was published this time.

On June 8, Hitler met with Keitel and Zeitzler at the Berghof.²³⁹ They discussed the units of the renegade Russian general Vlassov and the Russians employed as "Hiwis" (*Hilfswillige*, volunteers, helpers) by the German armies. Hitler was opposed to all efforts to grant even minimal rights to subjugated populations or allowing them to carry arms. In the course of this discussion, he again referred to numerous real and imagined events during the First World War in order to substantiate his argument that Vlassov's people were unreliable and their deployment had to be limited. He declared the following:

We will never build up a Russian army—that is a first-rate phantom. Before we do that, it would be much easier to send the Russians as workers to Germany. After all, this is far more decisive. I do not need a Russian army that I must first interlace with German "corset bones." If I get Russian workers instead, then that is a service to me. Then I can free Germans and reeducate the Russians.

Since foreign helpers with the German armies, armed "eastern people," and SS "volunteers" already numbered in the hundreds of thousands, it was difficult for Hitler to do anything about this development. The deficit in available soldiers was already so grave that these assistants had become irreplaceable.

On June 10, Hitler received the Italian ambassador Dino Alfieri at the Berghof. The occasion was the anniversary of Italy's entry into the

June 20, 1943

war.²⁴⁰ Mussolini met with von Mackensen in Rome for the same reason.

In the middle of June, Hitler received the former state secretary von Weizsäcker, who now served as ambassador to the Vatican. Weizsäcker wanted general instructions for Rome and proposed a policy of “mutual nonintervention,” as he recalled.²⁴¹

Hitler agreed. He then spoke about Bismarck who had been defeated in the Kulturkampf [struggle between church and state] because, unlike the priests, he had not had the ear of the common man. After the war, Hitler intended to permit the continued existence of the church as an instrument of the state, but not in any other form. In passing, Hitler mentioned that there were only three men in Rome: the king, the Duce, and the pope. The last of the three was decidedly the strongest. Hitler portrayed the war situation in such rosy colors that he could not possibly have believed it himself.

At the end of the talk, Hitler remarked as follows:

Actually, I envy you. I must now return to my headquarters in the east. Three months in a cultural center like Rome, that would be all right with me.

On June 16, the Führer sent a congratulatory telegram to King Gustav V of Sweden on his eighty-fifth birthday.

On June 18, Horthy received a handwritten letter from Hitler on his seventy-fifth birthday.²⁴²

On June 20, the following decree was published on the occasion of a roll call for the newly raised Sixtieth Motorized Infantry Division:²⁴³

In recognition of the outstanding deployment of my SA in the struggle for the Greater German Reich, I award the Sixtieth Infantry Division (motorized) on the day of its integration with the SA regiment “Feldherrnhalle” the name “Panzer Grenadier Division Feldherrnhalle.”

I thereby also recognize the heroic struggle of the members of the Sixtieth Infantry Division (motorized) who remained behind at Stalingrad. I am certain that the officers, noncommissioned officers, and men of the Panzer Grenadier Division Feldherrnhalle will do everything, true to the example of their fallen comrades, in order to bring the struggle of the Reich for its freedom and its greatness to a victorious conclusion.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler was constantly thinking about how he could eliminate all active opposition by the German military and have his revenge on the culprits. On March 4, he had ordered that all death sentences for members of the Wehrmacht could be carried out by hanging.²⁴⁴ Now he ordered the creation of a special drumhead court-martial for the

June 20, 1943

Wehrmacht. The decree read as follows:²⁴⁵

The Führer and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht

Führer Headquarters, June 21, 1943

I

I order the creation of a central special drumhead court-martial for the Wehrmacht.

1. The special drumhead court-martial is permitted to sentence by summary trial political crimes that are directed against faith in the political or military leadership, and by application of the appropriate strict measures may pass a death or prison sentence. Execution will immediately follow upon the confirmation of the sentence.

The court shall have jurisdiction over every member of the Wehrmacht who has committed an offense in the home war-zone or whose whereabouts is there. The chief of the OKW shall be authorized beyond this to clarify the competence of the special drumhead court-martial for every member of the Wehrmacht.

2. I exercise the rights of the judge (*Gerichtsherr*), insofar as I do not confer them on the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht or order something else in the individual case. The president of the Reich court-martial will perform the duties of the judge.

The competent judge will be held responsible by me for reporting to the president of the Reich court-martial crimes of the above-mentioned nature in the most speedy manner.

3. The special drumhead court-martial will be linked to the Reich court-martial by a special senate. As judges will be nominated, insofar as this is possible, one member each from the army, navy, and Luftwaffe; the branches of the Wehrmacht will submit nominations.

II

Every judge to whom it is reported in whatever form that one of the officers in his jurisdiction is accused of a political crime must investigate this accusation in a judicial inquiry.

I order furthermore the following:

1. In *all* proceedings against officers involving political crimes that are not within the competence of the special drumhead court-martial, the court records must without exception be immediately forwarded to the president of the Reich court-martial, following the decision on the confirmation and execution of the sentence or following the suspension of proceedings. This applies to the entire war-zone.

2. Should the president judge the decision inappropriate to the offense, he will report this to the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht. Should he agree with the view of the president, he will seek my decision in cases of sentences or execution orders; in the case of a suspension of proceedings, he will instruct the judge to continue the inquiry or bring a charge.

III

July 1, 1943

I direct the chief of the OKW to issue the necessary supplementary and implementing regulations.

The requirements of the chief of the OKW in questions of the personnel and constitution of the special drumhead court-martial will prevail. Upon request, the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe shall place a plane at the disposal of the court.

Adolf Hitler

On June 22, Hitler awarded Envoy Rudolf Rahn the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross for his "outstanding achievements in the service of the Reich," along with the Iron Cross First Class for his "exceedingly brave personal service."²⁴⁶

On June 23, an announcement was made public that Hitler had appointed the deputy Gauleiter Albert Hoffmann as Gauleiter of South-Westphalia.²⁴⁷

On June 26, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the conference of the Union of National Journalists' Associations in Vienna.²⁴⁸

On June 29, he ordered a "party funeral" for the commissar general for the occupied Dutch territories, Fritz Schmidt, who had "died in a crash on an official trip in France."²⁴⁹

On June 30, there was a report that Hitler had awarded the Thai foreign minister, Vikhit-Vatakan, the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.²⁵⁰

There was still no sign of Operation Citadel (the assault on Kursk) on the eastern front. As mentioned before, Hitler had postponed the operation from May until the middle of June. Whether he liked it or not, he had to return to the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia.

On July 1, he received all commanders and commanding generals involved in the operation there. After a presentation, he informed them of his decision to launch Operation Citadel at this point. Manstein reported the following on this:²⁵¹

First, Hitler gave detailed reasons for the earlier postponement. It had been necessary in view of the regeneration and reinforcement of personnel and matériel for the units earmarked for the attack. Now, their personnel had been replenished. In terms of matériel, we are superior to the Soviets in tanks for the first time.

What was new and not very convincing in light of his earlier explanations was his claim that the postponement had above all been necessary because, if we had struck any earlier, then the calls for help by the Soviets would have resulted in immediate landings by the western powers in the Mediterranean area. At the time, we would not have had the means to counter this. We could not have

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counted on resistance by the Italians. In the Balkans, the enemy would have found support with the local populations. Now, the critical phase was essentially over. We now had largely sufficient forces on Sardinia, Sicily, the Peloponnese, and Crete.

He correctly²⁵² justified his decision to carry out Citadel by saying that we could not wait until the enemy takes the offensive, which might not happen until the winter or the creation of a second front. In addition, a decisive and successful offensive as soon as possible was desirable in view of its influence on our allies and the homeland.

At the end of the discussion, Hitler repeated his claim that Italy's decision to remain neutral in 1939 "had made it possible for the British government to influence France to enter the war, too."

In Bucharest on July 3, Manstein presented Antonescu with the Crimean Shield in Gold. Hitler had awarded it to him on the anniversary of the conquest of Sevastopol.²⁵³

With the coming Operation Citadel in mind, Hitler issued a proclamation on July 4, an excerpt from which read as follows:²⁵⁴

The blow which the German armed forces will deal the enemy must be of decisive importance and must bring about a turn of events in the war. This blow must represent the last battle for the victory of the German arms.

On July 5, Army Groups South (Manstein) and Center (Kluge) started the attack. After initial successes, this last German offensive at the eastern front had to be discontinued after one week, because of strong Russian resistance. On July 17, the operation was given up for good.

On July 6, Hitler received a delegation of Turkish officers at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Surprisingly, Turkey had followed an invitation by Hitler and had sent several officers, headed by Colonel General Toydemir, to Germany on June 24. From June 25 to July 6, they had visited sectors of the German eastern front and the Channel coast.

Hitler received his guests, who appeared in full uniform, in the presence of Keitel.²⁵⁵ While the Führer looked quite solemn at the meeting, he was undoubtedly happy about this visit from a country that did not belong to Germany's satellite states.

On July 14, Hitler conveyed his "heartfelt best wishes" to Pavelich in a telegram on his birthday.²⁵⁶

On July 18, Hitler sent a "friendly congratulatory telegram" to Franco on the Spanish national holiday.²⁵⁷

July 19, 1943

Contrary to Hitler's expectations, the Anglo-Americans had landed on Sicily on July 10. The German forces had been unable to prevent this. Naturally, Hitler blamed the Italians for it and immediately arranged for a meeting with the Duce. The final conquest of Sicily would undoubtedly soon entail the military collapse of Italy—all the parties involved appeared to realize this.

The meeting between Hitler and Mussolini took place at Feltre, near Belluno in northern Italy, on July 19.²⁵⁸ As the envoy Dr. Schmidt reported, Hitler gave Mussolini a dressing-down in front of a large number of Italian generals. To make matters worse, exaggerated news of the first air raid on Rome, which occurred that morning, arrived. Mussolini was so agitated that he could barely follow the proceedings and later asked Schmidt for a copy of his notes.

Mussolini knew that Italy could not take it much longer. The Italian people would not put up a serious resistance to the Allied landings. While he tried to get weapons and ammunition deliveries from Hitler, the Führer offered him only German divisions. Uninterruptedly for over three hours, Hitler tried to convince Mussolini that there was only one way out for them: to fight and to keep on fighting on all fronts, in Russia as well as in Italy. What counted was the fanatical will to win. In Germany, fifteen-year-old boys were manning the anti-aircraft guns.

If anybody tells me that we can leave these tasks to later generations, then I tell him: this is not the case. Nobody can say whether the next generation will be a generation of giants. Germany needed thirty years in order to recover; Rome never rose again. That is the language of history.

After lunch, things continued in this manner. In spite of Hitler's torrent of words, the dictators could not agree on anything in the end. The official German communiqué made this perfectly clear, being of unprecedented brevity:²⁵⁹

The Führer and the Duce met on Monday, July 19, in a city in northern Italy. Military questions were discussed.

Unlike the communiqué following their meeting at Klessheim from April 7 to 10, 1943, there was no more talk here of "complete agreement" having been achieved, the "great warmth" of the talks, or the "grim determination to wage this war by a supreme effort until the final victory."

Hitler flew back to East Prussia from Feltre. Mussolini returned empty-handed to Rome. The next few days would decide his fate.

July 19, 1943

Not only the Italian people, the royal family, and the military men, but also the highest-ranking Fascist leaders were convinced that it was time to put an end to the war and to Mussolini's reign.

The members of the Great Fascist Council demanded that the council be summoned. Reluctantly, Mussolini gave in. The session in the Palazzo Venezia began at 6:00 p.m. on July 24.²⁶⁰ For one hour, the Duce was allowed to speak uninterruptedly about the government's activities, the situation in general, and the meeting at Feltre. Then, however, he was repeatedly interrupted by hecklers' shouts. In the end, the Palazzo sounded like a sailors' bar. The gentlemen rudely accused one another of all sorts of misdeeds. Marshal de Bono even pulled out his revolver, which he put down only after Mussolini reminded him of his own past sins.

After a number of incidents, Grandi managed to have his resolution put up for a vote. He demanded that the head of the government "request the king to take over the actual command of the armed forces and make the final decision on all orders in the interest of the welfare of the country." The result of the vote was catastrophic for Mussolini: nineteen members voted in favor of the resolution,²⁶¹ only eight voted against it, with one abstention.

After over twenty years in government, it took Mussolini a while to get used to the idea that he would no longer be prime minister. On July 25, he attended to a number of official tasks, among other things inspecting damage done to the city in the course of the air raid. In the afternoon, however, he received a summons from the king. After a while, the king finally told Mussolini that he had already appointed Marshal Badoglio²⁶² as the new prime minister. At the end, he cautioned the Duce not to do anything foolish. For twenty years, he had covered for the Fascist regime, but now that the welfare of the Italian nation was at risk, he could no longer do so.

As a precautionary measure, Mussolini was escorted to an ambulance upon leaving the palace and placed under arrest.²⁶³

Nobody in Italy lifted a finger to save Fascism. On the contrary, the people were happy and hoped that now peace would soon return. Even though the new head of government Badoglio announced that the war would be continued, nobody believed him. If the intention was to continue the war, then there would have been no reason for deposing Mussolini. Fascism, which had supposedly been made for eternity,

July 26, 1943

disappeared overnight, along with its party and militia, as though it had never existed.

In Germany, the majority of the people and soldiers welcomed Mussolini's downfall. They remembered that the collapse of the allies in the year 1918 had heralded the end of the war. One would have willingly sacrificed the "achievements" of National Socialism for peace now. Most people hoped that the avalanche that Mussolini's fall would set in motion would also soon sweep away Hitler and his regime. But Hitler was not about to give up!

Naturally, great confusion reigned at the Wolfsschanze headquarters following the arrival of the news from Italy. Even though many there had foreseen the collapse of Italy, the swiftness of the change of government did come as a surprise, especially considering the pitiful role played in it by Mussolini and the Fascist movement. News of a heavy air raid on Hamburg did nothing to improve the mood at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.

During a discussion of the situation on July 25,²⁶⁴ Hitler had already raged against the Luftwaffe and the supposed inability of German planes to find London.

These days, you have to be content if we manage to find London at all. They dare to tell me these days: We do hope to find London! It is a crying shame (*Affenschande*), and I will tell it exactly as it is to the Reichsmarschall. I call a spade a spade.

Most of the explanations which I keep hearing go like this: It is impossible to find it. Not to find London, isn't it a crying shame?! I have to let some blockhead tell me: "Yes, my Führer, when he [the British pilot] comes to Dortmund from England, then he is able, thanks to his present beam method, to drop his bombs on hangars five hundred meters in width and two hundred fifty meters in length." Blockhead! But *we* cannot find London, which is fifty kilometers across and at a distance of a hundred fifty kilometers from the coast.

The times had certainly changed since German planes had rained bombs on London in September 1940!

On the evenings of July 25 and 26, Hitler held a series of agitated conferences at his headquarters on the situation in Italy. Göring, Goebbels, and Himmler were ordered to attend them in part.²⁶⁵

What seemed most crucial to Hitler was to prevent at all costs a session like that of the Great Fascist Council in Germany! He wanted to place the Reichstag deputies under constant surveillance. Goebbels noted on this topic the following:²⁶⁶

July 30, 1943

Knowledge of these incidents [in Italy] could possibly lead subversive elements to believe that they also can bring about what Badoglio and his friends brought about in Rome. The Führer ordered Himmler to make sure that any such potentially surfacing dangers meet with the strictest measures by the police. Anyway, he does not think that too much was to be expected here. The German Volk hates the Italians too much.

Of course, Hitler would have loved to send a few paratroopers to Rome in order to arrest that “filthy swine” Badoglio, the king, and the crown prince—as well as to occupy the Vatican—and take out the entire “herd of pigs” (*Schweinepack*). However, these were merely spontaneous ideas, which he never dared to carry out in the end. What he lacked was a good excuse. If the Fascists had only managed a revolt somewhere, then he could have rushed to their “rescue.” Had Badoglio not been so clever as to promise “further cooperation” and “a continuation of the war,” then things would have been different. But as matters stood, what could he do?

Hitler’s insecurity was evident in the German government’s uncoordinated information policy regarding the events in Italy. It recalled the treatment of the Hess case by the press in 1941.

In order to deceive the German public as to the disastrous nature of the collapse of Hitler’s 1919 theory of friendship with Italy, the press treated the announcements and appeals by the new Badoglio government as though an insignificant change of government had taken place in Italy, which did not put into question the friendship between Germany and Italy. Even Mussolini’s departure from government was described as regrettable but understandable, especially considering that it was partly due to “the Duce’s bad health.”

There was a very curious news item, which reported that Hitler had presented the deposed Duce with a collection of Nietzsche’s works on his sixtieth birthday on July 29. Did this mean that Mussolini was supposed to spend the rest of his life studying philosophy, for example, the doctrine of the superman? The official announcement read as follows:²⁶⁷

Führer Headquarters, July 30, 1943

The Führer has sent the Duce, through Field Marshal Kesselring, the collected works of Nietzsche in a beautiful special edition with a heartfelt dedication, as a personal present on his sixtieth birthday.

The German people considered this announcement in detail. If Kesselring had brought the present to Mussolini, then the Duce could

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not be held captive at a secret location or be dead, as some rumors claimed.

There was also the matter of a rather peculiar meeting between von Ribbentrop and the new Italian foreign minister Guariglia, which took place in Tarvisio on August 6.²⁶⁸ Again, “future cooperation” was stressed. While the participants were nearly the same as at earlier meetings, the Italians no longer offered the Fascist salute. Von Ribbentrop took an armed SS escort with him, as a precaution.

Even though something was obviously not quite right about the new German-Italian relations, Badoglio managed the impossible: his tactics succeeded in delaying Hitler’s active intervention in Italy for more than six weeks. Hitler did not yet dare allow Rommel to play the role he had reserved for him in the disarming of Italy. Instead, he sent him to Thessalonica.²⁶⁹ He was far more worried about the attitude which the twenty Italian divisions in the Balkans might take than about the actual situation in Italy. This was evidenced by Directive No. 48. Dated July 26, it read as follows:²⁷⁰

I. Enemy efforts in the eastern Mediterranean, connected with the attack against Sicily, make it seem likely that there will soon be landing operations against the blockaded Aegean front along the Peloponnesian-Crete-Rhodes line, and against the western coast of Greece and the neighboring Ionian Islands.

In case the enemy operations spread from Sicily into southern Italy, an attack should be expected against the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, north of the Straits of Otranto.

The enemy leaders also place reliance on their further plans for bandit movements deep inland in the southeast, for the most part systematically guided by themselves.

The neutral position of Turkey is beyond doubt at present, but will require attention in the future.

II. Owing to the current situation, in agreement with our ally Italy, a new command structure will be established in the southeast territory along the following lines: A. Army: 1) The [German] high command of the southeast takes command of the Italian Eleventh Army on July 27, 1943, at midnight. [Technical details follow.²⁷¹]

The persistence with which Hitler prepared for an Allied landing in the Balkans was astonishing. After the Allies had just taken Sicily, it was obvious that their next target would be the Italian mainland. It was far too risky to try to conquer Europe from the jagged Balkans. It would simply take too much time. The Balkans were a highly unlikely place for an attack, especially considering the far more favorable

August 15, 1943

circumstances in France and Italy. Furthermore, the Allies realized something that Hitler apparently did not: historically, Russia always regarded military operations in the Balkans as a threat.

Of course, Hitler had not completely abandoned his plan for occupying Italy. Directive No. 49 (Operation Alaric, later also called Axis), which dealt with these questions, was never formally issued;²⁷² studies on the occupation continued but in secret.

On August 2, Hitler had artillery general Wodrig lay a wreath at Hindenburg's sarcophagus at the Tannenberg Memorial.²⁷³

On August 3, Hitler awarded the city commander of Hamburg, Major General Wahle, the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross. He sent him this telegram:²⁷⁴

In recognition of your self-sacrificing personal service in the course of the relief campaign for Hamburg that was so terribly struck, I award you the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords.

Adolf Hitler

The situation on the eastern front was becoming increasingly critical. The Russians had not only thrown the German units involved in Operation Citadel back to their initial positions, but they also launched new strong offensives in the central and, above all, in the southern sectors along the Donetsk region.

Hitler was not much impressed. In the middle of August, he told Zeitzler that the south, that is, the Mediterranean, meant more to him than the east.²⁷⁵ The Balkans kept haunting him.

For this reason, he summoned the Bulgarian king Boris to Rastenburg on August 15.²⁷⁶ He wanted to feel him out on his stand regarding a possible Allied landing. He had long distrusted King Boris because of his refusal to declare war on the Russians. There was a new factor involved, too: King Boris was married to a daughter of the Italian king.²⁷⁷ This sufficed to make him highly suspicious in Hitler's eyes. The discussion with Hitler at the Wolfsschanze headquarters was probably not very pleasant for the Bulgarian king. In any event, the pilot Baur noted that Boris was downcast on the return flight to Sofia: "The king who had staked everything on Hitler could no longer ignore that this card would not win."

No communiqué was published on Hitler's talk with King Boris. While the brief note on the meeting with Mussolini at Feltre had

August 20, 1943

attracted general attention, the complete silence following King Boris' visit was even more revealing.

On August 17, the Allies completed their occupation of Sicily. The last German and Italian troops were forced to retreat across the Strait of Messina. The high command of the Wehrmacht announced on this day "the planned evacuation of the island."

On the night of August 18 to 19, the Luftwaffe chief of staff, Colonel General Hans Jeschonnek, committed suicide at Göring's headquarters. The public was informed that he had succumbed to a "severe illness." Hitler had Göring place a wreath in his name at Jeschonnek's funeral.²⁷⁸

With the Udet case,²⁷⁹ this was the second suicide among leading Luftwaffe generals. No matter what the precise reasons were, the suicides underlined the fact that Hitler had asked too much of the German Luftwaffe, and it was increasingly less able to carry out the tasks he set for it.

On August 19, it was made public that Hitler had charged Obergruppenführer Wilhelm Schepmann, the head of the SA Group Saxony, with the conduct of the affairs of the SA chief of staff.²⁸⁰

On August 20, Hitler decreed a series of domestic policy measures.²⁸¹ For a long time already, Hitler had distrusted the Reich minister of the interior Frick. In the period before and after the seizure of power, Frick had rendered him great services. In particular his skilful legal formulations had played a significant role in the establishment of Hitler's dictatorship. However, Frick's relations with Hitler had considerably cooled as the Führer began to institute his completely arbitrary reign in the course of the Second World War and, in doing so, constantly ignored his own National Socialist laws, the Reichstag, and so on. Hitler had grown especially angry with Frick as the Reich minister pressed for the creation of a senate that would deal with the question of succession to the Führer.²⁸² While Hitler himself had announced in his Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, that he now intended to summon such a senate "by law," he actually had no intentions of having his freedom of action restricted by such a forum. Frick was a dangerous man for Hitler because he also was the president of the Reichstag parliamentary party.

Naturally, since Hitler was constantly preoccupied with questions of power politics, he was not happy that Frick, in his capacity as interior minister, was officially Himmler's superior and in charge of the police.

August 21, 1943

In addition, Frick headed the Reich Labor Service, which, in the course of the war, had taken on increasingly militaristic characteristics, with its members carrying arms. In case of a crisis, Frick would have the police and the Labor Service at his disposal and, hence, would be capable of turning against the Führer.

For this reason, Hitler dismissed Frick as Reich minister of the interior on August 20. He assigned him to the insignificant post of Reich protector in Prague. Neurath, who had not actually occupied this post since September 1941, was finally relieved of his duties in Prague for good. To prevent Frick from doing anything foolish in his new post, Hitler created the position of a “German state minister for Bohemia and Moravia,”²⁸³ to which he appointed the previous state secretary with the Reich protector, SS Brigadeführer Karl Hermann Frank. As Hitler’s obedient servant, Himmler naturally became the new Reich minister of the interior. The Führer placed himself directly in charge of the Labor Service in the following decree of August 20:²⁸⁴

As an amendment of the Reich Labor Service Law in the form of the announcement of September 9, 1939, (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 1747) and my decree of January 30, 1937, (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 95) I order the following:

I

Carrying the designation “Der Reichsarbeitsführer” (the Reich leader of labor), a high Reich office shall be established with its seat in Berlin.

II

1. The Reich leader of labor shall be in charge of the Reich Labor Service.
2. The privileges regarding the affairs of the Reich Labor Service to which the Reich minister of the interior is entitled in accordance with laws, decrees, and ordinances, will devolve on the Reich leader of labor. The consideration of action on affairs of the Reich Labor Service will no longer form part of the jurisdiction of the Reich minister of the interior.
3. The Reich leader of labor will be directly responsible to me.

On August 20, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Horthy on the Hungarian national holiday.²⁸⁵

On August 21, he received the minister for the Honvéd (Hungarian armed forces), Colonel General von Csatay, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁸⁶

On August 25, the public was informed that, on a suggestion by Speer, Hitler had decided to establish an educational grant for the families of fallen soldiers.²⁸⁷

August 28, 1943

On August 27, Hitler flew to his Werwolf headquarters. During what was his last visit in Vinnitsa, he met with von Manstein.²⁸⁸ In view of the heavy Russian attacks, the latter put it plainly to the Führer: either quickly bring up new forces, at least twelve divisions, or give up the Donets areas. Hitler chose the first option and promised von Manstein “all available units.” But naturally these “available units” did not exist any more. What mattered to Hitler was that Manstein would continue to defend the Donets region with the forces already at his disposal.

Then Hitler returned to Rastenburg. On the following day, he met with Kluge for a discussion of the situation at the central sector.²⁸⁹ Hitler declared that he would await developments in the Mediterranean before making any decisions regarding the eastern front.

On the same day, news of the death of the Bulgarian king arrived. Following his return from Hitler’s headquarters, King Boris spent a week in the Bulgarian retreat Tshankuria. He went on excursions there, talked with tourists, and went hunting.²⁹⁰ On August 23, he returned to Sofia, where he took ill the same evening. He suffered from a “clogging of the left cardiac artery.” Two outstanding specialists, Dr. Seitz of Berlin and Professor Eppinger of Vienna, were summoned and arrived in Sofia on August 24. However, the efforts of the doctors were in vain. Following complications from pneumonia, the King died on the afternoon of August 28. The unexpected death of the forty-nine-year-old monarch gave rise to speculations that he had been poisoned. Supposedly, following the unsuccessful secret talks at his headquarters, the Führer had ordered him to be poisoned. Instead, Hitler claimed that Princess Mafalda, the wife of Prince Philip of Hesse, who was visiting Sofia at the time, had poisoned him on behalf of the Italian royal house.²⁹¹

On the death of the king, Hitler sent the following telegrams of condolence:²⁹²

To Prince Kyrill of Bulgaria, the King’s brother:

The news of the demise of your brother, His Majesty King Boris, has profoundly shaken me. In thanking Your Royal Highness for the conveyance of this information, I ask you to accept this expression of my sincere heartfelt sympathy with you on this terrible loss.

Adolf Hitler

To the queen dowager:

August 30, 1943

The distressing news of the demise of His Majesty King Boris has moved me painfully. In King Boris, Bulgaria has lost a man who led the destiny of his people with admirable courage and prudent wisdom. In him, I lose a loyal friend and ally whose memory will always be highly honored by myself and the German Volk. I ask Your Majesty to accept my and the entire German Volk's profound, sincere sympathy with the royal house and with the Bulgarian nation.

Adolf Hitler

To Prime Minister Filov:

On the demise of His Majesty King Boris, I wish to convey to Your Excellency my and the German Volk's heartfelt sympathies. I know that you were closely tied to your sovereign, as his loyal adviser in his historic mission for the future of Bulgaria. Together with you, I keenly feel the terrible loss which Bulgaria has suffered. I ask you to express my sympathies to the royal Bulgarian ministerial council as well.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler sent Grand Admiral Raeder to attend the king's funeral in Sofia on September 5.

Assuming the name Simeon II, the six-year-old son of the king followed him on the throne. A regency council was created, consisting of Prince Kyrill, Prime Minister Filov, and war minister, Lieutenant General Mikhov.

On August 29, Hitler received the newly appointed envoy of the "Independent State of Croatia," Professor Stjepan Ratkovich, and the new Romanian envoy, Jon Georghe, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁹³

On the same day, the General Freiherr von Boineburg-Lengsfeld, the military governor of Paris, distributed 211 "Führer certificates of honor" to the families of members of the French Foreign Legion who had fallen in Russia.²⁹⁴

In Copenhagen at this time, the commander of the German troops proclaimed martial law in Denmark.²⁹⁵

In Berlin on August 30, Thierack presented the Bulgarian justice minister Partov with the Grand Cross of the German Order, which he had been awarded by Hitler.²⁹⁶

On August 31, Hitler allowed two armies to retreat from the Donets area, "if the situation absolutely necessitates this and if there is no other possibility left."²⁹⁷

On September 2, Hitler again concerned himself with questions of domestic policy. In two decrees, he expanded his own powers.

September 2, 1943

The first decree dealt with the “concentration of the war economy.” It began with these words:²⁹⁸

In consideration of the streamlined concentration and the uniform deployment of all economic forces required by the war, I order the following for the duration of the war:

I

The Reich minister for economic affairs will be responsible for all principal questions of economic policy in the German economy.

II

The responsibilities of the Reich ministry of economics regarding raw materials and production in industry and in craftsmen’s trades will devolve on the Reich minister for armament and munitions. In view of his expanded scope of duties, the Reich minister for armament and munitions will bear the designation “Reich minister for armament and war production.”

The second decree concerned the Todt organization. In general, its members did not bear arms, although they did wear uniforms. As Hitler feared, it was possible that they would fall into the hands of agitators. Based on this consideration, he placed this organization immediately under his supervision, too. The decree read as follows:²⁹⁹

I

1. The Todt organization will be an institution geared toward the implementation of all kinds of tasks involving construction and building, tasks of decisive impact on the war.

2. The chief of the Todt organization will be the Reich minister for armament and munitions. He will answer directly to me and will be responsible only to me.

II

The deployment of the Todt organization will take place in the Greater German Reich and in the annexed or occupied territories. Deployment will be ordered by the chief of the Todt organization.

III

Articles I and II will apply equally to the carriers employed by the Todt organization.

September 4, 1943

IV

Implementing regulations on the structure of the Todt organization will be issued by the chief of the Todt organization.

On September 3, Hitler met with von Manstein and Kluge at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Both of them again wanted new troops.³⁰⁰ However, Hitler was frank and told them the following:

. . . additional forces could not be taken away from other theaters of the war or from Army Group North. Hitler also totally rejected the idea of creating a unitary command by conferring responsibility for all theaters of the war on the chief of staff.

The latter rejection came as no surprise. The generals' proposal would have taken important privileges away from Hitler. And he was not ready to allow this. He much preferred increasing his power.

On the same day, Montgomery's Eighth Army landed in Calabria. On the fourth anniversary of Britain's declaration of war, the English set foot on the continent. Resistance in Italy would collapse within a matter of days; otherwise, the change in government of July 25 would have been senseless. However, Hitler apparently still believed that the unstable situation there would continue

On September 4, he sent Reich youth leader Arthur Axmann the following telegram:³⁰¹

On the day of premilitary training on September 4 and 5, the Hitler Youth in all areas of the Reich is bearing witness to its skills in premilitary training as preparation for military service with the Wehrmacht.

While, in an unprecedented heroic fight, the Wehrmacht is doing its utmost for the future of Greater Germany, the youth in the homeland is steeling its body and spirit. In the future, every new age-group will be trained in premilitary-training camps by battle-tested soldiers who largely were once Hitler Youth leaders themselves. Soldierly thought and action based on National Socialist ideas are the goal of this training.

The boys earlier trained by the Hitler Youth are already proving themselves in the ranks of the Wehrmacht. I thank the Reich youth leaders for this.

As the competitions of the Navy Hitler Youth and the Air Force Hitler Youth in Stralsund and Quedlinburg were devoted to the memory of the brave men at sea and in the air, so let us dedicate this day of premilitary training in all German Gaus to the silent heroism of the front-line soldiers, who so self-sacrificially fight in the divisions of the army and Waffen SS.

The front expects that—in this most difficult, fateful struggle—the Hitler Youth will continue to see its most noble mission in providing the fighting troops with the best soldierly recruits. National Socialist willpower and action

September 8, 1943

will increasingly be expressed by the attitude and appearance of the youth. Then that strong generation will grow up that will in the end successfully resolve all tasks that fate has set our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

On September 4, Hitler ordered the evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead, the so-called Krimhild movement (*Krimhildbewegung*).³⁰² The order opened with these words:

In order to free units for other tasks, I have decided to evacuate the Kuban bridgehead and to withdraw the Seventeenth Army across the straits of Kerch to the Crimea [technical details follow, regarding the evacuation movements, destruction of buildings, and the defense of the Crimea].

This personal order was truly surprising coming from a man who had publicly declared as follows:

What we once possess, we will never again surrender!³⁰³

Land taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!³⁰⁴

Now for the first time, Hitler himself gave orders to evacuate an area which he must have known he would never be able to retake.

On September 5, Hitler again increased the powers of his personal physician, Professor Brandt, whom he had already placed in charge of the medical and public health services earlier.³⁰⁵

On September 8, Hitler flew to Zaporozhye for talks with Army Group South. The situation on the eastern front was becoming critical. The Russians had recaptured Kharkov on August 22. The German efforts during February and March had been in vain.

In addition to von Manstein, Kleist (Army Group A) and Colonel General Ruoff of the Seventeenth Army attended the talks.³⁰⁶ While Hitler agreed to withdraw the right wing to the line Melitopol-Dnieper, he announced that he would provide new self-propelled assault-gun detachments which would make this unnecessary. Hitler was ever ready to make promises of assistance and, time and again, he managed to impress the generals with this. Saying goodbye to von Manstein at the airport, he even promised him an additional four divisions for the securing of the Dnieper crossings.

Following his return to Rastenburg, Hitler was given news of Italy's unconditional surrender. On September 8, Badoglio sent him a telegram, describing the hopelessness of Italy's situation. The telegram closed on this note:³⁰⁷

September 9, 1943

You cannot expect a people to continue a war in which all legitimate hope, I shall not say for victory, but for a successful defense, has vanished. In order to prevent its complete ruin, Italy has been forced to address a request for a ceasefire to the enemy.

Hitler's "Italian mule," as Churchill had called Germany's ally, had collapsed for good! Hitler acted as though he had been done a great injustice and Italy's surrender had come as a complete surprise for him. He telephoned Goebbels³⁰⁸ and asked him to come to the headquarters on the next day. He did likewise with Göring, Himmler, and several Austrian Gauleiters. In addition, he personally wrote a press statement on "Badoglio's treason," which concluded with these words:³⁰⁹

Badoglio is unconditionally abandoning Italy to the enemy. The German leaders were prepared to see this step. All necessary measures have been taken. Since the criminal attack on the Duce on July 25 and the elimination of the Fascist government, the German government has paid special attention to the developments in Italy. It will know how to counter these new developments.

Hitler ordered the occupation of Italy. Initially, he had intended to take these measures on July 26. He issued orders to Kesselring regarding southern and central Italy and to Rommel regarding northern Italy.

When Goebbels arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on September 9, Hitler put on a show. He claimed that, on the day before, he had suddenly been seized by "a strange unrest," which had "immediately driven him back to his headquarters."³¹⁰

On the general situation, Hitler commented that he believed that, "given some effort, he would master things. Of course, we cannot hold southern Italy. We will have to retreat beyond Rome. The old line of defense, as the Führer has always envisioned it, will be established now, namely, the Apennines line."

On this day, Hitler's assessment of the situation was even more pessimistic than the actual situation. He expected "an attempt by the Anglo-Americans to invade the Netherlands" and described the situation in the east as "extremely critical."

When Goebbels asked him whether he thought it would be possible to do something with Stalin in terms of peace negotiations, Hitler refused.

Anyway, the Führer thinks that it will be easier to do something with the English than with the Soviets. In the Führer's opinion, the English will listen to reason at a certain point.

September 9, 1943

Surely, the English will also take Sardinia and Corsica. If they come out of this war with this loot [in addition to Sicily], then they will have won a few things. The Führer thinks that this will make them more open to a possible arrangement.

Hitler's old theory of friendship with England! He wanted to act "generously" and leave them Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica.³¹¹

Goebbels "energetically" urged Hitler now to speak before the German Volk. Hitler usually shied away from speaking in public under such unfavorable circumstances. He much preferred to talk when there was some triumph to be reported. Finally, he agreed to work on a short radio address.³¹²

At dinner that night, Hitler discussed the value of medals.³¹³

The Führer thinks that the only medal which is being awarded fairly is the Mother's Cross; at least here there is a sharp delineation downward, although not upward. There is no bungling, and preferential treatment is not possible here.³¹⁴

On the next day, new reports from Italy arrived. "Things in northern and central Italy" had got off to an "extraordinarily favorable" start. However, German U-boats had arrived too late at the naval port of La Spezia, since the Italian fleet with over a hundred units had already gone to sea. In accordance with the terms of the armistice, it had passed on to Malta for internment.

All in all, things were not going so well in Italy that Hitler dared to speak publicly. He decided to postpone his speech. He felt that measures guaranteeing his own security were far more important than an address to "console the Volk." Following the news of Mussolini's removal from office, Hitler had placed the Reichstag deputies under police surveillance. Now that the power of the Italian royal house was becoming increasingly evident, Hitler took care to eliminate any role the former royal houses of Germany might play in power politics. He stated the following to Goebbels:

All German princes in the German Wehrmacht will now be eliminated.³¹⁵



LVI Himmler speaks with a Jewish woman

Photo: Publisher's archives



LVII Himmler at Dachau concentration camp

Photo: Publisher's archives

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4

During the lunch, news of the surrender of the Italian garrison in Rome to German troops arrived. Finally, Hitler felt more inclined to give a speech, even though he did not really feel up to it. Things would have been different, of course, had the Duce already been freed!

Nevertheless, Goebbels managed to get Hitler in front of the microphone and had him record the speech on a tape recorder. Hitler felt decidedly better once he had “got rid” of the speech, as Goebbels put it. He even promised to speak again soon, at the opening of the Winterhilfswerk in the Sportpalast in Berlin. However, he did not keep this promise.

Shortly after 8:00 p.m. on September 10, Hitler’s speech was broadcast in Germany:³¹⁶

My German Volksgenossen!

Freed from the heavy weight of the expectation which long haunted us, I now think the time has come that I am able to speak again to the German Volk, without having to take refuge in lies either to myself or to the public.

For a long time, the collapse of Italy which took place was foreseeable, not because of a lack of suitable possibilities in Italy for effective defense, and not because of the nonarrival of the necessary German help. Rather, it was the result of failure—or better the lack of desire—of those elements which have now caused the surrender in concluding their planned sabotage. What these men strove to achieve for many years has now been put into effect: the switching of the Italian government from the German Reich allied to Italy to the common enemy.

When England and France declared war on the German Reich in September 1939, Italy was obliged, by treaty, to declare its solidarity with Germany immediately. This solidarity was based not only on the agreements in the pact, but also on the fate which the enemies planned for Germany as well as for Italy in the future. It is known that Mussolini had firmly resolved to order an immediate mobilization. The same forces which today brought about the surrender succeeded in preventing Italy’s entry into the war in August 1939.

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As the Führer of the German Volk, I understood the extraordinary domestic difficulties that the Duce was experiencing. Therefore, neither at this time nor later, did I urge Italy to honor its obligations to the alliance. On the contrary, I completely left it to the Italian government's discretion either not to enter into the war at all or to do so at a point when it was felt suitable and it was at complete liberty to make the decision. By June 1940, Mussolini managed to create the domestic prerequisites for Italy to join the Reich's side.

The battles for Poland were already decided by this time, as were those for Norway, and those against France and its allied English armies on the continent. Nevertheless, I had to thank the Duce for his stand which, as I knew, he only managed to see through at home—not against the Italian people, but against certain circles—with the greatest difficulties. Since this time, the Reich and Italy fought together; in many theaters of the war, they spilled their blood together. Never for one second did the Duce or I doubt that the outcome of this battle would decide the existence or nonexistence of our people. Accordingly, Germany, even though it was itself immersed in a most difficult struggle, helped its ally to the utmost of its means.

Many offers of assistance were either completely rejected by the military rulers in Italy from the start or were accepted only under conditions which could not be met. At an appropriate time, documents will be submitted to the public that will reveal the extent of Germany's contribution to its ally in this fateful struggle and the extent of what it continued to be willing to contribute. The German soldier displayed an attitude in the common theaters of the war that distinguishes him everywhere. After all, without his intervention, North Africa would have already been lost for Italy in the winter of 1940–1941.

The name of Marshal Rommel shall remain eternally tied to this German achievement. When the Reich decided to help Italy in the Balkans in the spring of 1941, it did this not in order to realize its own ambitions, but simply in order to help the ally out and to eliminate a danger which arose due to his actions and which naturally also threatened Germany. Germany made this sacrifice at a moment when it had more than enough of its own worries, because of the feared large-scale Bolshevik attack on all of Europe, which was expected at any hour. The blood of numerous Volksgenossen sealed the German Volk's loyalty to the alliance.

The German Reich and I as its Führer could assume this stand only knowing that at the head of the Italian people stood one of the most important men of modern times, the greatest son of Italy since the end of antiquity. His unconditional loyalty was the prerequisite for the successful maintenance of the alliance. Future Italian generations will one day regard his overthrow as a profound disgrace, along with the dishonorable insults he suffered.

What ultimately triggered the long-decided coup d'état was the demand of the Duce for increased juridical powers for the successful conduct of the war. For this purpose, he wished to employ the strictest measures against open and secret saboteurs of the war, against reactionary enemies of social justice, and against the resistance movement within the Italian people. Until the last

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minute, Mussolini wished to neutralize the treacherous enemies of the Italian people in this struggle of life and death in order to secure Italy's future.

It is easy to understand the pain which I personally felt in view of the historically unprecedented injustice done to this man, his disgraceful treatment, which degraded him to the level of a common criminal, this man who had lived only for his people for over twenty years. I was, and am, happy to be allowed to call this great and loyal man my friend. Moreover, I do not change or deny my views whenever it seems opportune.³¹⁷ I believe that, in spite of views to the contrary, loyalty represents an irreplaceable value in international relations. Without it, all human society would begin to falter, and its organizations would sooner or later break apart. In spite of this, even after this humiliating event, the German troops on Sicily, the German pilots, men of the U-boats, motor torpedo boats, transporters of all types, and so on, on land, in the air, and at sea have fulfilled their duty to the utmost.

Although for reasons of tactical convenience the enemy today wishes to conceal this—posterity will one day find out that, with the exception of a few brave Italian units, it primarily were the German troops who defended with their blood not only the German Reich but also Italian soil.

If the leaders of the Italian state now decided to break the alliance, withdraw from the war, and, thereby, transform Italy itself into a theater of war, they may give whatever reasons for doing this. While they can portray this as a necessity, they will never find an excuse for the fact that this occurred without the ally's having been informed ahead of time.³¹⁸ Not only this: on the same day on which Marshal Badoglio signed the armistice, he asked the German chargé d'affaires in Rome to come see him and assured him that he, Marshal Badoglio, would never betray Germany, that we should trust him, and that he would prove this through his actions, that he was worthy of our trust, that Italy would above all never consider surrender.

On the day of the surrender, the king summoned the German chargé d'affaires and assured him in particular that Italy would never surrender, that it was bound to Germany for better or for worse, that it intended to stand loyally on our side. Yes, even one hour after the announcement of the betrayal, the Italian chief of staff Roatta told our military attaché that it was a filthy lie and an English propaganda hoax. At the same moment, the representative of the Italian foreign ministry stated that this information was only a typically British swindle and that he intended to issue a denial of it. Fifteen minutes later, he admitted that the information was indeed correct, and that Italy had withdrawn from the war.

In the eyes of the democratic warmongers as well as in those of the present Italian government, this behavior may seem an excellent example of tactically skillful statesmanship. History will one day come to a different conclusion. Future generations of Italians will be ashamed of the use of this tactic against an allied friend, who with his blood and sacrifices of all types fulfilled his duty to more than the letter of the treaty.

My Volksgenossen! Since I have had sufficient opportunity in the past two years to observe the increasing influence of these reactionary and anti-German

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circles, which assumed an attitude hostile to the social tasks in Italy, there was no doubt, after the overthrow of the Duce, about the true intentions of this change in government.

In fulfillment of my duty, I have ordered all those measures which could be taken in such a case to spare the German Reich a fate which Marshal Badoglio and his men not only inflicted on the Duce and the Italian people, but into which they also intended to plunge Germany.³¹⁹

The interests of the German Volk in waging this war are for us as sacred as they are compelling. We all know that, in this merciless struggle, the loser will be annihilated, in accordance with the wishes of our enemies, while only the victor will retain the means for living. In cool determination, we are therefore willing to take those measures both great and small to destroy the hopes of our enemies. But also countless honorable Italians have now all the more declared themselves indissolubly tied to the struggle of the two people.

The loss of Italy means little militarily. After all, the struggle in this country was being fought primarily by German forces. We will now continue this fight freed from all encumbering burdens. The attempt of the international conspiracy of the plutocracies to break German resistance, like the Italian, by talk is childish. They must be mistaking the German Volk for another people. Their hope to find traitors here today as in Italy is based on complete ignorance of the essence of the National Socialist State. Their belief that they can bring about a July 25 in Germany, too, is based on a fundamental misconception of my position as well as of the attitude of my political comrades in arms, my field marshals, admirals, and generals.³²⁰

More than ever before, the German leaders oppose this ambition as a fanatically united community. Misery will only reinforce our determination. My private life has long ago ceased to belong exclusively to me. I work with the realization and the sense of duty that, by my contribution, I can secure the life of my Volk for future generations. That I have the right to believe unconditionally in this success is not only founded on my life, but also on the rise of our Volk.

Alone and abandoned, we had to accept the declarations of war from our enemies in the year 1939. We acted in accordance with Clausewitz's declaration that heroic resistance is at all times better than cowardly surrender. That is why I had already told the Reichstag on September 1, 1939, that neither time nor force of arms would ever defeat the German Volk. Since then, and primarily due to our own strength, we have forced the enemy's retreat from the German borders, in places to more than a thousand kilometers. Only by air is he still able to terrorize the German homeland. Here, too, the technological and organizational means are being developed not only to end his terror attacks for good, but also to retaliate by different and more effective measures.

While in this mighty and fateful struggle tactical necessities may at times force us to give up something at a front or to evade a particular threat, the ring of steel which protects the Reich will never break. It is forged by the German homeland and held up by the heroism and blood of our soldiers.

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At this time in particular, I expect that the nation will all the more fulfill its duty with dogged persistency in all spheres of this mighty struggle. It has every reason to have confidence in itself.

The party must set an example in everything. The homeland can look with pride to its soldiers, who time and again do their duty at the heroic risk of life and under the most difficult circumstances. In the hours of suffering, in the course of many weeks and months of often superhuman efforts, may the front always remember the homeland which has today become a fighting front, too. Here the heroism of old men and boys, mothers, women, and girls is evident. Every soldier therefore has the sacred duty, more than ever before, to continue with the greatest perseverance and to do what must be done in this struggle. The German Volk never before had more right to be proud of itself in its history than in this mightiest struggle of all time. All attempts to subject Germany to the fate of an enslaved nation will fail because of this willpower and this achievement.

May every individual German, no matter where he stands, be aware that on him, on his effort and his willingness to sacrifice depends the preservation of our Volk, the fate and the future of many generations.

I can therefore not find the words to thank the German Volk, the men and women of the homeland, the soldiers at the front, for what they do, what they willingly bear, and patiently suffer. These words of thanks one day will be spoken by coming generations in the realization that their free and socially secure life has grown out of the sacrifice of our time. I myself am infinitely proud to be allowed to be the Führer of this Volk, and I am grateful to the Lord for every hour which He gives me to contribute through my work to making this greatest battle in our history successful.

The measures taken to protect German interests, in view of the developments in Italy, are very harsh. Insofar as they concern Italy, they are already progressing according to plan. The example of Yugoslavia's betrayal provided us with salutary insights and valuable realizations.³²¹

Italy's fate may serve as a lesson for all of us so that, in the hour of the most terrible distress and the most bitter need, we may never renounce national honor, that we loyally stand by our allies, and with a faithful heart fulfill what duty demands of us. The people which passes these trials by Providence will in the end receive as a reward from the Almighty the laurel wreath of the victor and therefore the prize of life. This victor must and will be Germany under any circumstances.

The speech was truly average. However, Goebbels was quite impressed by it. Proudly, he noted in his diary: "Even in England, they will have to admit that it is one of the strongest the Führer has given during the entire war." Goebbels had no more sense of irony than Hitler. Both were thrilled whenever the English had praised Hitler's accomplishments or those of the German soldiers!

September 12, 1943

After Hitler's speech, the high command of the Wehrmacht published an announcement on the disarmament of Italian troops in Italy, Albania, Croatia, Greece, and southern France. The report ended with these words:³²²

The Italian armed forces no longer exist. What will remain for eternity will be the contempt of the world for the traitor.

"The Italian armed forces no longer exist." Again, as with France in the previous year, one of Hitler's intentions voiced in *Mein Kampf* was fulfilled:

Never tolerate the emergence of two continental powers in Europe. Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, in hindering the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, in its destruction.³²³

Now, however, he was forced to keep occupied by German troops Italy too.

On September 12, Hitler freed Mussolini in a *coup de main* at the Gran Sasso where the Duce had been interned at a mountain hotel, and brought him to Germany. SS Hauptsturmführer Otto Skorzeny led the foray by a special SS Kommando, including several parachutists. They landed on the mountain around 2:00 p.m. on September 12. A report published by the German News Bureau three days later listed at least one-third of the participants as missing or dead.³²⁴

Like nearly all other operations by Hitler, this theatrical coup took place on a weekend. He did not free Mussolini because he cared for him as a person or because he deluded himself on the Duce's future role. He primarily wanted to keep up the impression within the German Volk—and himself—that Fascist Italy with the Duce at its head still existed and that nothing at all had changed in his world.

Secondly, he felt the need to uphold his 1919 theory of alliance. Just as he managed to enter into an alliance with Italy and maintain it under any circumstances, he would still get the desired alliance with England arranged one day. A statement he made to his manservant Linge is revealing on this issue:³²⁵

Once this rescue becomes known, it will hit the world like a bomb—most of all the English. That will show the English that I never abandon a friend, that

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I am a man of honor. Then, I will have kept my promise. England will say: "He is a true friend."

Although it seems incredible, Hitler apparently hoped that the English would be so touched by this rescue operation that they would try to win the friendship of such a true ally.

Mussolini was not thrilled in the least about his rescue. He was happy that the change of government had not cost his life and hoped not to be handed over to the Allies. The last thing he probably desired was to fall into Hitler's hands. Not without reason, he feared that the Führer would attempt to punish or kill him for his "failure" in the session of the Great Fascist Council. Contrary to Mussolini's claims broadcast later, films made of his liberation from the Grand Sasso show him to be exceedingly anxious and worried about the fate which awaited him as he took his seat in the "Fieseler Storch" airplane, which had landed in front of his hotel.

Mussolini's Italian guards did not resist in the least. It is possible that Badoglio's government had got wind of the operation. In accordance with the terms of the armistice, it would have been forced to surrender Mussolini, as a war criminal, to the Allies. However, Badoglio was as reluctant to do this as the German government was after the overthrow in 1918 when it rejected the Allies's request for the extradition of von Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and others. Badoglio did not mind Hitler's taking charge of Mussolini, since this meant that he no longer needed to concern himself with the Duce's fate.³²⁶

The German public was informed of Mussolini's liberation as though it were a question of a political and military victory without equal. But all the vociferous cheers and special reports did not deceive the public; Hitler's only victory in 1943 was rather odd. In the years 1940 and 1941, he himself would probably not have believed that he would one day broadcast the kidnapping of the deposed and powerless Mussolini as news of victory.

Mussolini was flown from the Gran Sasso to Vienna. From the Imperial Hotel, he telephoned Hitler, who was at his headquarters and had already been informed by Himmler that the *coup de main* had been a success. On the following day, Mussolini was brought to Munich, where his likewise "liberated" family already awaited him.³²⁷ Hitler telephoned Skorzeny, congratulated him, promoted him to SS

September 18, 1943

Sturmbannführer, and awarded him the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.³²⁸

On September 14, Mussolini arrived at the Rastenburg airfield. He was still wearing a dark civilian suit and a black coat. Hitler welcomed him and hugged his "friend." On the same evening, a series of "confidential conversations" followed. A first result of the talks was the issuing of four brief "orders of the day" by Mussolini on September 15.³²⁹

On September 15, the governments of Germany and Japan issued this joint declaration:³³⁰

The breach of faith by the government of Marshal Badoglio does not affect in any manner the Tripartite Pact, which remains in force as before without reservation. The Reich government and the Japanese government are determined to continue waging the war together, with all means at their disposal, until the final victory.

On the same day, Hitler received von Manstein in Zeitzler's presence. Von Manstein again reported on the dangerous situation of Army Group South, whose northern wing was particularly endangered. He urgently requested assistance.³³¹ Hitler promised him four divisions from Army Group Center. However, it was likewise heavily pressed by the Russians, who had conquered Orël in August and Bryansk on September 14. The Russians were now advancing on Smolensk—Russia's holy city.

On September 18, Hitler received a new head of a satellite state at the Wolfsschanze headquarters: the Serbian prime minister Colonel General Nedich.³³²

On the same day, the talks with Mussolini ended.³³³ Hitler had resuscitated the weary Duce a bit, but all in all he was dissatisfied with him.³³⁴ He simply couldn't understand why Mussolini did not regard it as imperative to have his son-in-law Ciano executed as a "traitor."³³⁵ It had cost Hitler "great effort to convince him that at least Grandi was a conscious traitor to the Fascist Party and the Duce."

Mussolini was brought to the Prince Carl Palace in Munich, from where he addressed the Italian people in a radio address that evening. During Hitler's years of triumph in 1937 and 1938, Mussolini had always set up quarters at the Prince Carl Palace. But his speech now lacked the enthusiasm of earlier years. Mussolini cared about only one thing, his mistress Clara Petacci.³³⁶ He would not rest until Hitler finally had SS Obergruppenführer Sepp Dietrich bring her from Italy.

September 22, 1943

An exchange of telegrams took place between Hitler and the Japanese prime minister Tojo on the Duce's liberation.³³⁷ Tojo congratulated the Führer on the "success of a daring decision."

On September 20, Hitler established another medal, the Kuban Shield. Like other such awards, it was to be worn on the left upper sleeve.³³⁸ On the same day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Thailand, Rama VIII, on his birthday.³³⁹

On September 22, Hitler received Goebbels for "extensive talks" at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.³⁴⁰ He permitted the Reich minister to accompany him on his morning walk with his German shepherd Blondi. On that occasion, Hitler raved about a new type of magnetic torpedo.

Of course, they also discussed the Duce, the situation in Italy, and a number of personnel questions. Hitler was still haunted by the Duce's removal from office and the question of what type of punishment would be meted out in Germany in such a case:

A punishment which would for all time deter those who thought of treason even in the furthest corners of their heart.

Hitler was already dissatisfied with his new minister of justice.

No matter how much better Thierack may be than Gürtner, he is still not an ideal Reich minister of justice. At the end, he always sticks to legal eggshells.

All in all, Hitler seemed quite downcast in his discussion with Goebbels. He even mentioned that he was considering peace feelers. Goebbels asked him if he might be willing to negotiate with Churchill or if he was in principle against it.

The Führer gave me this answer: There is no such thing as principles in politics regarding public figures. However, he believes that negotiations with Churchill would not lead to anything, since he is too deeply involved in a contrary view and, besides, hatred and not reason served as his [Churchill's] advisors. The Führer would be more inclined to negotiate with Stalin. However, he does not think that this would lead to anything, because what he [Hitler] demands in the east cannot be surrendered by Stalin.³⁴¹

Moreover, Hitler again made derogatory remarks on the satellite states in the Balkans, which he himself had chosen as partners in his alliance.

Horthy would like to bail out, but the Führer has taken the proper precautions. Kallay, his prime minister, is a downright swine (*ausgemachtes Schwein*). But he does not betray himself; he is too careful to compromise

September 27, 1943

himself. As a result, we have to grin and bear it for now. [Johann] Antonescu is a reliable ally, insofar as you can say this about someone from the Balkans at all. However, he is also controlled by the corrupt and Anglophile Mihai Antonescu, who would rather bail out today than tomorrow.

On September 27, an exchange of telegrams on the anniversary of the Tripartite Pact took place. This time, however, King Victor Emmanuel III was missing from the list. Mussolini had suffered a great loss of prestige, even with his partners. Hitler's telegrams to the Duce, the Japanese emperor, and the Japanese prime minister read as follows:³⁴²

Duce!

On the third anniversary of the signature of the Tripartite Pact, I think of you and Fascist Italy, which rallies to you in loyal devotion, with a feeling of heartfelt solidarity and friendship. It is my unshakable conviction that, no matter how great the resistance, the mighty struggle, which has started for the freedom and future of the life of the people of Europe and East Asia, will be crowned by victory in the end. In this spirit, I send you, Duce, on today's occasion, my heartfelt and warmest best wishes for the happiness and future of Italy, to which Fascism has brought a freedom of honor.

Adolf Hitler

[To the Japanese Emperor]

On today's day of commemoration, on which the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact celebrates its third anniversary, I convey to Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings and best wishes, also in the name of the entire German Volk. It is my firm conviction that this freedom-fight forced on our countries will end with the triumph of our just cause and will therefore lead our people to a happy and secure future.

Adolf Hitler

[To Prime Minister Tojo]

On the third anniversary of the historical conclusion of the Pact, which in a solemn manner sealed the solidarity of our people and the common nature of their goals, I convey to Your Excellency, along with my most sincere greetings, my best wishes for the future struggle of the glorious Japanese arms. Filled with the unshakable belief in the final victory of our common struggle, I hereby also express my conviction that the ideal embodied in the Tripartite Pact, the creation of a new and just world order, will be realized in the interest of the well-being of the people of Europe and East Asia, following the successful conclusion of this confrontation.

Adolf Hitler

September 28, 1943

On September 27, a funeral ceremony for Gauleiter Kube took place in the Reich Chancellery. Kube had been area commissar for Minsk and had been assassinated with a bomb. Hitler had a wreath placed.³⁴³

On September 28, the constitutional assembly of the “Fascist-Republican” puppet regime took place in “a city in northern Italy.” Hitler sent the following telegram addressed to “the chief of the Fascist republican government of Italy, Benito Mussolini, Rome,” to the Duce, who was not in Rome at all:³⁴⁴

Duce!

With joy and satisfaction, I have received your message on the foundation of the Fascist Republican government of Italy. I have the privilege of informing you, Duce, that the government of the Greater German Reich recognizes the Fascist Republican government of Italy formed by you. The Reich government is determined to wage this war in loyal alliance with it, side by side, until the victorious end.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler’s system of alliances was starting to fall apart not only in the south, but also in the north. Talks between Finnish and English representatives had already taken place in Stockholm in August. At first, nothing had come of the talks. In September, however, the Finns declared that they were waging their own war and were not interested in the war of the great powers. Apparently, the Finns would seek a separate peace sooner or later. This was also evident in Hitler’s Directive No. 50 of September 28, which read as follows:³⁴⁵

1. The position of Army Group North is fully fortified; the retreat of their front is not intended. The most hazardous operational sector at Velikiye Luki is substantially reinforced. Nevertheless, a second position has been built beyond Lake Peipus and Narva, in case of unfavorable developments within Finland.

2. We must also take into account the possibility for Finland to be cut off or to fall.

3. In such a case, the task of Geb. Army High Command 20 will be to hold the northern territory, which is vitally important for us for defensive and economic reasons, if the front line changes [technical details follow].

This cautious directive proved that Hitler was operating on a more “subdued note.”

The Allies decided to take Italy from the south. Judging by historical experience, this could become a more protracted undertaking. During its long history, Italy had been repeatedly conquered, although usually

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from the north, and very rarely from the south. On September 9, the American Fifth Army landed at Salerno. Soon, however, it ran into the danger of being forced back into the sea by German troops that had been brought up hurriedly. In such a perilous situation, as demonstrated frequently in the course of the Second World War, the English had to come to the rescue.⁵⁴⁶ Montgomery sent a Canadian division, without artillery, by sea from Calabria to the beachhead. Soon the situation became more stable and, on October 1, the Allies entered Naples.

On the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on the "day of the Caudillo."³⁴⁷

On October 3, this year's [German] Thanksgiving Day, Hitler maintained silence. He refrained from issuing appeals and sending telegrams and asked Goebbels to speak in his stead at the Sportpalast. In addition, he sent Skorzeny there. The man who had freed Mussolini was instructed to present three Knight's Crosses of the War Service Cross to the recipients in Hitler's name.³⁴⁸

The partially preserved shorthand reports on Hitler's discussions of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on October 3 and 4 contain nothing new, aside from the recall of a Spanish division from the eastern front.³⁴⁹ This event also shows how much Hitler's star was already on the decline.

On October 7, Hitler gave a speech before Reichsleiters and Gauleiters, who met at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a conference. The communiqué read as follows:³⁵⁰

In the course of the gathering, the Führer gave the assembled party leaders a comprehensive overview of the course of the war up to now, and the present military and political situation. The Führer concluded that, next to the strength of the weapons, the intention and perseverance of their bearers was crucial to the victory in this historical confrontation whose course demonstrated its own rhythm of climaxes and tensions as do all great historic decisions. Weapons alone meant nothing if the intention of the human being did not stand behind them. Irrespective of the military situation, the intention and attitude, the constant pertinacity in the pursuit of the goals must always be the same. The embodiment of this intention is the nation.

For the present fateful struggle of the German Volk, its struggle for power serves as an example. Never did it allow setbacks to discourage it. Its fighting spirit, its energy, its firm determination and extreme self-reliance again stiffen the German Volk's backbone today and give it strength in spite of the weight of the air war. If we keep up this spirit, which is evident on the battlefield as well as in the homeland, then this war could never be lost. Instead, it must and will gain us a great German victory. The entire German Volk knows that it is

October 10, 1943

a question of life and death. It has burned its bridges. There is only the way ahead. It must therefore remain hard and persevere until the final victory—as long as this may take and as difficult as this may be at times. The Führer concluded:

“We will fight everywhere and will never be worn out until we have reached our goal. Take with you in your hearts the unshakable and firm belief that, if our will does not falter, this war will end with a great German victory.”

On this occasion, Hitler congratulated Himmler on his forty-third birthday.

On October 10, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Wang Ching-wei on the Chinese national holiday.³⁵¹

The more the situation in the various theaters of war deteriorated, the less Hitler cared to concern himself with the war. He preferred to think of the times which would follow upon the victorious conclusion of the war. He enjoyed making plans for the rebuilding of the destroyed cities. This is evidenced by his decree of October 11 on “Preparations for a Reconstruction of Cities Damaged by Bombs”:³⁵²

I

The repair of damage in the cities affected by enemy terror attacks will take place after the war in the framework of a comprehensive reorganization. The reconstruction will already be prepared during the war, insofar as this will be possible, by the drawing up of urban development plans. I alone will decide which of the reconstruction cities (*Wiederaufbaustädte*) will receive priority in the planning. I charge Reich Minister Speer in his capacity as inspector general for the Reich Capital with the supervision of the urban-development planning in the cities designated by me.

II

Reich Minister Speer will attend in particular to the following tasks:

1. For the reconstruction cities, he will lay down the limits of the future design, as far as possible.
2. He will decide which office will be entrusted with the preparation of the plans and will assign suitable workers to it.

III.

1. Instead of the Reich minister of labor, Reich Minister Speer shall decide all questions of urban development in the reconstruction cities.

2. The ordinance on the reorganization measures for repairing war damage of December 2, 1940 (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 1575), and its supplementary regulations remain unaffected by this.

October 18, 1943

IV

The legal and administrative regulations necessary for the implementation of this decree will be issued jointly by Reich Minister Speer and the Reich minister of the interior.

On October 12, Hitler awarded Professor Sauerbruch the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords.³⁵³ In addition, he received Lieutenant General Emilio Esteban-Infantes, the commander of the recalled Spanish division, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters and presented him with the Knight's Cross.³⁵⁴

On October 13, the Badoglio government declared war on Germany. This made little difference to Hitler. On the same day, he received Marshal Graziani, who had joined Mussolini.³⁵⁵ Now Hitler had his own Italian Marshal!

Also on the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on his birthday. On October 15, another congratulatory telegram followed on the birthday of the king of Afghanistan.³⁵⁶

On October 16, Hitler congratulated Epp on his seventy-fifth birthday in a handwritten letter.

On October 18, Horthy also turned seventy-five. Hitler presented a yacht to the regent as a birthday gift and sent Raeder to Budapest.³⁵⁷

Also on October 18, Hitler received the members of the Bulgarian regency council at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. In endless monologues, he demonstrated his rhetoric, which usually never failed to impress politicians from the Balkans. Prince Kyrill also seemed to succumb to it, as the interpreter Schmidt remarked.³⁵⁸ However, the whole structure of Hitler's wishful thinking began to fall apart on the Prince's return trip. The official communiqué read as follows:³⁵⁹

On October 18, the Führer received the members of the Bulgarian regency council, Prince Kyrill and Professor Filov. The Führer discussed the general situation with Prince Kyrill and Professor Filov, as well as questions of common interest. On the German side, the meeting was attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Jodl. The discussion at the Führer's was characterized by a spirit of heartfelt agreement and of the proved traditional friendship between the Reich and Bulgaria.

It was remarkable that the third member of the regency council, General Mikhov, did not attend the talks. In addition, there was no mention of the German-Bulgarian "brotherhood in arms," which existed, however, exclusively against the Anglo-Americans.

October 30, 1943

On October 19, Hitler spoke at an OKW conference at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:³⁶⁰

At the end of a conference organized by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, at which leading men in state and party made presentations on ideology and domestic policy, the Führer received the participants in the conference and spoke to them about the political and military situation. The commanders of the defense districts, the commanders in chief of the navy high command, commanding admirals, as well as the commanding generals of the district air commands, along with their chief physicians, and chief deputies took part in the conference, in addition to a number of high-ranking officers and officials from the high command.

On October 19, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to King Michael of Romania on his birthday.³⁶¹

In the course of the evening discussion of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on October 26, the topics discussed included the dangerous situation in the Crimea, the German-English exchange of wounded prisoners of war and medical personnel organized by the Swedish Red Cross, and the deployment of Italian war loot and production.³⁶²

On October 30, Hitler made an appeal to the public on behalf of the War Vocational Competition for the Youth, which was scheduled for January 15, 1944. The appeal read as follows:³⁶³

Working German Youth!

We take as our example the heroism of the German soldier. It is our duty to show that the deployment of the homeland is worthy of this heroism. Vocational achievements form part of this deployment. In peacetime, vocational competitions were already an expression of the working German youth's will to work and produce. Today, I make a new appeal to you on behalf of the Reich Vocational Competitions. Substantiate your avowal of faith to our soldiers through your deeds in the workplace. The battle at the front is waged by the bravest. May the battle of vocations reveal to us the most diligent who will be put in the lead through education and financial assistance for the gifted. Your action in the Reich Vocational Competitions will be proof of your unshakable belief in victory.

Adolf Hitler

From October 19 to October 30, the foreign ministers of Great Britain (Eden), the United States (Hull), and the Soviet Union (Molotov) had met for a conference in Moscow. The joint communiqué³⁶⁴ again stressed that the Allies would continue the war against the Axis powers until they "laid down their arms." The

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declaration also dealt with the establishment of a European commission for consultations, the restoration of democracy to Italy, the independence of Austria, and the prosecution of German war criminals.

On November 3, Hitler issued Directive No. 51.³⁶⁵ It revealed the increasing problems for the Germans in the west. The directive read as follows:

The hard struggle against Bolshevism, which has caused us great losses during the past two-and-a-half years, has demanded exceedingly great military forces and extremely great effort. This corresponded to the extent of the danger and to the general situation, which in the meantime has changed. The danger in the east is still present, but a greater danger is taking shape in the west: the Anglo-American landing operation. Owing to the huge size of the territory in the east, the loss of even quite a large land area will hardly have a lethal affect on Germany's life nerve. The west is different! If the enemy manages to break into our defense on a broad front, the consequences will become boundless in a short time. There is every evidence to prove that the enemy will start the invasion of the western European front no later than the spring, maybe even earlier.

Proceeding from all this, I cannot be responsible for the west's becoming weaker, giving way to other theatres of war operations. I have decided to reinforce its defense, especially where we shall start the fight against England, for it is the area where the enemy should and will invade, and it is the area where, unless everything is deceptive, the most decisive landing operations will begin.

Distracting and deceptive offensives on other front lines ought to be expected as well. But quite a heavy offensive is possible against Denmark. It is hard to support her from the sea, and support from the air will be less effective. But in terms of political and operational effectiveness its success offers the greatest promise.

At the beginning of the battle, the enemy's common offensive forces will be inevitably directed toward occupation of the coast. The only way to strengthen our defense on the coast within the short time which we may still have left is to build a most powerful fortification which must be erected by way of concentrating all the available human and material forces of our native land and of the occupied areas.

The land weapons (stationary tanks dug into the ground, coastline artillery, defensive anti-landing weapons, mines and others), recently drawn up in Denmark and the western occupied areas, must be strictly concentrated in the most hazardous sectors of the coast. It should be taken into account that the defense potential in less hazardous sectors cannot be increased in the nearest future.

If the enemy should nevertheless manage a land operation by concentrating their own forces, they must be fought back by our most powerful counterattack. It is very important to ensure an ample and urgent supply of

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forces and materials and, by intensive training of the available major units, to increase their skills and turn them into an attacking and absolutely flexible reserve that will counterattack the landing operations, hinder their advance, and throw them back into the sea.

Consequently, by means of accurately and meticulously prepared operations, everything must be supplied from the coastline front that is not subject to the attack, and from our native country, against the enemy who have landed and all this must go into action at high speed. The air and naval forces must use all their strength to resist a heavy offensive expected from the air and from the sea. With this in view, I order the following:

A) The Army

1) The chief of the general staff of the Army and the inspector general of the tank units shall submit to me, urgently, a plan to distribute weapons, tanks, storm weapons, trucks, and ammunition within the next three months on the western front and in Denmark, in accordance with the new situation.

[Technical details follow].³⁶⁶

On November 5, Hitler received the representatives of the new Bulgarian government at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:³⁶⁷

On November 5, the Führer received the Bulgarian prime minister Bozhilov and the Bulgarian foreign minister Shikhmanov for a comprehensive exchange of views on all questions of interest to the Reich and Bulgaria. The discussion, which was attended on the German side by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Jodl, was characterized by a spirit of heartfelt agreement and proven traditional friendship. Afterwards, Bulgaria's prime minister and foreign minister were the guests of the Reich foreign minister, where the friendly exchange of views continued and ended that evening.

The Russians continued to advance steadily in the east. They had conquered Smolensk in September, and Zaporozhye and Dnepropetrovsk in October. On November 6, the Germans even lost Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, to the Russians. The battle at the great Dnieper bend continued with unabated fierceness.

On November 7, Hitler received von Manstein at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.³⁶⁸ Von Manstein wanted to save the position at Kiev, but Hitler declared that he was not willing to let the "one and only chance" to salvage the Crimea pass him by. Regarding Kiev, he said, "we will not meet with any breakthrough success anyway." On the other hand, he felt that he could chalk up "the success offering itself at the lower Dnieper."

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It is imperative that the army remains certain that it can still land successful blows. In addition, war production necessitates that we stay in control of the manganese-ore reserves at Nikopol. Moreover, we cannot allow the enemy to take possession of the Crimea and use it for air strikes against the Romanian oil fields.

Hitler again declared himself willing to answer for the “greatness of the risk.”

On the afternoon of November 7, he boarded his special train in order to travel to Munich for the commemorative festivities. Goebbels had not thought it possible that he would be willing to leave his headquarters in view of the catastrophic situation at the front.³⁶⁹ He certainly did not know his Führer all that well! In the previous year, Hitler had already made it perfectly clear that even the most disastrous situations at the front could not keep him from attending the reunion in Munich. This was not because he could not do without the company of the “Old Fighters.” He cared no more for them than for the participants in the annual anniversary celebration of the party’s foundation, which he had not attended since February 1942, under a variety of pretexts. He stuck to the meeting on November 8 because it was a suitable excuse for his vacation with Eva Braun.

At least twice a year, Hitler was in need of such a vacation. Every April, numerous politicians from the German satellite states had to come together in Salzburg or at the Berghof, as well as every November, when the commemoration in Munich provided him with another excuse for a vacation. And he stuck to this program to the end!³⁷⁰

On November 8, Hitler arrived in Munich. That afternoon, he gave a speech at the Löwenbräukeller, which was broadcast that evening. It began with these words:³⁷¹

My Party Comrades! German Volksgenossen!

Almost one-third of a human being’s lifetime has passed since the day that we commemorate today and in celebration of which I have returned for a few hours to your midst. And still, hardly an epoch in the history of mankind covers twenty years of such mighty, world-shaking, and decisive events fashioning the destinies of nations.

It is appropriate to review the past events in broad outlines.

The obligatory “party narrative” followed. Hitler again recalled the statement falsely attributed to Clemenceau about the “twenty million Germans too many.”

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The prognosis Clemenceau made on Germany having twenty million men too many was just as candidly brutal as the present undisguised threat by English politicians that there are one hundred or two hundred million men too many moving about in India.³⁷²

The “party narrative” culminated in the following assertion:

If historiography in coming centuries will one day critically review the years of the National Socialist rebirth, uninfluenced by the pros and cons of an era of warfare, then it will not be able to avoid the conclusion that it was a question of the most wonderful victory of faith over the supposed elements of the materially possible.

Hitler again told his horror stories in the service of anti-Bolshevik propaganda. He meant to prove to the English that only Germany could stem the tide of the “Bolshevik-Asian colossus.” He declared the following:

The second thought which takes hold of us today can be only this one: What would have become of Germany and Europe had there not been a November 8 and 9, 1923, and had the National Socialist world of thought not conquered Germany?

After all, the seizure of power in the year 1933 is indivisibly bound up with November 8, 1923. On this day, the young movement underwent its first process of selection; the weak were removed, and those who remained were filled with an even greater fanaticism. Then a period followed in which National Socialist thought took hold of people far more easily than before. The party became the germ cell for the realization of our world of thought. Long before 1933, the National Socialist state possessed millions of followers in the Volksgemeinschaft of our party. Alas, what would have become of Europe and, above all, our German Reich and our beloved homeland, had there not been the faith and the willingness of the individual to risk everything for the movement? Germany would still be what it was at the time: the democratic and impotent state of Weimarian origin. To ask this question makes every thinking man today shudder. After all, it makes no difference what Germany would have ended up looking like; the Eastern European, Central Asian, Bolshevik colossus would have completed his armament program and would never have let his goal of destroying Europe out of sight. The German Volk, however, with its completely insufficient Reichswehr of a hundred thousand men and its lack of internal political strength and material weapons, would have faced this world power with the power of only a few weeks of military resistance.

There is no need to substantiate today just how decrepit the idea was to have Europe defended by the Poles against Bolshevik Russia. Just as foolish was the widespread belief that it might have been possible to appease the Bolshevik colossus by renouncing all ideas of power; or that its plans of world conquest could have been eliminated by a peaceful Europe which increasingly disarmed. My party comrades! This appears to me as though chicken and geese will one

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day make a solemn declaration to the foxes that they no longer intend to attack them, in the hope that the foxes will then become vegetarians. The Bolshevik-Asian colossus will assail Europe until it is finally broken and defeated.

Or does anybody want to claim that Finland threatened world peace? It was nonetheless attacked, however. Without Germany's intervention, its existence would already have been exposed to a terrible new trial in the year 1941. We need not say a word about the outcome of this new Bolshevik action.

Nobody will seriously believe that the Estonians, Latvians, or Lithuanians really wished to conquer the Ural Mountains. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union decided to chase these people out of their countries and cart them off to Siberia. And Romania surely didn't intend to take the Caucasus or the oil wells of Baku. But Russia obstinately pursued the goal of occupying not only the mouth of the Danube, but also the Romanian oil fields, and, beyond that, the entire Balkans, in order to use them as a steppingstone for further expansion. There is only one state capable of successfully opposing this attack which has threatened Europe time and again from the east for the last two thousand years, and that is Germany.

Even if this struggle is also an infinitely difficult one for our Volk, this just proves that no state is capable of withstanding this misery without Germany — and certainly not against it. It proves that the hope of the European people to obtain leniency from the Moscovites through good behavior or mental caresses is at best childish stupidity or pitiful cowardice. Above all, the idea that some other power, perhaps from outside Europe, could take over the defense of the continent, is not only harebrained, but also reveals an actual moral weakness. It is due above all to bourgeois politicians not having the foggiest idea about things, when in so many countries people act as though they believed that the Jewish-plutocratic west would defeat the Jewish-Bolshevik east. On the contrary, the Jewish-Bolshevik east will one day relieve Jewry in the west of the necessity of continuing to be hypocritical. With complete candor, it can then announce its actual objectives. The Jewish democracy of the west will sooner or later lead to Bolshevism. The same naive men who today believe that they have found in Stalin the genius who will pull their chestnuts out of the fire for them, will live to see, perhaps sooner than they anticipate, how the spirits summoned from the underworld will strangle them, and that in their own countries.

One thing is certain, my party comrades: without a November 9, 1923, the National Socialist movement would not have become what it became. Without the National Socialist movement, there would not be a strong German Reich today. Without this German Reich, which is undoubtedly the militarily most effective state in Europe, there would not be a future for Europe now.

After this long-winded exposition, Hitler finally turned to more current problems:

The fact that England was again the driving force in this war, that it is was responsible together with the Jews, for the cause, outbreak, and waging of this war, is only a repetition of the events in the First World War. That such mighty

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historic events cannot lead to the same results twice must be assumed, whenever the forces of the past cannot be compared with those of the present. Nobody can fail to notice that the present Germany is a different state than the Germany of 1914–1918, just as November 8, 1943, is not the same as November 9, 1918.

The struggle in which we have been involved since 1939 is too mighty and too unique to measure against small differences of opinion between states. We are fighting the fifth year of the greatest war of all time. As it began, the enemy in the east was barely a hundred fifty kilometers away from Berlin. In the west, his fortresses threatened the Rhine; the Saar region was under fire from his artillery. At the Belgian-Dutch border, the treaty bound satellites of England and France lay in wait, barely a hundred kilometers from our greatest industrial areas, while the democratic government of Norway confirmed those agreements which would one day lead it into our enemies' camp. In the Balkans, there was the latent danger of the most terrible surprise to come. Italy was forced into nonbelligerent status by its king and his clique. Thus, Germany was completely on its own.

And now, my party comrades, this National Socialist state has crushed this ring of encirclement in historically unique blows. The heroism of its soldiers pushed the fronts nearly everywhere over a thousand kilometers from the borders of the Reich. Our enemies have become modest. What they call victories today, they once portrayed as completely insignificant operations. But through these insignificant operations, they created the mighty battlefield on which the present struggle of nations is taking place. After our great allies in East Asia,³⁷³ the European nations have also recognized the greatness of the historic task and made their sacrifices accordingly. If the sacrifices of the greatest European state allied with us have in the end been more or less in vain, then this must be attributed to the planned sabotage of a pitiful clique which, after years of wavering, finally pulled itself together for one single action. However, their deed can surely claim the glory of having been unique in history in its shamelessness.

I am happy that we were able to rescue from the hands of the most miserable figures of an otherwise great age the man who did everything not only to make his nation great, strong, and happy, but also to let it participate in the historic conflict which will in the end determine the fate and the culture of this continent. It is self-evident that the consequences of the Italian collapse will affect the war in general. But the hopes of our enemies will be in vain here, too. What they hoped for from the beginning has not happened. What they expected from the future will likewise not come about. They had hoped to cut off and destroy the German divisions in Italy with one blow. They thought that the Germans would give up the occupation of the islands, that the Balkans would drop into their lap like ripe fruit, and that they could bring the war to the German borders with one blow.

The assault on the Brenner Pass became an offensive at a snail's pace far south of Rome. It will now demand its toll in blood, and this not according to the estimates of our enemies, but, on the whole, according to our plans.

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Every new landing will force them to provide more and more space in their ships. This will dissipate the forces of our enemies and open up new venues for the deployment of our arms. Wherever such a landing takes place, we will be prepared. Then, they will experience, as Churchill put it, that "it is one thing to land against Italy on Sicily and another to land against the Germans on the Channel coast, in France, Denmark, or Norway."³⁷⁴ It will then become apparent whether our restraint in some areas was due to weakness or cool reason.

The struggle in the east is the most difficult that the German Volk has ever had to fight. What our men bear here cannot be compared with what our enemies achieve. Not only will it not be possible to reach the final objective, namely, to bring about the collapse of the German front, but also, as always in world history, the final battle alone will bring about the decision. That nation that will resolve this battle in its favor is the one that has the greatest intrinsic value and seizes the decisive hour with the greatest perseverance and the greatest fanaticism. What I demand of the German soldier is therefore tremendous. It is the task of the front to make the apparently impossible possible in the end; it is the task of the homeland to support and reinforce the front in its struggle against the apparently impossible or what is apparently impossible to bear. It must recognize with complete clarity that the fate of our entire Volk, our women and children, our entire future depends on forcing the decision in our favor by a supreme effort. Every sacrifice which we make today stands in no relation to the sacrifices that will be demanded of us if we do not win this war. Therefore, there can be no thought other than that of mercilessly fighting with the unshakable goal of gaining the victory, no matter what the situation may be and no matter where we may have to fight.

When the betrayal by the king of Italy, the crown prince, and his military clique became more and more apparent, our position was not good and, in the eyes of some people, it was even desperate. The two dictators in the democracies³⁷⁵ already hoped that they would be able to celebrate together the destruction of the German armies and the extradition of my friend as a delightful spectacle in Washington. However, what appeared nearly impossible was made possible within a few weeks. A nearly unavoidable catastrophe was transformed practically overnight into a series of glorious actions, which completely restored our position, and in some respects even improved it. Once this war is over, the greatest credit will therefore go to our faith and our persistence rather than to the unique initiatives and the individual actions.

Besides, every German should appreciate that, even if this battle had taken place on German soil from the beginning, we do not doubt for one second that it would have also been waged with the greatest fanaticism. Someone as decorated with so many laurels as the German Wehrmacht will sometimes be tired and stop to rest. But when the bell tolls, then every front-line fighter, every man and woman at home, must face the battle anew in order to defend what Providence has given them in terms of what makes life worth living.

In view of this, our enemies' propaganda must and will fail. Just as in the First World War, they are counting not so much on a victory of arms, but on

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the effect of their slogans, threats, and bluffs. First, they believed in the threats regarding time, hunger, winter, and so on. Then, they thought their bomb terror would suffice to wear down the German Volk at home.

While in the First World War the German Volk went to pieces at home almost without enemy action, it will not lose the power of its resistance even under the most difficult circumstances today. In this respect, it is the task of the National Socialist Party to set examples through its leaders, *Unterführers*, and members.

The burden of the fight in the homeland, as at the front, must be borne in an exemplary fashion primarily by the party comrades, and they will then, no matter whether man or woman, constitute elements of an unbending resistance. They must help the weak and support the dejected, but instill reason in the unworthy and—if necessary—destroy them. There must be no doubt about one thing: this war is merciless. The objectives of our adversaries are correspondingly satanic. When a British paper writes that the German Volk will be turned over to the Russian Bolsheviks for so and so many years so that they can carry out their plans regarding it, or when English bishops pray that the Bolsheviks may one day succeed in devastating and completely annihilating the German Volk, then there is only one response possible: a no less great fanaticism which forces the individual to fulfill his duties. Too many sacrifices have already been made. Nobody has the right to exclude himself from these sacrifices in the future.

Every one of our brave soldiers who fought somewhere in Russia and did not return to the homeland has a right to demand that others be as brave as he was. For he did not die so that others would give up what he fought for. Instead, he fell so that his sacrifice and the sacrifice of his comrades and all *Volksgenossen* at the front and in the homeland would save the future of the homeland and the future of our Volk.

I have already mentioned that our adversaries today believe themselves to be able to wear down the German Volk primarily through bluff and propaganda, by acting as though they had already gained the victory. If this were not so serious, you would have to laugh about this tactic at times. At the same time when they chase from one conference to the other in order to reconcile their disagreements and find the possibility of some type of joint approach, they act as though they were already the victors. They establish commissions for the “design of the world after the victory.” It would be more useful if they concerned themselves with the design of their own world. They establish commissions that have the task of seeing to it that the world is provided with foodstuffs after the war. It would be better if they provided foodstuffs to their nations right now, where millions are threatened by a famine at this time.

It is truly British-Jewish impudence and impertinence when they now act as though they were in a position to solve the problems of the world. They have not even been able to work out their own problems. They needed a war in order to avoid rendering account for their domestic failures, which otherwise their own nations would have forced them to do.

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A country like America, for example, has thirteen million unemployed. The leaders of this country, who failed to cope with this problem, act as though they could resolve the employment problems of the entire world. Of course, they could organize their capitalist exploitation. It is an entirely different matter that this same exploitation has ruined their own people. This interests them only little, of course.

Their propaganda measures are in line with those we encountered in the World War. First, in a flood of papers they try to create the impression among the German Volk and even more so among the people of our allies that they have not only already won the war and the future is essentially determined, but also that the majority of the people desire such a development. I would like to reply to this at this point.

I do not know whether there are people in the German Volk who truly have anything to hope for in an Allied victory. They could only be people who think exclusively of themselves: criminals who would be willing to be the hangmen of their own people. Any person who is tied to his people knows exactly what a victory of our adversaries would mean. Therefore, there are no social classes in Germany hoping for victory. At the most, there might be some criminals who perhaps believe that their own fate would be improved in this case. However, let nobody doubt this or delude himself: we will deal with these criminals! What happened in the year 1918 will not repeat itself in Germany a second time. At a time which demands so many difficult sacrifices from hundreds of thousands of the bravest soldiers, at such a time, we will not shrink from bringing such people as are unwilling to make these sacrifices back to reason. If tens of thousands of our best men, our dearest Volksgenossen, fall at the front, then we will not shrink from killing a few hundred criminals at home without much ado.

In the World War, however, things were different. In the World War, the sacrifice of the soldiers was regarded as only natural. But equally as natural were the profiteering racketeer, the war profiteer, deserter, or finally the man who demoralized the entire nation and received money for this from abroad. These elements were untouchable. They were spared at the time, while the soldier had to give his life. However, things are different today.

My old fighters, you will remember how we were outraged by this situation in the World War, how we said at the time: It is a crying shame that it is even possible for brave men to fall at the front while rascals do their foul work at home.

These rascals existed, and exist even today in a few instances. But they have only one chance, namely, not to betray themselves, because if we catch one, he will lose his head. Rest assured, it is much more difficult for me to order a small operation at the front in the realization that perhaps hundreds or thousands of men will fall, than to sign a sentence that will result in the execution of a few dozen rascals, criminals, or gangsters. These hopes will therefore be in vain. Moreover, the present state is so organized that these elements cannot work at all. The conditions for their work do not exist.

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No matter how self-confident these declarations about a “few dozen rascals” sounded, they made perfectly clear how much Hitler was preoccupied by the thought of a possible rebellion. A few minutes later, he would return to this topic.

At first, however, he discussed the Allied bomb warfare and claimed that the “hundreds of thousands of the bombed-out are the vanguard of revenge.” He said, “We will rebuild our German cities to be more beautiful than ever before, and this within the shortest time.” Two or three years after the war, the “two to three million apartments” would be “completely there again, even if they destroy as many as they like.” Naturally, Hitler announced “retribution.” He declared the following:

The second instrument on which they count is the bomb warfare. What the German homeland has to endure here, we all are aware of. What I personally feel in this respect, you can imagine. When this war began, the American president hypocritically approached me with the request not to wage bomb warfare. We did not do this. However, this request only served as a means to give our enemies time to prepare the war and to get it underway at the appropriate time.

I would like to say two things here: what pains me exclusively are the sacrifices of the homeland, especially the sacrifices of the women and children. What hurts me is that these people lose all their possessions. By contrast, the damage done to our industry is largely insignificant. It does not in the least prevent the constant increases in our armament production. Moreover, one thing should be realized: we will rebuild our German cities to be more beautiful than ever before, and this within the shortest time.

If a nation is capable of waging a fight against the rest of the world, if a nation is capable of turning six, eight, or ten million cubic meters of concrete into fortresses in one year, if a nation is capable of producing thousands of armament factories out of nothing, then such a nation will also be capable of building two to three million apartments. In about two to three years after the war, these apartments will be completely there again, even if they destroy as many as they like.

The Americans and the English are right now planning the rebuilding of the world. I am right now planning the rebuilding of Germany!

There will, however, be a difference: while the rebuilding of the world through the Americans and the English will not take place, the rebuilding of Germany through National Socialism will be carried out with precision and according to plan!

Our mass organizations, from the Todt organization to the Reich labor service embracing the entire German economy, will be roped in for the job, along with the war criminals. For the first time in their lives, the war criminals will do something useful there. This is the first thing I have to say. The second

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thing is this: whether or not the gentlemen believe it, the hour of retribution will come!

If we cannot reach America at the moment, one state is within our reach, thank God, and we will hold on to it.

And I would like to add a third item: the opinion of our adversaries that their air terror can decrease the intensity of the German military resolve is based on a fallacy. After all, whoever has already lost all his belongings can only have one desire: that the war will never be lost, since only a victorious war can help him get his things back. And so the hundreds of thousands of the bombed-out are the vanguard of revenge.

And there is something else with which our adversaries still operate, even though less forcefully than before. It is the slogan that time is on their side. When the war started, in response to an announcement by Chamberlain that the war would have to last at least three years—an announcement which was understandable because of the capitalist view of the English that you need at least this long in order to amortize a capital investment—I immediately had us set up a program for five years. I have had this program extended since then. Just as we worked with extended periods before, we did this here, too. Certainly, we do not enjoy waging war. We have, of course, programs of peace, in contrast to our adversaries, who did not even know what to do in peacetime. I am very sorry that I was not able to continue my work of peace and create more useful things in this period. However, since this has not been possible, we will never give up the fight too early, but rather regard time as our ally.

Let the war last as long as it wants to, Germany will never capitulate. Never will we repeat the mistake of 1918, namely, to lay down our arms at a quarter to twelve. You can rest assured of this: the very last party to lay down its arms will be Germany, and this at five minutes after twelve.

They may hope to wear us out by heavy blood sacrifice. This time, however, the blood sacrifice will consist of two, three, or four enemy sacrifices for every German one. No matter how hard it is for us to bear these sacrifices, they simply oblige us to go further. Never again will it come to pass—as in the World War, when we lost two million and this loss was pointless in the end—that we will today pointlessly sacrifice even a single human being. When he emerges from the rage of a battle of matériel and regains consciousness following the greatest exertions the soldier at the front will understand that our sacrifices must not be in vain, our Volk must benefit from them, and not only our Volk, but also, in the end, all of Europe.

And in conclusion, one more thing: every week I read at least three or four times that I have either suffered a nervous breakdown, or I have dismissed my friend Göring and Göring has left for Sweden, or again Göring has dismissed me, or the Wehrmacht has dismissed the party, or the party has by contrast dismissed the Wehrmacht—in this case, they suddenly say Reichswehr [Reich defense] instead of Wehrmacht [defense force]—and then again, the generals have revolted against me, and then again, I have arrested the generals and have had them locked up. You can rest assured: everything is possible, but that I lose my nerve is completely out of the question!

November 8, 1943

Well, if “everything” was possible, then it would also have been possible for the generals to “revolt,” and for him to “dismiss” his “friend” Göring. On September 10, he had still maintained that his “political comrades in arms, field marshals, admirals, and generals” formed a “fanatically united community.”

My party comrades! Twenty years ago, we were face-to-face with ruin. For four years, I worked with a burning heart and had only one thought: the success of our movement for the sake of the fatherland’s salvation! At one blow, everything was destroyed. For three to four weeks, it seemed as though I really would lose my nerve. Yes, a vile creature³⁷⁶ even agreed to accuse me of having broken my word. When my adversaries believed they could drag me in front of a drumhead court-martial in order to break me by sentencing me to confinement in a fortress, I did not lose heart or despair; instead, I wrote *Mein Kampf* during those months. I had studied history too thoroughly not to realize that great victories have never been gained without the most severe setbacks. The greatest heroes in world history have always had to remain steadfast even under the greatest strains.

Anybody can bear sunshine. But when the weather is bad and a storm is raging, then it will show who is a strong character and who is a weakling. When things get difficult, then you can tell who is truly a man, who does not lose his nerve in such hours, but instead remains determined and steadfast, and never thinks of capitulation.

Finally, I would like to say something to those people who keep talking to me about religion: I am also religious, profoundly religious on the inside, and I believe that Providence weighs human beings. Those who do not pass the trials imposed by Providence, who are broken by them, are not destined by Providence for greater things. It is a natural necessity that only the strong remain after this selection. Thank God, the German Volk, as I have come to know it in its mass of different individuals, is strong and thoroughly healthy. Believe me, had I been a member of the Democratic Party in 1918, I would also have despaired of Germany. But I was a member of the German Wehrmacht, a front-line soldier among millions of others, and that gave me my faith. My dogged struggle in the movement for the soul of the German Volk and the masses, the millions of workers and farmers—this struggle made me all the stronger. Because it introduced me to the most precious thing there is, the unspoiled power of the masses, the millions of Volksgenossen. From this finally developed the idea of the National Socialist state. We have received countless blessings from Providence—the successes it imparted to us, the magnificent victories it allowed us to gain! How completely did we change, within a few years, the nearly desperate situation of our country and our Reich! How Providence led our armies far beyond the borders of the Reich! How it helped us to overcome nearly hopeless positions, such as the Italian collapse! And then should we be so wretched as to lose heart and despair of this Providence?!

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I bow in gratitude before the Almighty. I thank Him that He blessed us so, and that He has not sent us a more difficult trial, namely, a fight on German soil; but instead, against a world of superior numbers, He permitted us to take this fight successfully far beyond the borders of the Reich.

I am proud to be the Führer of this nation, not only in happy days, but all the more in difficult ones. I am happy that I can give the nation strength and confidence during such days and that I can say to them: German Volk, be completely calm; come what may, we will overcome it. In the end, there will be victory!

When the World War was over, and I spoke to you for the first time, my comrades, I said something like the following: "We must not quarrel with our fate. For many years, fortune was on our side, as it is only on the side of God's chosen ones. We gained victories in the west, east, south, everywhere in Europe! And then our Volk became ungrateful. In spite of these victories, it lost its morale and its faith, and it became weak. Therefore, it no longer deserved the Lord's blessings." And I often said—you surely remember this—that Providence struck us down and that it struck us down rightly. It only dealt us what we deserved.

Today, we shall make a vow: this will never be repeated. We shall never again become arrogant in days of great happiness, and we shall never despair when Providence sends us trials. After all, what is it other than a trial, if the necessities of war force us to give up a hundred kilometers somewhere, while we are still in a position to defend the homeland at such a great distance from it.³⁷⁷

It is the mission of the party and of the National Socialist leaders to be the bearers of the faith for the nation. It is your mission, my party comrades, and above all yours, my ladies.

Not long ago, an American magazine wrote that what was worst about National Socialism was its women. They said that National Socialism did more for women than any other nation. It improved their social position. It began to bring them together in tremendous organizations. It sent the women of the educated classes into the factories so that female workers could go on vacation, and so on. The paper concluded that the democracies could not imitate this. And because they could not imitate this, they would have to exterminate National Socialist women in the future, since they were fanatical and incorrigible.

That is correct! I know that, throughout the years, my most fanatical followers were the Volk's women. This must remain so all the more in the future! Together with the men, the women must give support to the movement even in difficult times.

If there are bomb attacks, it is primarily the party which sees to the maintenance of order, that everything is done that possibly can be done. Can you imagine, my party comrades and ladies, that we would have been able to bear in the World War for only one month what we now have borne for years? Can you imagine that? The credit for this goes to the manly education of our Volk; the credit goes to the National Socialist faith.

November 9, 1943

As long as this force remains with us, we need not despair. On the contrary, we can look to the future with proud confidence.

I have come here for a few hours in order to speak to you, my old followers. I am going back tomorrow and I will take with me the beautiful memory of my old comrades in arms and our time of struggle together.

You shall also leave here with fanatical confidence and the fanatical faith that there can be nothing other than our victory. We fight for this. Many have already fallen for this, and many will still have to make the same sacrifice. Generations will live because of this, not only now, but also in the future. The blood we spill will one day bring rich rewards for our Volk. Millions of human beings will be granted an existence in new homes.

Thus, we commemorate all our comrades who, as National Socialist fighters, led the way, which can only be a way toward greatness for our fatherland, greatness for our German Volk.

Our National Socialist Party, our German Reich: *Sieg Heil!*

Hitler's speech was recorded on a tape recorder and broadcast at 8:15 p.m. It was his last public speech which was broadcast, although not in its entirety, since Goebbels edited the speech. He deleted some passages for the following reason: "Very few, somewhat awkward wordings, I crossed out with permission from the Führer."³⁷⁸

On November 9, an exchange of telegrams with the Poglavnik took place on the day of commemoration. Hitler replied as follows:³⁷⁹

My sincere thanks for the words of commemoration for the victims of November 9, 1923, which you, Poglavnik, conveyed personally to me in a telegram in the name of the Croatian people. Just as the blood of these fighters was not spilled in vain, the sacrifices which we and our allies made in our common struggle for the freedom and future of Europe will not have been in vain. In the unshakable conviction that we will be granted the final victory at the end of this difficult struggle, I think of you and send you my heartfelt best wishes for the brave Croatian people and for their future.

In addition, Hitler received Gauleiter Bohle in Munich. The following communiqué was made public on this "memorable" visit:³⁸⁰

The Führer received Gauleiter Bohle, the head of the foreign department of the NSDAP, for a report on questions concerning his sphere of duties. The Führer expressed his appreciation for the loyalty to the Reich persistently demonstrated by the Germans living abroad, and for the exemplary conduct of the Germans living abroad and the German sailors in the fateful struggle of the nation.

On November 12, Hitler signed a series of decrees dealing with domestic policy. One decree concerned "Compensation for strategic space requirements."³⁸¹ Another decree dealt with the "Appointment of

November 12, 1943

officials in Lower Styria and in the occupied territories of Carinthia and Carniola.³⁸² These territories had been occupied by German troops following the capitulation of Italy and earmarked for annexation to the Reich.

The most remarkable of these decrees dealt with the family-owned enterprise of Friedrich Krupp. It was astonishing that, in view of the advanced stage of the war, the company still cared for such an ordinance from the Führer. The decree read as follows:³⁸³

Führer Headquarters, November 12, 1943

For a hundred thirty-two years, the Friedrich Krupp Company, as a family-owned enterprise, has rendered outstanding, unique services to the military power of the German Volk. It therefore is my will that the firm will be preserved as a family-owned enterprise. To this end, I order the following:

I

The owner of the Krupp family fortune will be authorized to use this fortune in order to establish a family-owned enterprise with a special system of succession.

II

The establishment of the family-owned enterprise and its statutes will require judicial or notary certification. The statutes will require my approval, which will be obtained through the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery.

III

The current owner of the enterprise will bear the name Krupp before his surname.

IV

In conjunction with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery, the Reich minister of finance will be authorized to lay down rules for the fees connected with the foundation of the family-owned enterprise, the future taxing of the enterprise, the inheritance tax falling due on the death of the owner or on the transfer of ownership to another owner, subject to this decree.

V

The Reich minister of justice and the Reich minister of economics together with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery, will be entitled either individually, insofar as this concerns their respective portfolios or together, if necessary, to issue implementing and supplementary regulations through administrative channels.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

On November 17, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Prince Kyrill of Bulgaria on his birthday.³⁸⁴

November 20, 1943

On the same day, Hitler received von Papen at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, where he had returned in the meantime. Von Papen reported on the situation in Turkey.³⁸⁵

Eden and the Turkish foreign minister Menemencioglu met in Cairo on November 5. It was obvious that British pressure on Turkey was increasing, and its consequences would one day not be advantageous to Germany. It is highly questionable whether von Papen made this sufficiently clear to Hitler. Goebbels noted in his diary: "Von Papen assesses our chances [with Turkey] very optimistically. The Turks are not about to give up their neutrality; there is no chance that they will yield to the English-Soviet pressures in the foreseeable future."³⁸⁶ At the headquarters, von Papen attended one of Hitler's "discussions of the situation."

The surviving shorthand transcript of the discussion of the situation at noon on November 19³⁸⁷ reflects the difficult position on the central and southern sector of the eastern front. Most remarkable is a report on secret negotiations of the Romanians and Hungarians with the Allies in Portugal. However, Hitler mostly concerned himself with the possible use of the German "Panther" tanks as a stationary tank force in fortified positions.

On November 20, Hitler spoke for the last time to officer candidates. Berlin had become too dangerous because of the air raids, and so the site of this year's appeal was not the Sportpalast but the Jahrhunderthalle in Breslau. Undoubtedly, Hitler had chosen this city because the Prussian king, Frederick William III, had issued his appeals for the German wars of liberation from here and established the "Order of the Iron Cross" in this city in 1813.

A report on Hitler's speech before a group of young cadets supposedly numbering twenty thousand³⁸⁸ was given in the following communiqué:³⁸⁹

The Führer spoke before approximately twenty thousand young officer candidates who have been deemed worthy of the great responsibility of leading the sons of our Volk as soldiers. In front of the new generation of officers in the army, navy, and Luftwaffe, the Führer explained the reasons for the mighty struggle which has been forced on us—a battle of life and death, for the freedom and life of our Volk. He explained that it had always been the goal of the Jewish forces, which stood behind the British policy, primarily to exterminate Germany by unleashing a war in alliance with the Soviet Union in order to hand over all of Europe to Bolshevism. If Germany did not win this war for itself and for Europe, the Führer explained, then the barbarity of the steppe

November 20, 1943

would take hold of our continent and would annihilate it as the bearer and source of human civilization. Today, those who started the war and who bear the blame for it no longer leave any doubt that this is ultimately their intention. Through this war, England believed that it could force through by the effusion of blood its old theory of the balance of power in Europe. In reality, however, Great Britain itself is, this time, only an instrument in the hands of an alien phenomenon which has been fighting for control for over a hundred fifty years: international Jewry. It makes use in shrewd disguise of supposed British state interests in order to facilitate the spread of the plague of Jewish-Bolshevik revolution in England, as well as in the rest of Europe.

The Führer opposes our enemies' plans of destruction, which are dictated by Jewish hatred, with the unshakable determination of the German Volk to prove itself victorious in this historical struggle by the greatest perseverance and the full extent of all its forces. He pointed out to the young officers that to the courage and firmness of the soldier today belongs the avowal of faith of the politically educated man who knows what is at stake in the fight. Especially in this terrible struggle, everyone must realize that it is not simply a question of a military confrontation between individual states, but rather a gigantic struggle between nations and races, in which one ideology will win and the other will be mercilessly destroyed. This means that the nation that loses will cease to exist. It is insane to expect anything other than victory or ruin in this fight. Even the last German soldier must therefore realize that this cruel struggle, which our enemies wanted, caused, and forced on us, can only end in a German victory. In terms of personnel and matériel, we are under any circumstances in a position to assert ourselves against the coalition of our enemies, and it is therefore understandable that we will win this war in the end.

With the use of the great and memorable periods of German history, the Führer explained to the young officers that victory had always crowned our flags whenever we had been filled with the one and unshakable belief in our eternal Germany. As so often in the past, Providence will not make gifts to our Volk today in its struggle for its freedom and future. Put to a severe test, everything has to be fought for with the toughness of our sons at the front and in the homeland. Even in the bitter hours of trial, what matters is that the men who are called on to lead derive their faith in the victory from their ideology and, by their example and conduct, know how to instill it in their followers. The officer must therefore be the bearer of the political will within the Wehrmacht. Every officer must always realize that wherever he stands and fights, the fate of the German Volk and Reich is in his hands.

Field Marshal Keitel concluded the appeal with an avowal of faith in the Führer.

As after every speech by Hitler, Goebbels noted that this address in Breslau had been "very good." Above all, the Führer "emphasized the political education of the officer corps in particular. The young officers

December 4, 1943

gave the Führer stormy ovations. The Führer is very happy again to have spoken before such a great assembly of men.”

On November 23 and 24, Berlin witnessed two powerful air raids. The Reich Chancellery sustained heavy damage.

On November 25, Hitler had a wreath laid at the party funeral for Graf [Count] Reventlow in Potsdam. The count had been a National Socialist writer and Reichstag deputy.³⁹⁰

On November 30, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Háchá on the fifth anniversary of his election as state president.³⁹¹

In Teheran from November 27 to December 2, the first conference between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin took place. During a solemn ceremony on November 29, Churchill presented Stalin with the “Sword of Stalingrad.” The British had ordered the award to commemorate the defense of the city. Churchill declared the following:³⁹²

Marshal Stalin—I am commanded by His Majesty King George VI to present to you to be forwarded to the city of Stalingrad the Sword of Honour of which His Majesty himself has approved the design. This blade bears upon it the inscription “To the steely-hearted citizens of Stalingrad. A gift of King George VI, as a sign of the homage of the British people.”

In a low voice, Stalin thanked him, raised the Sword “in a most expressive gesture to his lips, and kissed the blade. He then handed it to [General] Voroshilov.”³⁹³

On December 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on his birthday. The next day, he sent one to Ryti on the Finnish national holiday.³⁹⁴

It would soon be Christmas, and Hitler felt that the mood in Germany needed improvement. New reports of victory would surely help to make the holidays more pleasant. On December 6, a new offensive on the eastern front was launched on Hitler’s orders. Its objective was the reconquest of Zhitomir and, potentially, Kiev. However, its main purpose was to liven things up for the public in Germany.³⁹⁵

On December 7, Hitler received at the Wolfsschanze headquarters A. A. Mussert, the head of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands (Nationalsozialistische Bewegung, NSB). They had a long exchange “in the spirit of trusting and heartfelt cooperation.”³⁹⁶

On the same day, Hitler signed a decree on the “Simplification of the Bavarian land administration,” which read as follows³⁹⁷

December 11, 1943

Führer Headquarters, December 7, 1943

I

1. I authorize the Bavarian prime minister to delineate anew the jurisdictions of the Bavarian land authorities, if this is necessary for the simplification of the administration in Bavaria.

2. The abolition of public authorities will require the assent of the responsible Reich minister. With the Reich minister's consent, he will be entitled to transfer jurisdictions that previously had belonged to a Bavarian land authority to a Reich authority.

3. I reserve for myself the abolition of Bavarian state ministries.

II

In the course of the implementation of these measures, the Bavarian prime minister will be permitted to deviate, in agreement with the Reich ministers involved, from existing law.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

On December 9, Hitler appointed Envoy Rudolf Rahn as his ambassador to the Republican-Fascist government.³⁹⁸

On December 11, another exchange of telegrams with the Japanese emperor, with Mussolini, and with the Japanese prime minister Tojo took place. Hitler's telegrams read as follows:³⁹⁹

On the second anniversary of the alliance between Germany, Japan, and Italy, I ask Your Majesty to accept my sincere best wishes for the continued success of the victorious Japanese arms. At the same time, I again express my firm conviction that the freedom fight of our people for a just reorganization of Europe and East Asia will be crowned by the final victory of our allied armed forces.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

On the second anniversary of the day on which National Socialist Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Japanese empire came together in an indissoluble community of struggle and fate, I convey to you my heartfelt greetings and best wishes. I think of your untiring deployment in the battle against our common enemies and add to this an expression of my unshakable conviction that the final victory of the Tripartite Pact powers will secure for our nations a happy and free future.

In comradely solidarity,

Adolf Hitler

It is two years ago today that Germany, Japan, and Italy together decided to fight the war forced on them, against the United States and England, until the final victory. In commemoration of this historic hour, I convey to Your Excellency my sincere best wishes. I would like to take this opportunity again to express my conviction that the bravery of our troops and the strong

December 18, 1943

determination of our nations to fight until the common enemies are defeated are a secure guarantee for the creation of a new Europe and a new East Asia.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, the German Zhitomir offensive had resulted in territorial gains. The German OKW reports, together with radio and press commentaries, attempted to attribute decisive importance to this operation, just in time before Christmas. The OKW report of December 14 contained the following victory announcement:

In the sector northeast of Zhitomir, our troops cleared the west bank of the Teterev of dispersed enemy forces. From December 6 to 13, the enemy lost four thousand four hundred prisoners and around eleven thousand dead there. Nine hundred twenty-seven guns, two hundred fifty-four tanks, and a great number of light and heavy infantry weapons were captured or destroyed.

Of course, the objective observer realized that the Zhitomir offensive was a modest operation. It could not bring about a change in the war. On the contrary, it would simply contribute to dissipating the German forces more quickly. Barely two weeks later, the Russians launched a counteroffensive. By early January, the situation in this sector was worse than before the Zhitomir offensive. However, Christmas was over by then. One year later, this Christmas magic would be repeated on a far larger scale in the form of Hitler's offensive in the Ardennes.

On December 18, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Ley on the tenth anniversary of the *Kraft durch Freude* organization. Hitler's telegram read as follows:⁴⁰⁰

Dear Party Comrade Ley!

For the greetings which you conveyed to me from the commemoration ceremony of the tenth anniversary of our great social work *Kraft durch Freude*, I say special thanks to you, its creator and designer. I hereby honor with great appreciation the exemplary achievements of the National Socialist community *Kraft durch Freude* in the course of these ten years in the social and cultural realm for the working German Volk. I am convinced that you and your coworkers will perform the work increased by the heavy tasks of war with the same dedication and energy.

Your Adolf Hitler

It became clear in the course of the discussion of the situation on the evening of December 20,⁴⁰¹ that Hitler was greatly disconcerted by the threat of a landing by the Allies in western Europe. No more did he

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vainly propose to “evacuate” the area in question in order to spare the Allies “the difficulties of a landing.”⁴⁰² Now he declared the following:

There is no doubt that the attack in the west will come in the spring.

You have to count on a landing in Norway, also as well as on a diversionary attack in the Bay of Biscay and perhaps in the Balkans.

It would be highly unpleasant if the swine gains a foothold and lures our Luftwaffe out.

If he gains a foothold there in Norway, then that would be disastrous for our entire northern army. Then, the transports will not be possible any more. We know what it means in the south, when the swine sits on an island.

There is no doubt about it: they have committed themselves. From mid-February, early March on, the attack will take place in the west. I do not have the feeling that, let us say, the English really have their heart in this attack.

If they attack in the west, then this attack will decide the war.⁴⁰³ If this attack is parried, then the whole story is over.

The impending Allied landing was an unpleasant prospect for Hitler. But what could he do about it? He had an idea: flamethrowers were all that he needed! Immediately, he began trying to convince himself and his audience that this was the solution. As he explained:

Can't we arrange for a special allocation of flamethrowers for the west? Flamethrowers are the best thing for the defense; after all, they are terrifying weapons. But also battery flamethrowers. In the worst case, you would have to use force on (with) Speer. He has workers available because of the destroyed factories. You could stick them in somewhere and have them make flamethrowers. Especially in defense, the flamethrower is the most terrifying thing there is.

That will take the pluck out of the attacking infantry, I should say, before it starts hand-to-hand fighting. It will lose its pluck when it suddenly gets the feeling that there are flamethrowers on all sides.

Also in battery positions, there must be flamethrowers. Everywhere there should be flamethrowers. I also thought about using them against low-level flights, but that cannot be done.

Then Hitler telephoned Saur:⁴⁰⁴

Saur, how many flamethrowers are you making per month now?—I need three times as many as you are making now and that in two months. You have to stick workers in there as quickly as possible. So in all of January/February three times as many as you are doing now! That is the minimum requirement. That makes only twelve hundred? I thought twenty-four hundred. I want three times as many. You already noticed that the

December 22, 1943

numbers come out. So, fast, more, more! We need it really urgently. Thank you! Heil! Happy Holidays!

He said that he had increased its production to twelve hundred. He said that he thinks he can increase it even further. He can increase it, because this is a type of production where you do not need many primary products. And, because of the bomb attacks, he has workers available whom he can stick in there. We can never be taken by surprise, if there are twenty to thirty thousand flamethrowers in the west.

From where on earth was he going to get the thousands of flamethrowers that he needed for an endless front at the coast all the way from Spain to northern Norway, in southern France, and in the Balkans? Who would operate them? And what would the flamethrowers do against the heavy naval artillery of the Allied fleet and the thousand kilogram to five thousand kilogram bombs of the Royal Air Force?

Hitler was getting nervous thinking of where the Allies might land. He had no idea where. Not surprisingly, he declared: "I am convinced that the moment it starts will be a relief."⁴⁰⁵

On December 21 it was made public that Hitler had appointed Seyss-Inquart as president of the German Academy, to replace the dead Bavarian prime minister Siebert.⁴⁰⁶

In Kharkov on December 18, three Germans had been sentenced to death as war criminals by a Russian court-martial. They were publicly hanged the following day, in front of forty thousand spectators.⁴⁰⁷ This was the first concrete effect of the resolutions of the foreign ministers' conference in Moscow. Hitler was greatly annoyed. He announced reprisals in the course of the discussions of the situation on December 21 and 22:⁴⁰⁸

We will not punish prisoners of war but the war criminals in our hands.

Hitler was referring to members of the British commando troops,⁴⁰⁹ but not to members of the Allied air forces, who had been taken captive in the course of "terror attacks."⁴¹⁰

Hitler spent the Christmas holidays at his Wolfsschanze headquarters. He awarded the Regiment "List" a "high distinction" in the form of a stripe. The communiqué read as follows:⁴¹¹

High distinction for the Grenadier Regiment "List." The Führer has awarded the Grenadier Regiment No. 199 and the Grenadier Reserve Battalion No. 199 a stripe with the inscription "Infantry Regiment List." The

December 26, 1943

presentation of the stripe to the regiment deployed in the east took place on December 25, in a worthy manner appropriate to the field.

However, the awarding of medals and stripes failed to change the situation. On December 24, the Russians began an offensive for the reconquest of Zhitomir, which they took on the last day of the year 1943.

On December 26, the battleship *Scharnhorst* left the safety of a Norwegian fjord. Near the North Pole, it attempted to sink a British escort for Murmansk in a suicidal attack. The British battleship *Duke of York* and the cruiser *Jamaica* promptly sank the ship with its crew of fifteen hundred men.

In the course of a discussion of the situation on December 27,⁴¹² Hitler announced the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union, in spite of much evidence to the contrary:

You should not assume that it is a giant from antiquity,⁴¹³ who every time he falls to the ground becomes stronger. At one point, he will run out of breath.

Moreover, he again compared the crisis before the seizure of power with the situation he was now facing.

Zeitler, I want to tell you something. I am a man who has personally built up and led perhaps the greatest organization there is on earth. I still lead it today. During this time, I received news from local groups (Ortsgruppen): here Social Democracy cannot be beaten. Or: Communism simply cannot be beaten here, this is completely out of the question, you cannot get it out of here. One thing was remarkable: it was always the leader [of the specific Ortsgruppe]. If it were a general judgment, then it would be in order. If somebody tells me that the exertion of moral influence on the infantry is useless—then I can only say that I once heard a major talk, and I said to myself, there is no sense in talking to the troops, I heard this a thousand times, there is no sense to it. Of course, if an officer tells me that it is simply of no use with the men, then I can only say, that only proves that your influence was of no use. For if I put another team next to yours, the people are all well-behaved in the hands of their leaders.

After all, looking at a unit is looking in a mirror. Or I think of my Ortsgruppen. In every election, I used to have Gaus where I knew on the eve of the election that there would be a success. Why? I cannot say: Yes, that was Franconia, or that was Cologne—Cologne was the black-red Cologne, after all. Or East Prussia? What did East Prussia mean? It was completely reactionary, against us. Or Mecklenburg or Thuringia. Thuringia was bright red. But, in the one case, I had Koch; in the other, Sauckel, then Ley and so on.

These eternal comparisons between domestic and foreign policy in Hitler's tirades were as boring as they were wrong. The English were

December 27, 1943

simply not German Nationalists, and the Russians not German Communists!

Even if one accepted this comparison, the result was not in Hitler's favor. After all, he had carefully avoided the application of force in his struggle at home (except for 1923), but he had used force consistently abroad after 1939. This spelled ruin for Hitler. Undoubtedly, he would have failed in Germany, too, had he used force to seize power at the time. After all, even the most brilliant speeches before Gauleiters or Ortsgruppenleiters would not have had much effect in the face of the machine guns of the Reichswehr or of the police, just as they did not have much effect in the face of the bombs and grenades of the Allied and Soviet troops.

On December 27, Hitler indulged in his favorite sport, the design of new medals and their statutes. He decreed new bylaws for the "Service Medal of the German Eagle."⁴¹⁴ One year later, he would devote himself at about the same time to drawing up new statutes for the Iron Cross medal.⁴¹⁵

On December 27, Hitler issued a supplementary directive for Directive No. 51.⁴¹⁶ It read as follows.

I. The enemy's deployment in South England is coming to an end. It should be expected that it will be over in the middle of February; after the middle of February a massive landing operation of the enemy can be expected at any time. As it will take a long time to move all the forces to particularly hazardous sections of the coast, and as the enemy air forces will certainly hinder our road network by damaging it, it is urgent to start deployment before the landing of the enemy's decisive forces.

II. Hence, the Führer has ordered:

Due to a particular menace to the front of AOK. 15 and to the right wing of OAK. 7 (Cotentin Peninsula),⁴¹⁷ the available mass of the forces must be concentrated at these fronts. The units involved must be well trained and must put up anti-fragmentation structures.

III. The deployment must start on January 1, 1944. [Technical details follow.]

It was evident in the discussions of December 28, 29, and 30 at the Führer headquarters,⁴¹⁸ that Hitler attempted to portray the situation in rosy colors for the benefit of the generals. However, he succeeded only in robbing Peter to pay Paul; that is, he withdrew troops from the northern front in order to throw them into a newly created gap in the south.

December 30, 1943

The situation at the end of 1943 was even more catastrophic than it had been in the beginning. Since Stalingrad, the German troops in the east had been on the retreat. Slowly but surely, this retreat led them back to their initial positions of 1941. The Allies had taken possession of North Africa. There had been some slow advances in Italy, but this was a peripheral theater of war. Montgomery's recall to England had made this clear. From England, a landing during the following months threatened to bring about a decision in the west.

The following additions to the states already at war with Germany had been made in the year 1943: Iraq (declaration of war on January 16), Denmark (August 29), Iran (September 9), Italy (October 10), Colombia (November 29), and Bolivia (December 9). No less than forty-three states were now at war with the Greater German Reich.

The Year 1944

Major Events in Summary

Whereas Hitler's prognoses for 1943 had already been more modest than in earlier years, his forecasts for 1944 were downright gloomy. On the one hand, he still proclaimed: "In this struggle of life and death, Germany will win in the end!"¹ On the other hand, he also said that "the year 1944 will make heavy and difficult demands on all Germans. The tremendous developments in the war will reach a crisis point this year. We are completely confident that we will successfully ride it out."²

Hitler desired to "ride out" the year 1944 "successfully"! It was more like scraping by if possible! In the east, he still had some room for avoiding contact with the enemy. However, if a landing in the west succeeded, then the "crisis," that is, Germany's collapse, would be a question of only months. Hitler probably realized this, although he still boasted: "No matter where the plutocratic world will undertake the threatened attempt to land in the west, it will fail!"³ Hitler charged Rommel with an inspection of the coasts in question along the Atlantic, the North Sea, and the Mediterranean. Since the autumn of 1943, Rommel had constantly been on the go: first in the Balkans, then at the Riviera, later in Denmark and France. In the winter of 1943-1944, the German newsreels often presented Rommel on the screen, inspecting the fortifications of the so-called "Atlantic Wall." His otherwise inscrutable face revealed what he thought: if the Allies really undertook a landing, then all measures would have been in vain.

On November 28, 1942, Rommel had already candidly told Hitler, who was greatly angered by this, that the German weapons were not up to the "effectiveness of the British bombers, tanks, and artillery."⁴

On December 20, 1943, Hitler had declared: "From mid-February, early March on, the attack will take place in the west."⁵ Since this period passed and nothing happened, Hitler felt that he could take his annual spring vacation at the Berghof. Again, all sorts of representatives from

the satellite states had to make an appearance either there or at Klessheim Castle. Hitler enjoyed himself so much that it was not until mid-July that he finally returned to the Wolfsschanze headquarters. In the meantime, the war continued: the Germans lost the Crimea in May and were forced to give up Rome on June 4. The Allies landed in northern France on June 6 and gained a foothold there, even though Hitler had prophesied that they should consider themselves fortunate if they managed to stay “on land for nine hours.”⁶

Hitler’s “V-1” rocket bombs, which targeted the British Isles and later Belgium from mid-June on, and even the improved “V-2” gained no successes.⁷ Given the state of the technology at the time, their military significance was negligible. They served as an instrument of terror, but terror like propaganda works only against an inferior nation, never against one of equal or superior strength.

On June 22, the third anniversary of Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union, the Russians launched a major offensive along the central sector of the eastern front. Within a few weeks, the entire German Army Group Center, consisting of twenty-five divisions, was destroyed. Romania collapsed in the south of the eastern front, followed by Bulgaria. Brute force kept Hungary in line. Finland laid down its arms in the north.

On July 20, a few days after Hitler’s return to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, an attempt on his life was made. Hitler survived with barely a scratch, while a number of innocent men were killed or seriously injured in the explosion. It furnished Hitler with a pretext for hanging thousands of Germans who were suspicious anyway, or sending them to concentration camps. He also launched a propaganda campaign on his “miraculous rescue” and “the warning finger of God,” which had supposedly become apparent here. But all that could not change the fact that the end was drawing nearer and nearer, the closer the Allies came to the borders of the Reich.

By September, the Russians were at the border of East Prussia and the Allies were in front of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). While Hitler himself had stated, “if they attack in the west, then this attack will (decide) the war,”⁸ he was nonetheless not about to capitulate after the landing of the Anglo-Americans. After all, he had announced earlier that he intended to “remain steadfast in the face of the impossible”⁹ and fight down to the “last battalion”¹⁰ in order to stay alive. He hoped that, by some miracle or through his new “wonder weapons,” Providence could

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still bestow the palm of victory on him, if only he “persisted.” He did not yield. Instead, he issued an appeal for the “Volkssturm,” a type of “*levée en masse*,”¹¹ the very idea of which he had belittled not that many years before. While speaking before a group of Kreisleiters gathered at the Vogelsang Ordensburg, he had expressed the following conviction:¹²

I do not believe, you know, in this so-called *levée en masse*. I do not believe that by mobilizing their enthusiasm, let us say, [you make soldiers].

Now twelve-year old boys and women were being trained for defensive battle. The Germans on the western and eastern borders of the Reich had to dig antitank ditches in order to document the “German will to resist.”

In order to improve the public’s mood in Germany, Hitler launched an offensive in the Ardennes shortly before Christmas. However, the victory reports he presented to the German public at Christmas were rather meager. It was obvious that this injection of courage would hardly outlast the holidays.

January 1, 1944

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's New Year's proclamation was rather long and contained little new. By the strangest arguments, he tried to prove that Germany would simply have to win the war. Europe would otherwise become the victim not only of Bolshevism, but also of English famine: "Wherever the British rule today, hunger and misery are the concomitants of life."¹³

Hitler then turned to the setbacks of the previous year, claiming that they had occurred because the French officers and the Italian king had broken their word. He did not say a word about Stalingrad. In a sentimental tone, he spoke about the bomb warfare and again said that the "hour of retribution will come." At the same time, he announced a large-scale rebuilding of the destroyed cities in Germany and claimed: "Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Kassel, and all the other big or small cities will be barely recognizable only a few years after the war."

In conclusion, he tried to convince himself and the German Volk that all setbacks were simply trials imposed by the "Lord," who was reviewing its bravery, diligence, and willingness to sacrifice. Hitler declared as follows:

During this year, my Volksgenossen, bitter and difficult decisions had to be made. After the Allies succeeded in landing in French North Africa, which was made possible by the breach of word and loyalty of the French admirals, generals, and other officers, I had to try to win time under any circumstances. We needed time not only to carry out the mobilization of the absolutely necessary new German armies, but also to prepare measures for countering the impending defection of Italy's King Victor Emmanuel [III], which could no longer be overlooked. The history of this war will one day decide who conducted themselves wisely in this period: our enemies or we. I do not believe that, had Providence ever offered us such an opportunity, we would have failed so pitifully to take advantage of it as our enemies did.

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We should thank Providence that, despite these hard trials, it gave us the opportunity time and again to overcome difficult crises by swift action, to set right apparently hopeless situations, and, in so doing, to carry out the expansion of our military forces according to plan. The shameful betrayal of the Duce, to whom Italy owed everything, suddenly placed in front of the German Reich and its leadership the most difficult decisions. It was a matter of course that the resulting consequences would influence the facts of the war. The German leadership was forced to weigh mercilessly the necessary against the less than absolutely necessary. It had to make very harsh decisions, which were very difficult to understand for the individual soldier, who might have been told to retreat over a hundred kilometers without having been attacked.

In spite of this, every German can be sure that no more than was absolutely necessary happened or will happen in order to render justice to the new great and mighty tasks. This task now is to win the war in any event! The building of new mighty lines of communication, the taking possession of great railway lines, their securing and operation, compelled us to limit ourselves at other fronts. The adjustment of forces, which we sought, can today already be regarded as a success.

If thus right now there is an attempt, by trips, conferences, new appointments of commanders in chief, and other such maneuvers—in view of the lack of other means to support the Russian offensive—to burden Germany, the German Volk, and its leaders with a war of nerves, then they are not only mistaking the German Volk, but also the German leaders for those of the former Italian kingdom. It is no news to us that the English intend to undertake a landing in the west or in the Balkans; not to mention that they have already been at most of these locations before. That they want to see these landings through by all means at their disposal is a matter of course.

That they appoint special commanders in chief for these landings is nothing new in the history of war. It was no different even during the pitiful coalition wars of the past. That they finally plan to defeat us in doing this has been their intention from the start, of course. I can therefore only assure the German Volk that we took account of all these intentions from the start and prepared ourselves, not only in terms of personnel and matériel but also by an reinforcement of those points that to us seemed to be crucial or important for such a landing. We did so to an extent which will probably surprise our enemies more than their landing can surprise us. They assure us that the new invasion can no longer be compared with the attempted landing at Dieppe. Well, we expect nothing different, since our defense has also changed in the meantime. Above all, the English who landed at Dieppe did not have any direct contact with the German defense at the time. I am speaking before the German Volk completely confident that wherever the Allies carry out their landing, they will be given an appropriate welcome. The German soldier will do his duty there, too, realizing the fateful significance of this struggle.

In such a worldwide, mighty, and dreadful struggle, it cannot be avoided that the psychological stress for the individual sometimes reaches the limit of what is bearable, even surpassing it at times. In spite of this, on the whole, every

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German unit has time and again done justice to its duties, after the necessary recovery. The heroism of our soldiers in the army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS is without precedent in history. While before the front was always held up to the homeland as a glorious example of sacrifice, today the homeland can be held up to the front as an example of a no less great heroism and sense of sacrifice. The bomb warfare against German cities profoundly moves all our hearts. It is not so much the cities themselves, their houses, and public buildings but rather the loss for good of our artistic monuments that we lament; but we will rebuild our cities to be more beautiful than they were before. The organized National Socialist Volksstaat will have eliminated within a few years all traces of this war. From the ruins, a new splendor of German cities will burst into bloom. Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Kassel, and all the other big or small cities will be barely recognizable only a few years after the war. Wherever historic values can be replaced, we will reproduce them faithfully. If the National Socialist state succeeded in peacetime in building over three hundred eighty thousand apartments per year, then it should not be a problem for our cooperative effort to produce two to three million apartments after the war. What pains all of us and me in particular is the sacrifice of life, especially of women and children, and the loss of so many personal belongings and small remembrances, which, in spite of their lack of material worth, mean so much for the life of the person who either inherited them from his father, saved up the money for them himself, and for whom they are irreplaceable souvenirs of times past.

By the way, the hour of retribution will come!

However, there is another side of this bomb warfare. The man who has lost everything knows that only victory will return his belongings to him. Only the success of this war will again transform our German cities from heaps of rubble into blossoming communities. Only success will again give millions of men space to work and live. Success alone can create a situation which, above all, renders impossible the attempt of these international criminals to bring such suffering upon mankind once again. When millions of men have nothing they can call their own anymore, when they have nothing they can lose, then they can only win something.

The National Socialist state leadership is therefore determined to wage this war with the utmost fanaticism to the bitter end. In this, it will differ from the weak and cowardly leadership of the German nation in the World War. The party, whose members sacrifice their blood disproportionately at the front—with its organizations for the youth, the elderly, women and girls—carries out the work of responsibility not only in the education, but also and above all in the conduct of our Volksgenossen in the most difficult and bitter hours. War once brought forth the National Socialist movement and, therefore, it must and will hold its own all the more in the war today.

The achievements of the fighting soldiers at the front and the fighting Germans in the homeland are complemented by the work of our Volksgenossen and those Europeans who are in our ranks. The German peasant, that is, primarily the German peasant's wife—they are contributing to

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the feeding of our Volk. They also know that the collapse of the German Reich would mean the end of the German peasantry. Therefore, they can have only one goal, namely, to secure for our Volk what is absolutely necessary in terms of foodstuffs in order to get through this most difficult fight successfully.

The achievements of German agriculture are correspondingly unique. They are supplemented by the activities of millions of our workers, who deliver weapons and ammunition to our soldiers. In contrast to the World War, when we were opposed by thirty-five hundred tanks and had barely a dozen of our own and no antitank defenses whatsoever, the quality and number of our production of tanks increase constantly, like that of the weapons of defense. Germany is perhaps the only state in the world that has not lowered its production of coal but has increased it and, by throttling private consumption, has subordinated everything to waging the war. Thanks to the huge Lebensraum and great number of people deployed in Europe for the fighting of our war, and also to our glorious allies in East Asia and the nations fighting together with us in Europe, which are likewise defending their homelands and the European continent, we represent a powerful factor in terms of people no less powerful than that of our enemy, especially if you consider not only numbers but also productively employable manpower as the actual value.

These enormous events are made possible by the achievements of our transport, our general administration, and the unpaid work of millions of men, who dedicate every free hour to the care and assistance of others. The deployment of this Volk is perfected by the unique achievements of the German woman and girl, and today already by a brave German youth.

It is the mighty rhythm of life of the National Socialist Volksstaat which makes the war possible for us. It created the material and ideological prerequisites for this struggle of survival not only of the German Reich, but also of the entire continent. However, this socialist Volksstaat is also the target of the hatred of the Bolshevik-plutocratic international conspirators and their Jewish wire-pullers. It will also be the reason for the decline of this coalition!

The year 1944 will make heavy and difficult demands on all Germans. The tremendous developments in the war will reach a crisis point this year. We are completely confident that we will successfully ride it out.

Let us pray to the Lord for the victory not as a gift, but let us ask Him to weigh justly our bravery, our diligence, and our sacrifices. The objective of our struggle is well-known. It is none other than to preserve the existence of our Volk, which He has created. Our willingness to sacrifice and our diligence will not remain a secret to Him. We are ready to give and do everything in the service of this goal. With fairness, He will examine us until He can pronounce a sentence. It is our duty to appear not too light before Him, so that we shall be accorded the merciful judgment which calls itself "victory" and means life.

Hitler's order of the day to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and [in particular of] the army was likewise long. He even mentioned the "heroic struggle of Stalingrad," although he claimed that this "crisis" had

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been caused by the “complete failure of the Italian ally in the east.” The “betrayal by the Italian king,” the “traitorous French generals in North Africa,” and the “Badoglio creatures” had forced him to “protect the rest of the European Lebensraum . . . at the expense of the east.” At the center of the order of the day stood this prophecy: “No matter where the plutocratic world of the west undertakes the landing it threatens, it will fail!” Hitler declared the following:¹⁴

History will be forced to record the year 1943 as the second year of a great crisis.

The long-standing sabotage by the Italian royal house, its attendant camarilla, and the plutocratic-capitalist cliques have finally led to the betrayal by the French generals, admirals, and officers in North Africa. This resulted in the slackening of all means of resistance in this area.

Through a systematic, passive resistance of the responsible Italian offices, traffic to North Africa was paralyzed so that, because of the lack of material instruments of power and provisions, our units could no longer hold the North African area. The complete failure of the Italian ally in the east led to a further crisis, which ended in the heroic struggle of Stalingrad.

Finally, the underground activity of these traitors—at the time already paid by England —began to undermine the Balkans and threatened to cheat the German soldier out of the rewards of his blood sacrifice. The arrest of the Duce led to a shamelessly frank treason, which is perhaps unique in history in its profligacy. The consequences were very hard for us.¹⁵ In a few weeks, Germany had first to defeat the troops of the traitors and then disarm them. More than a million men met this fate. In part, they had threatened to cut off the rearward communications of the German troops in Italy and the Balkans. We occupied countless islands. Some had to be reconquered after heavy fighting against the troops of the Italian king. In other instances, we were forced to evacuate islands because of the impossibility of securing contact. In southern Italy, it became immediately necessary to improvise a new front and consolidate it. In the Balkans, the Italians and bandits of all sorts had to be defeated and disarmed. Numerous divisions had to be brought up into these areas for this purpose and new armies had to be assembled, but at the same time the expansion of our fortifications and the continued training of their crews could not be neglected.

In the same period it also became necessary to erase at all costs the impending offensive by the Russians [while it was] still in the summer, so as to use up their forces as much as possible before the onset of winter. In the homeland, measures to fend off enemy bomb attacks had to be reexamined and improved. New offensive and defensive weapons had to be developed, their methods of application studied, and finally [they had to be] practically tested.

During this year, my comrades, the German leaders were weighed down by the greatest task which could ever be set to anybody. Thanks to the bravery, dedication, and spirit of sacrifice of the front and the homeland, thanks to the diligence of our workers, we managed with the support of our allies in East

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Asia and our comrades in arms in Europe, to resolve these enormous questions. In Europe, the German Volk and the German soldiers bore the main burden.

All the problems presented to us by the treason of the Italian king are now basically resolved. The front stands south of Rome and is constantly being reinforced in order to fend off the Anglo-American units. The rush on the Brenner Pass has become an offensive at a snail's pace. The Allied warlords are today happy if they report the "conquest" of the ruins of one or two peasant villages per week. The Balkans are in our hands; all the islands are occupied by German troops. The landing of Allied units, no matter where it should take place, will run into German resistance, which will look completely different from the welcome of the Americans by the traitorous French generals in North Africa or the characterless Badoglio creatures in Sicily.

These positive points are opposed by negative ones. The mighty new tasks can be accomplished only by renunciations elsewhere. The taking up of positions essential to the defense of Europe in the south necessitates an adjustment of duties to the rear and supply lines at the expense of the east. Many new deployments earmarked for the east are now tied down and must help to protect the rest of the European Lebensraum. This is the cause of many of your cares and needs, my comrades at the eastern front.

In spite of this, there is no doubt that this greatest year of crisis in our history, which the English and the Bolsheviks were firmly convinced would end in our complete collapse, has become a great historic success. No matter how difficult the fighting was and will continue to be in the east, Bolshevism has not reached its goal. No matter where the plutocratic world undertakes the threatened attempt to land in the west, it will fail!

The attempt to wear down the German homeland will result in its opposite! Their intention of eliminating the German war production will be foiled. Our resistance will not diminish; instead, it will become even more successful in the year 1944.

Even if the scales of technological progress have tipped temporarily in favor of our enemies in the year 1943, we will catch up again. After all, the German spirit of invention has not been asleep but active. The products of its achievements will reestablish the balance of technological weapons.

It is a hard fact that our enemies, who unleashed this war hoping for a completely certain victory, have been forced back almost everywhere. After four years of struggle, Germany, which had a Lebensraum of six hundred thirty-four thousand square kilometers at the beginning of the war, today occupies two million six hundred fifty thousand square kilometers in Europe. And it is a fact that the smashing of the German Reich has not taken place for a fourth year. They did not manage to exterminate our Volk or break its vital force. Instead, we continue with great confidence to defend the Reich and, therefore, Europe, in the fifth year of the war.

This goes to the credit of the leadership and the soldiers of the entire Wehrmacht.

The accomplishments of the army with all its formations in this year have earned it the greatest glory. Even if it appeared to the brave grenadier to surpass

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by far what is humanly possible, he had time and again found the strength to assert himself. In this bloody struggle, the front in the east stands in defiance of all enemy forces. The Bolshevik attempt to invade Europe will again fail, for good this time, in one way or another. I know what I demand of you, my soldiers of the army. Still, even the greatest sacrifice you make today is no greater than the sacrifice demanded even of women and children in Germany. They must and do make this sacrifice everywhere with a faithful heart. No less are the accomplishments of the navy, which, through its fight, gets a grip on the tasks which are set for the Wehrmacht in general. The apparent subsiding of the U-boat warfare is caused by a single technical invention on the side of our enemies. We are not only in the process of eliminating it, but we are also convinced that we will succeed in this shortly.

Like the army, the Luftwaffe has made tremendous accomplishments while fighting on all fronts. In addition, it faces the task of defending the homeland's soil. Its heroism rises above everything.

The heroic divisions and units of the Waffen SS, which fight within the framework of the army, feel tied to the army for better or for worse.

All other institutions and units which are deployed at the front and in action likewise deserve the greatest praise: the men and women of the Red Cross, the Reich Labor Service, the NSKK, and the OT.

The accomplishments of the German railroad men are also matchless.

The year 1943 is now over. It has not only refused our adversaries what they had hoped for, but, on the contrary, it has dealt them perhaps their severest disappointment.

The year 1944 will be very difficult. It is our joint task to transcend the purely defensive in its course and deal the adversary such heavy blows that finally the hour will come in which Providence can grant the victory to that nation which deserves it most. When I look at you, my German soldiers, your heroism, bravery, and courage, and when I consider the sacrifices and accomplishments of the homeland, then my confidence is transformed into an unshakable certainty: more a nation cannot do, suffer, and bear. Thus, if Providence gives the prize of life to whoever fights for and defends it most bravely, then our Volk will be received graciously by Him who as a just judge has at all times granted the victory to those most deserving of it.

In this struggle of life and death, Germany will win in the end!

The official note on the exchange of telegrams at the beginning of the year was again quite brief. This was no surprise, since the number of heads of state and politicians who still cared to send their greetings to Hitler had greatly diminished. The public was not even told what the Duce stated in his telegram. The communiqué read as follows:¹⁶

At the turn of the year, an exchange of season's greetings by telegram took place between the Führer and numerous foreign heads of state and government.

The ambassadors, envoys, and chargés d'affaires present in Berlin expressed their own greetings to the Führer and those of the heads of state, governments,

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and nations that they represent by entry in the guest book at the Presidential Chancellery.

On January 4, von Manstein arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters to tell Hitler that the bend of the Dnieper could simply not be held.¹⁷ However, Hitler cut him off and gave a speech himself. He categorically declined to withdraw from the bend of the Dnieper and to give up Nikopol.

On this topic, Hitler said that the unavoidable loss of the Crimea would then lead to the collapse of Turkey followed by that of Bulgaria and Romania. He further explained that he was not in a position to bring up additional forces to the army group for its northern wing. At best, he could take them from Army Group North, but only if it withdrew to Lake Peipus. As a result, Finland could possibly break away. We would lose control over the entire eastern Baltic Sea, and ore transports from Sweden would no longer be possible. In addition, we would lose essential training waters for our U-boats.

From the west, he could only give us forces after a landing by the enemy had been driven off or the British—as he believed—had settled in Portugal. He had to fight to win time right now, until things were cleared up in the west and our activated formations were ready for deployment. From May on, the U-boat warfare would again gain momentum.

By the way, there are so many disagreements among our enemies that they will one day fall apart. To win time means everything.

It was true that to win time meant everything to Hitler. After all, he believed in a miracle! He clung to the idea that the alliance of the western powers with the Russians would “fall apart” before the war was over. He tried to convince not only his generals of the correctness of this utopian wishful thinking in the next fifteen months but also his entourage. Goebbels constantly had to “drive home” this point with the German public.

After the discussion of the situation on that day, another talk between Hitler and von Manstein followed. Zeitzler was the only other person present. Von Manstein made another feeble attempt to get Hitler to change the command and suggest a “truly responsible chief of the general staff.” While von Manstein spoke, Hitler looked at him very sharply, almost putting him off. Then Hitler took over and said the following:

Only he who controlled all the resources of the Reich was capable of waging this war militarily. Only he was in a position to decide which forces were available for the individual theaters of war and how operations there

January 8, 1944

should therefore proceed. Also, Göring would never comply with anybody else's orders.

On the question of the appointment of a commander in chief for the eastern theater of war, nobody else would have the same authority as he.

"The field marshals never ever obey me! Do you think that they would listen any better to you? I can dismiss them, if need be, but nobody else would have this type of authority!"

This put an end for good to such suggestions! It was surprising that von Manstein went this far, considering Hitler's repeated hints that this would not get him anywhere. It would have been easier to take a bone from a dog than to get Hitler to give up an inch of his immense power voluntarily!

Another "private" military discussion followed in January 1944 between Hitler and Guderian.¹⁸ Hitler invited Guderian to breakfast, saying: "I have received a teal as a gift. You know I am a vegetarian. Would you like to join me for breakfast and eat the teal?" Guderian felt that this was a good opportunity for suggesting to Hitler the construction of defensive installations in the east. He was wrong. He stirred up a hornets' nest. Hitler shouted:

Believe me, I am the greatest builder of fortifications of all time. I built the West Wall; I built the Atlantic Wall. I used so and so many tons of concrete. I know what it means to build fortifications. There is not enough manpower, matériel, or means of transportation for the east. The railroads do not even suffice today for supplying the front. In view of this, I simply cannot bring trains with building materials up to the front.

A detailed list of figures followed, which Guderian was unable to counter on the spot. In spite of this, he again tried to make clear to Hitler that it was necessary to build defensive fortifications in the east. But Hitler replied that the generals in the east "would think only of retreat" if he built fortified positions or fortresses behind their fronts.¹⁹

Like von Manstein, Guderian then broached the question of the appointment of a Wehrmacht chief of staff. However, the reply he got was no different than the one von Manstein had received. Hitler rejected all proposals and refused to dismiss Keitel. He knew quite well that the generals were seeking to curtail his own powers and against this he would fight to his last breath!

On January 8, Hitler signed an order concerning the ideological indoctrination of soldiers. It read as follows:²⁰

January 10, 1944

Führer Headquarters, January 8, 1944

On the occasion of assuming direct command over the army, I said that it was a question of decisive importance to the fate of the German Volk that there is unconditional agreement between the state leaders and the officer corps not only in all military aspects but also with respect to ideology.

This war is being fought so bitterly and mercilessly because it represents the decisive struggle between two completely different ideologies. The German Volk today struggles for the freedom of its existence, the fashioning of its life, and its Lebensraum.

The fifth year of the war finds us and our enemies at the height of military armament. However, what remains decisive for success is always the man, the soldier, the fighter. Whoever is able to dedicate himself to the fight with the purest will, the bravest faith, and the most fanatical determination, will win the victory.

The soldier and especially the officer is therefore not only the bearer of arms of the nation, but he is by the same token also the bearer of the political will of his people.

An officer who is unable to educate and lead his troops ideologically is as misplaced in this battle as the officer who fails in the training of his troops or in their tactical leadership. The most valuable forces would waste away if the moral fighting strength of the army were based only on blind obedience, instead of the determination to fight in the realization of the "how come" and "what for."

The book *Wofür kämpfen wir?* (What are we fighting for?) will serve the officer as a guide for his own ideological orientation and as a mental tool for the political education and training of the officer. The officer must also be an active pioneer in the ideological realm. He must be able to educate his soldiers to become convinced and invincible fighters for our great Germanic-German Reich in the spirit of our National Socialist ideology.

I therefore order that the ideological thoughts contained in this book will be integrated into regular lessons for the soldiers in a convincing and emphatic manner. This political training is as decisive for the war as is weapons training. The commanders will arrange for these political lessons to play a worthy role in the framework of training and deployment.

Adolf Hitler

On January 9, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Austrian field marshal Czapp von Birkenstetten on his eightieth birthday. He granted him the privilege of wearing the uniform of the new Wehrmacht.²¹

On January 10, Hitler witnessed a belated triumph. He had finally managed to arrange that a special court in Verona sentenced to death, in "the name of the Duce," all members of the Great Fascist Council who had approved of Grandi's motion on July 24, 1943. Cianetti was an

January 17, 1944

exception. Five members of the Council were arrested and shot at 9:00 a.m. on January 11: Marshal de Bono, Ciano, Pareschi, Marinelli, and Gottardi. Mussolini had not hesitated to sacrifice Ciano, his own son-in-law, to Hitler, who had demanded his execution. Ciano certainly had been no angel, but his education and character placed him far above Mussolini. The Duce remained unmoved in his decision in spite of the curse placed on him by his favorite daughter Edda.

On January 17, Hitler issued his decree on the formation of “combat zones” along the Belgian and French coasts. Directive No. 51 (c) read as follows:²²

1. I authorize Commander in Chief West to declare areas of the Belgian and French coast fortified by him in whole or in part a “combat zone” [Items 2 and 3 below contain technical details.]

4. At the same time as Commander in Chief West declares certain areas a “combat zone,” the general powers of the governments of France and Monaco in this zone of the Mediterranean coast shall pass to Commander in Chief West, to the extent he considers necessary for the place and other circumstances. As for the rest, the regulations in items 2 and 3 ought to be considered logically applicable.

In the course of the following months, Hitler would repeatedly issue similar, highly detailed directives. No matter how well formulated and drawn up they were, they could not change the balance of power of the two sides: the German troops were hopelessly inferior to the Anglo-American armies. Hitler ought not to have bothered issuing all these directives. However, he appeared to enjoy doing this as much as composing proclamations and diplomatic congratulatory addresses. He would indulge in this until the end at the Führerbunker.

On January 17, the Russians started an offensive at Oranienbaum on the Gulf of Finland. It led to the relief of Leningrad.²³ Again, the outstanding Russian artillery played a decisive role in these operations.

In spite of all his efforts, Hitler had not been able to take Leningrad in 1941. In impotent fury, he had decided to “starve out” the city and have it “swallowed up by the earth.”²⁴ For three years, he had tortured its population in an inhumane manner. He had denied the citizens foodstuffs, had them shelled daily by bombers and heavy artillery, but could not break their heroic resistance. Finally, they were rescued. Ten days later, there was no German soldier to be seen within fifty kilometers of the city.

January 28, 1944

On January 21, as he did every year, Hitler had a wreath placed at the grave of Professor Troost in Munich by Gauleiter Giesler.²⁵

On January 23 in Nuremberg, Deputy Gauleiter Holz laid a wreath from the Führer at the grave of the SA Obergruppenführer von Obernitz, who had died in an accident while serving with the Luftwaffe.²⁶

On the same day, Hitler received the Norwegian prime minister Vidkun Quisling at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Afterwards, he received the Norwegian ministers Fugglesan, Lie, and Whist.²⁷

On January 25, Hitler signed an insignificant decree on the right of pardon of the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia.²⁸

On January 27, Hitler assembled his field marshals and commanders in chief at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in order to deliver a speech to them. Up to now, he had ensured their compliance by enormous appropriations of funds, special bonuses, and endowments amounting to hundreds of thousands of Reichsmarks.²⁹ Now, however, he was no longer content in assuring their obedience by financial means. He made clear to them that they owed him certain heroic duties. His speech culminated in this passage:³⁰

Gentlemen, if ever there comes a final hour, then I hope that you, my generals, will stand together on the barricades and that you, my field marshals, stand next to me with your swords drawn!

On hearing this, von Manstein exclaimed: "That will be the case, my Führer!" Hitler looked up in surprise: a heckler! He could not stand heckling, no matter what type.³¹ Only if there was complete silence, could he fully exercise his rhetorical power. This time, however, he swiftly regained his composure and replied: "I thank you, Field Marshal von Manstein!" Nevertheless, he had lost his place and abruptly ended his speech. Later, he gave von Manstein a dressing-down in Keitel's presence as follows:

Field Marshal, I won't stand for your interrupting me during an address which I deliver to the generals. After all, you would not put up with this from your subordinates either.

In the course of the discussion of the situation on January 28,³² it became clear just how critical things had become at different front sectors. Army Group North had been forced to retreat quite far following the successful Soviet offensive at Leningrad.³³ The Russians

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had again attacked Army Group South and had encircled two German corps around Cherkessk.

On January 22, Allied troops under the command of General Clark³⁴ landed at Anzio and Nettuno (south of Rome) in Italy.

On January 27, additional strong units landed. This threatened the so-called "Gustav line," a defensive line built by Field Marshal Kesselring from the Gulf of Gaeta via Monte Cassino to the Adriatic. Even Rome was endangered.

On January 28, Hitler sent the commander in chief, southwest, Kesselring, the following telex message:³⁵

In the next days, the "Battle for Rome" will start. It will decide the defense of central Italy and the fate of the Tenth Army. The significance of this battle goes beyond this, however, because with the landing at Nettuno the invasion of Europe, planned for the year 1944, has started. As far as possible from the base in England, where the majority of the invasion troops stand ready, strong German forces will be tied down, used up, and experience for future operations collected.

Therefore, every single one of your soldiers must realize the significance of the battle, which will have to be fought by the Fourteenth Army. It is not enough to give tactically correct and clear orders. The army, the air fleet, and the armed forces of the navy, its leaders and soldiers, must be filled with the fanatical will to end this battle victoriously and not to slow down until the last enemy has been destroyed or forced out to sea. The battle must be fought with the sacred hatred of an enemy who wages a pitiless war of annihilation against the German Volk. The enemy will use every means for this. He pursues no other goal than the destruction of German and European culture.

The fight must be hard and merciless, not only against the enemy, but also against any leader and any group which fails in this decisive hour.

As in the battles in Sicily, at the Rapido River, and near Ortona, the enemy must realize that the German fighting strength is unbroken and that the great invasion of 1944 is an undertaking which will suffocate in the blood of the Anglo-American soldiers.

Adolf Hitler

Thanks to rapidly brought up forces, Kesselring was able to seal off the allied beachhead at Anzio-Nettuno.³⁶ He continued to hold the Cassino front. On this mountainous, desolate front, he ruthlessly flung division after division into the battle. The positional warfare which ensued, even according to Allied records, bore great similarity to the trench warfare of the First World War and its terrible losses.

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In the long run, no matter how much blood Kesselring spilled, the Allies' advance proceeded, even though only gradually. The "Gustav line" was pierced in May 1944.

On January 30, Hitler preferred to stay at the Wolfsschanze headquarters rather than venturing out in public and giving a speech, especially in bombed Berlin. Instead, he stepped up to the microphone in order to avoid facing his audience. He delivered a relatively short radio address, which was directed at his English opponents rather than at the German Volk. He tried to convince them that, in the event of a German defeat, Europe and England would become Bolshevik. He argued that it was therefore in England's interest to let Germany win. After all, "a victory by Germany means the preservation of Europe, a victory by the Soviet Union means its destruction."

Hitler still thought that he could impress the English with such worn phrases, even in the fifth year of the war. What he told the German public was also an old thing: "The step from the vision of a half-blind soldier in the year 1918 to the reality of the National Socialist state in the year 1944 was more tremendous and difficult than the step from the present Reich to the final victory will be." Hitler's speech of January 30 read as follows:³⁷

In the fifth year of this the greatest war, no one can remain ignorant of the causes and, hence, the meaning and purpose, of this international war. After all, the time has long passed when it still appeared as though this war was one of those European confrontations instigated by England in order to render impotent (*Verohnmachtung*) the continent and maintain a balance of power to the advantage of the British empire. Those forces which agitated for war in London ever since 1936 have today been transformed from the drivers to the driven. The minds that they sought to summon in accordance with old British tradition have got beyond the control of their masters.

Remarks disseminated by certain English newspapers that, following a defeat of Germany, Russia would have no more reason to advance any further in Europe and, therefore, that Russia would be content to concern itself with the education, that is, extermination of the German Volk, are just as much a Jewish impertinence geared to European fools as the other view, namely, that before this war ends England would in any event immediately take the lead in a new fight against the Soviet Union.

First of all, whoever wins this international war will not allow British newspaper scribblers to determine his objectives. And, second, in the case of a victory of Bolshevism, the sad remainder of Europe would hardly continue to fight under England's leadership against the European-Asian colossus which would then rule Europe, especially since only a complete blockhead could think the military prospects of such a war are promising. In addition, every

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Europe knows that, in such a case, the remaining European remnant states would have the privilege—as would the Empire troops of the Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, or South Africans—only of bearing by themselves the burden of the blood sacrifice in the struggle for the preservation of British rule so that England's own men are spared.

One thing is certain: there can be only one victor in this fight, and this will either be Germany or the Soviet Union! A victory by Germany means the preservation of Europe; a victory by the Soviet Union means its destruction.

That is so very clear that every not completely crazy Englishman should know this quite well. If in spite of this they act as though things could be different, with true British hypocrisy, then this must be attributed to the responsible war criminals in London who no longer see any possibility of escaping their involvement. Above all, their escape route to the rear has been cut off at home by their Jewish wire-pullers and slave drivers. It is therefore no longer a question for England and the United States of America whether or not they want and are able to fight Bolshevism on their own after this war, but how they can fight Bolshevism in their own countries.

What Europe can in reality expect from the British promises of assistance has best been proved by the Anglo-American stand on the fate of the Poles, Finns, and Baltic states, as well as all of southeast Europe.

The unscrupulous promise of a guarantee to help Poland once drove this state into a war against Germany. By the untruthful claim that other states had to be saved from Germany, mutual assistance pacts were forced on them. Today, by the same untruthful slogans, these countries are being abandoned and sacrificed. They must be surrendered, but not because every single Englishman wants this, but because England will be incapable of preventing this development in case of a victory by Bolshevism. Yes, not only this; it is because they are not even able to stand up for a different policy against their own opposition contaminated by Bolshevism, let alone successfully implementing such a policy. By the way, anyone who sold to Jewry as England did will sooner or later die of this plague, unless he manages to pull himself together at the last minute and remove these bacteria from his body by force. The view that it is possible to live together peacefully or obtain a reconciliation between your own interests and those of this ferment of the decomposition of nations is like hoping that the human body will be capable of assimilating the plague bacillus in the long run.

The question of saving the European states and thereby saving Europe is therefore a question which can only be decided by the German Volk, its Wehrmacht, and the states allied to it. However, should the Reich break, then no other state in Europe will be capable of mounting an effective resistance against this new invasion by the Huns.

And they know this in the Kremlin.

Therefore, in the case of their victory, just as a precautionary measure for the future, the fate of the German nation would be its complete extermination through Bolshevism. And this goal is also the openly admitted intention of international Jewry.

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It is of no matter whatsoever whether the Jewish defenders of this goal sit in England or America, or whether they direct their central office in Moscow. It makes no difference whether European or non-European statesmen realize this fact, or whether they do not wish to believe it. It is all the more irrelevant whether they believe in one country or the other that, by submissive petting, they can perhaps detoxify the Jewish bacteria, which they bred themselves. If Germany does not win, the fate of the states in North, Central, and South America will be decided within a few months. The west would shortly follow. Ten years later, the oldest civilized continent would have lost the characteristic features of its life. The picture so dear to all of us of a more than twenty-five-hundred-year-old cultural and material development would have been erased, the nations as bearers of this culture, while the representatives of the spiritual leadership of these nations would lead a miserable existence somewhere in the forests and swamps of Siberia, provided they were not liquidated by a shot in the neck. Meanwhile, the devastating Jewish Ahasuerus [Xerxes] could celebrate the destruction of Europe in a second triumphant Purim festival.

That the German Volk is today capable of waging this decisive fateful struggle for its own and the European continent's preservation, it owes to the merciful dispensation of God, who allowed National Socialism to reach its goal victoriously eleven years ago, after a long struggle for power.

Without January 30, 1933, and without the National Socialist revolution, without the tremendous domestic cleansing and construction efforts, there would be no factor today that could oppose the Bolshevik colossus. After all, Germany was itself so ill at the time, so weakened by the spreading Jewish infection, that it could hardly think of overcoming the Bolshevik danger at home, not to mention abroad. The economic ruin brought about by the Jews as in other countries, the unemployment of millions of Germans, the destruction of peasantry, trade, and industry only prepared the way for the planned internal collapse. This was furthered by support for the continued existence of a senseless state of classes, which could only serve to transform the reason of the masses into hatred in order to make them the willing instrument of the Bolshevik revolution. By mobilizing the proletarian slaves, the Jews hoped that, following the destruction of the national intelligentsia, they could all the more reduce them for good to coolies. But even if this process of the Bolshevik revolt in the interior of Germany had not led to complete success, the state with its democratic Weimar constitution would have been reduced to something ridiculously helpless in view of the great tasks of current world politics. In order to be armed for this confrontation, not only the problems of political power but also the social and economic problems had to be resolved.

When National Socialism undertook the realization of its program eleven years ago, it managed just in time to build up a state that did not only have the strength at home but also the power abroad to fulfill the same European mission which first Greece fulfilled in antiquity by opposing the Persians, then Rome [by opposing] the Carthaginians, and the Occident in later centuries by opposing the invasions from the east.

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Therefore, in the year 1933, we set ourselves four great tasks among many others. On their resolution depended not only the future of the Reich but also the rescue of Europe, perhaps even of the entire human civilization:

1. The Reich had to regain the internal social peace that it had lost by resolving the social questions. That meant that the elements of a division into classes—bourgeoisie and proletariat—had to be eliminated in their various manifestations and be replaced by a Volksgemeinschaft. The appeal to reason had to be supplemented by the merciless eradication of the base elements of resistance in all camps.

2. The social and political unification of the nation had to be supplemented by a national, political one. This meant that the body of the Reich, which was not only politically, but also governmentally divided, had to be replaced by a unified National Socialist state, the construction and leadership of which were suited to oppose and withstand even the heaviest attacks and severest tests of the future.

3. The nationally and politically coherent centralized state had the mission of immediately creating a Wehrmacht, whose ideology, moral attitude, numerical strength, and material equipment could serve as an instrument of self-assertion. After the outside world had rejected all German offers for a limitation of armament, the Reich had to fashion its own armament accordingly.

4. In order to secure its continued existence in Europe with the prospect of actual success, it was necessary to integrate all those countries which were inhabited by Germans, or were areas which had belonged to the German Reich for over a thousand years and which, in terms of their national substance and economy, were indispensable to the preservation of the Reich, that is, for its political and military defense.

Only the resolution of all these tasks could result in the creation of that state which was capable, at home and abroad, of waging the fight for its defense and for the preservation of the European family of nations.

When, eleven years ago, the National Socialist movement gained power in the state, after a long struggle by lawful means, the main conditions for the successful resolution of these tasks had already been created. The German Volksgemeinschaft had become embodied in the movement itself. It was therefore not the state which fashioned the movement in the course of the following years. Instead, the movement molded the state. While many great things have been accomplished since that time, the building of the German Volksgemeinschaft undoubtedly stands at the top of the accomplishments of the National Socialist revolution. It was the gentle as well as dogged conversion of the former state of classes into a new socialist organism, a Volksstaat, which alone made it possible for the German Reich to become immune to all attempts at Bolshevik infection. One decisive accomplishment of the National Socialist revolution is that, in this state today, every young German, irrespective of his birth, origin, wealth, the position of his parents, so-called education, and so on, can become whatever he likes, in accordance with his merits.

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It is most evident in the war today just how rapidly the socialist organization of the body politic took place. After all, the Wehrmacht also plays a role in this development. More than sixty percent of the young officer corps comes from among the enlisted men and, thereby, bridges the gap to the hundreds of thousands of laborers or members of the lower middle-classes.

History will one day record it as one of our greatest accomplishments that we succeeded in beginning and carrying out the National Socialist revolution in this great state, without destroying national wealth, and without restricting the creative powers of the old classes, and, in so doing, obtained a complete equality of rights for all. This process will be continued by National Socialism with staunch determination and consequence. This will rob international Jewry of all chances for an internal hollowing out of our body politic.

Thus, the National Socialist community can already today be regarded as the unassailable center of European self-assertion. After all, only a state which is completely free of all antisocial focuses of infection at home can securely oppose Bolshevism abroad. Jewry itself has lost all power in our great Reich. By unleashing this war against National Socialist Germany, it helped to spread the ideas of the National Socialist revolution and teach other nations to appreciate the elements of a scientific realization and objective resolution of this question. The World War of the year 1939 will one day enter history as a gigantic repetition of the internal struggle against our party in the year 1924. Just as in the past, the attack which sought the destruction of the movement spread its ideas throughout Germany with the force of an exposition, this present struggle will in a few years open the eyes of others on the Jewish question. It will make the National Socialist solution of this question and the measures for its elimination appear just as worthy of imitation as self-evident. The greatness of the confrontation with its impact on world history will train the eyes and the minds of the nations for thinking and acting in tremendous historic dimensions. Millions of soldiers and prisoners of war will one day propagandize this realization.

That the National Socialist revolution has beyond this given the German Volk the weapons for self-assertion of its interior organization, economics, and power is nowhere better documented than in this gigantic fight which has raged for more than five years now. This struggle will not follow a course different from that of all previous great wars on this earth. The ups and downs of the events can only depress the man who has not learned to see and think in historical terms.

The step from the vision of a half-blind soldier in the year 1918³⁸ to the reality of the National Socialist state in the year 1944 was more tremendous and difficult than the step from the present Reich to the final victory will be. That Germany's and Europe's victory over the criminal attackers from the west and the east will stand at the end of this struggle has not only become an expression of faith for every National Socialist, but also, at the end of this entire fight up to now, his inner conviction.

The guarantors of this victory are today not only the soldiers at the front but also the fighters in the homeland. Just as National Socialism was born out

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of the First World War, so it will receive its exterior strengthening and reinforcement in the Second. No matter how difficult it may be, the homeland will never despair in the end because it knows its fate and sees its sons fighting at the front for it. The front will never lose heart. Even in the hardest days, it will get hold of itself again because in its hand it holds not only the working but also the equally brave, fighting homeland. The attempt of our enemies to bring about the collapse of the German Volk and Reich through high-explosive and fire bombs will in the end only result in reinforcing its socialist unity even more and create that hard state which Providence has destined to fashion the history of Europe in the coming centuries. That this tremendous, world-shaking process is taking place by causing suffering and pain corresponds to an eternal law of destiny, which states not only that everything great is gained by fighting but also that every mortal comes into this world by causing pain.

The twelfth year of the reorganization of our Volk will make the harshest demands on front and homeland. No matter how much the storm rages outside the walls of our fortress, it will one day subside like every tempest. From behind the dark clouds, the sun will come out again and shine on those who remained steadfast and unshakable and who, true to their faith, fulfilled their duty. The greater our worries are today, the greater our accomplishments will seem to the Almighty, who will one day weigh, judge, and reward those who faced a world of enemies, loyally held on to their flag, and carried it onward without losing heart.

Therefore, despite all the devilry by our enemies, this fight will in the end lead to the greatest victory of the German Reich.

On January 30, the eleventh anniversary of the seizure of power, Hitler promoted Generals Jodl and Zeitzler to colonel generals.³⁹

In addition, he established another medal, called the "Roll of Honor Clasp." Hitler's decree read as follows:⁴⁰

Führer Headquarters, January 30, 1944

The soldiers named in the German army's Roll of Honor will receive as an outward distinction the "Roll of Honor Clasp." This badge will consist of a swastika inside an oak wreath in gold. It will be worn on the ribbon of the Iron Cross of 1939. Implementing regulations will be issued on my behalf by the chief of the army personnel office.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler also established a "Guerilla War Badge." It would be granted by the Reichsführer SS in bronze, silver, and gold for twenty, fifty, and one hundred days of fighting against partisans.⁴¹

On February 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday.⁴²

On February 8, the anniversary of Todt's death, Hitler established an award "for inventive work of outstanding importance to the

February 10, 1944

Volksgemeinschaft,” which meant “for the improvement of weapons” exclusively! His decree read as follows:⁴³

I decree: particularly inventive work will in the future receive visible recognition as an expression of the creative power of the German Volk. I therefore establish the Dr. Fritz Todt Prize.

The Dr. Fritz Todt Prize will be awarded to Germans for inventive work of outstanding importance to the Volksgemeinschaft that furthers the improvement of weapons, ammunition, and Wehrmacht equipment and saves manpower, raw materials, and energy. Above all, the degree of the invention will be considered, as well as the personal dedication of the potential award-recipient, and the value of the invention for the Wehrmacht and the economy.

The Dr. Fritz Todt Prize will be awarded in the form of a button of honor in gold, silver, and steel, accompanied by a certificate and a monetary prize.

The golden button of honor will be awarded by me, upon a joint nomination by the head of the German labor front and the head of the NSDAP central technical office.

The silver and steel buttons of honor will be awarded by the relevant Gauleiter upon a joint nomination by the Gau representative of the German labor front and the head of the NSDAP Gau technical office.

The award of the prizes will regularly take place on September 4, Reich Minister Dr. Todt’s birthday, and on February 8, the anniversary of his death.

Implementing regulations will be issued jointly by the head of the German labor front and the head of the NSDAP central technical office, in agreement with the head of the Party chancellery.

Adolf Hitler

On February 10, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Seyss-Inquart on his inauguration as new president of the German Academy in Munich.⁴⁴ On the same day, he received Graf Helldorf—who was police chief of Berlin, SA Obergruppenführer, and general of the police at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He awarded him the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords. The head of the Gau staff office in Berlin, Gerhard Schach, also received this award.⁴⁵

On February 14, German intelligence and counterespionage activities were centralized. Himmler, then Kaltenbrunner were placed in charge of the “Abwehr” office at the OKW.⁴⁶

In the meantime, the Russians had taken Nikopol at the south of the eastern front. Although, on March 10, 1943, Hitler had still said, “The loss of Nikopol would mean the end of the war,” he was not about to end the war. Instead, he portrayed the loss of Nikopol as a great success and announced the following in the Wehrmacht report of February 18:

February 20, 1944

In heavy fighting around Nikopol, divisions from the Ostmark, Bavaria, Rhenish Westphalia, Saxony, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, and East Prussia, under the command of the General of Mountain Troops Schörner and Generals Brandenberger, Mieth, and Kreysing, have thwarted with cold steel strong attempts at breakthrough by the Bolsheviks in offensive and defensive fighting in the period from November 5, 1943, to February 15, 1944, and have dealt them heavy losses. They captured or destroyed seventeen hundred fifty-four tanks, five hundred thirty-three pieces of artillery, numerous other weapons and war matériel, and downed fifty-six enemy airplanes with infantry guns. Our Luftwaffe made an outstanding contribution to these successes through the deployment of strong combat aircraft and fighter formations.

On February 18, the army corps that had been cut off at Cherkessk was finally relieved, sparing it the fate of the Sixth Army. Reluctantly, Hitler had allowed the attempt to break out.

On February 20, Hitler received a few of its commanders at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁷

Following the breakout of the German combat troops cut off west of Cherkessk, the Führer received at his headquarters on Sunday [February 20] the following commanders of the units which had been encircled there: the commander of the advance guard, Lieutenant General Lieb, who led the spearhead during the breakout through the ring of encirclement; the commander of the SS Panzer Division *Wiking*, SS Gruppenführer and Lieutenant General of the Waffen SS Gille, whose division, made up of Germanic volunteers, proved itself to the utmost in the heaviest fighting; and the leader of the SS Volunteer Brigade *Wallonien*, SS Hauptsturmführer Léon Degrelle, who took charge of the brigade following the heroic death of its commander and who distinguished himself outstandingly in the decisive battles of the breakout.

The Führer personally presented the above commanders with high distinctions for their excellent personal services and the heroic struggle of their troops. Lieutenant General Lieb received the Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross from the Führer's hands; SS Gruppenführer and lieutenant general of the Waffen SS, Gille, received the Swords to the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross; SS Hauptsturmführer Léon Degrelle received the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

While in 1942 and 1943, the Führer had not attended the celebration of the party's foundation in Munich on February 24 and had instead sent proclamations, he simply canceled the entire reunion in the year 1944. In its place, a conference of Reichsleiters and Gauleiters was scheduled, at which Goebbels, Backe, Ley, and Jodl gave speeches.⁴⁸

March 8, 1944

On February 28, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Goebbels and Hilgenfeldt on the tenth anniversary of the relief organization "Mother and Child." Hitler's telegram read as follows:⁴⁹

Führer Headquarters, February 28, 1944

The progress report conveyed to me on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the relief organization "Mother and Child" again proves what accomplishments the homeland is capable of, especially now in the war. I express my gratitude and appreciation to all those, especially the many nameless workers of the relief organization "Mother and Child," who have helped with the beneficial work in the service of our youth.

Adolf Hitler

On March 1, the third anniversary of the accession of Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact, Hitler and the Bulgarian rulers failed to exchange telegrams. Only von Ribbentrop sent a telegram to his colleague Shikhmanov. However, Hitler received Croatian statesmen at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on this day. The communiqué read as follows:⁵⁰

On March 1, the Führer received the prime minister of the independent state of Croatia Mandich and the Croatian foreign minister Perich. The reception at the Führer's was attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel. The Führer had a friendly discussion with the statesmen on all common and current Croatian questions.

On March 8, Hitler issued "Führer Order No. 11" which read as follows:⁵¹

In view of various incidents, I order the following:

1) A distinction is to be made between "fortified posts," each under command of "fortified-post commandants," and "local bases," each under command of "battle commandants."

The "fortified posts" must function like the fortresses of old. They must prevent the enemy from occupying these operationally important posts. They must allow themselves to be encircled in order to tie up the strongest possible enemy forces. This will create a prerequisite for a successful counteroperation.

The "local bases" must be defensive base points in the deep zone of the battle area in case of enemy breakthrough. By their inclusion in HKL, these bases must create a defensive rear; they must become the keystone and crucial points in case of enemy invasion and the starting points for a counterattack.

2) The commandant of a fortified post must be a carefully selected strong-willed soldier, with the rank of general, if possible. He must be appointed by the respective army group. The commandant of the fortified post is personally sworn in by the commander of the army group. The commandant shall

March 15, 1944

guarantee fulfillment of his task to the very utmost on his personal soldier's honor. [Technical details follow.]

Hitler truly believed that such orders could change the military situation in Germany's favor. The Second World War again showed, however, that such morale-boosting orders can at best prolong the war. They do not influence the course of events.⁵² Events bypassed Hitler, no matter how many guidelines on how to persevere he issued.

Hitler made himself conspicuous by his absence at the Heroes' Memorial Day celebrations in Berlin on March 12. Whereas, up to now, he had only failed to appear at the February 24 festivities in Munich, he now did not even have the courage anymore to speak at the Heroes' Memorial Day celebrations. Grand Admiral Dönitz had to give a speech, which was broadcast on radio, and place a wreath at the Unter den Linden memorial.⁵³

On March 14, Hitler sent "his best wishes in a telegram of heartfelt words" to State President Tiso on the Slovak national holiday.⁵⁴

On March 15, Hitler had Frick present a handwritten letter to State President Háchá:⁵⁵

Herr Staatspräsident!

On March 14, 1944, we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the day on which the thousand-year-old connection between the Reich and Bohemia and Moravia was restored in a peaceful settlement, thanks to your statesman-like vision. The first five years of the protectorate have been almost entirely marked by the fateful struggle in Europe. Therefore, they represent a test of the new political situation in Bohemia and Moravia, which is more conclusive than the experiences during the many decades of peacetime. To be able to state at the end of this period that the new order has proved successful for the Reich, and especially for Bohemia and Moravia, suffices for my sincere satisfaction.

Whereas other European nations that allowed themselves to be driven into a war unleashed by our enemies against the Reich had to make the most terrible sacrifice of blood and today see themselves as unscrupulously surrendered to Bolshevism by their former friends, the Czech people have been able to preserve without injury, under the protection of the fighting German Wehrmacht, its continued existence and all that makes life worth living. By its demonstration of loyalty and its achievements in the framework of the new order during what will soon be five years of war, the population of the protectorate has revealed that it is aware of this situation. Thereby, it has in the best possible manner proved wrong all the untruthful rumors spread abroad. May the Czech people's conviction continue to deepen that the thwarting of the Bolshevik threat, the preservation of its traditional forms of life, and its central European living standard depend solely on the victory of the Reich! If

March 18, 1944

the Czech people fulfills its duty in this spirit for homeland, Reich, and Europe, then it will also participate in the triumph of our victory.

I thank you, Herr Staatspräsident, for your responsible conduct of office and wish you good health and the strength to continue to exercise the powers of your office at the head of your people for the benefit of the protectorate.

Yours sincerely,

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler also received the president of the government of the protectorate, Minister Krejci,⁵⁶ in the presence of Lammers, Bormann, and State Minister Karl Hermann Frank.

Since Hitler had already used this “important” state visit as an excuse for not attending the Heroes’ Memorial Day celebrations in Berlin, he needed another pretext for departing for another extended vacation at the Berghof. For this reason, he invited the Hungarian regent to Klessheim Castle for March 18.

He had long been angry with Horthy because the Hungarian regent opposed a massacre of the Jews in his country. In addition, Horthy had written him a letter in early March, requesting the withdrawal of Hungarian troops from the eastern front. Hitler believed that it was high time to bring pressure to bear on Horthy. After all, had he not succeeded in intimidating Schuschnigg at the Berghof⁵⁷ at the time?

On March 18, Horthy arrived at Klessheim, accompanied by his foreign minister Chyzy, war minister Csatay-Tutzenthaler, and chief of staff Szombathelyi-Knaus.⁵⁸ Horthy had taken along his military advisers because Hitler had lured him to the castle with the prospect of discussing the return of the Hungarian troops from the front. However, Hitler did not mention this topic at all. Instead, he bitterly blamed Hungary and claimed the following:

... that, according to information obtained by the German secret service, the Hungarian government was negotiating with the Anglo-Americans and the Soviets. Instead of intensifying its contributions to the war, it sought to withdraw Hungary from the war. Full of indignation, Hitler objected to the nearly one million Jews who lived free and nearly without any restrictions in Hungary. Germany was forced to regard this as a threat to its front in the east and in the Balkans. In view of the circumstances, the German leaders had to fear that a second Badoglio case might come about.

Because of this, Hitler had decided on the military occupation of Hungary. He demanded the regent’s consent. With these words, he placed an already-prepared declaration in front of Horthy, in which the Führer of the Greater German Reich and the regent of the Hungarian kingdom jointly declared that

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a military occupation had occurred in the interest of the fight against Bolshevism and was based on mutual agreement and consent.

Up to this point, Hitler had pulled everything off according to plan. However, there were some unexpected complications: Horthy refused to sign. He said that his signature would represent a violation of the Hungarian constitution. Hitler replied that, in this case, the occupation would proceed without his consent. Horthy then stated that this would meet with armed resistance by the Hungarian Honved troops. Hitler pointed out that Croat, Slovak, and Romanian troops would also march into Hungary. Finally, Horthy threatened to announce his resignation. Hitler parried by saying that, in this case, he would not be able to guarantee the safety of his person, family, and grandson.⁵⁹ Horthy had reached the end of his patience. He jumped up, agitated, and shouted: "If everything has already been decided here, then there is no sense in my staying any longer. I will depart immediately!" He raced for the door, pulled it open, and headed down the flight of steps, his face crimson. Downstairs, the chief of protocol Freiherr von Dörnberg, who was two meters tall, stepped in his path and engaged him in a diplomatic conversation. That gave Hitler time to catch up with him. He had also appeared on the stairs, somewhat embarrassed but at the same time angry. He accompanied Horthy back to his rooms.

While the regent did calm down, he still demanded his special train on the spot. Now things were not at all going as Hitler had planned. That night, German troops would occupy Hungary, even before Horthy returned home. What was to be done? Hastily, an enemy air raid was staged, with an air-raid warning, a smoke screen laid over Klessheim Castle, and similar such "props." There was even an announcement that, supposedly, the telephone lines to Budapest had been "heavily hit" so that Horthy would not be able to make any calls.

During this forced intermission, a new meeting between Hitler and Horthy was arranged. Hitler demanded that Horthy stay in office and appoint a prime minister in accordance with the German government's wishes. Then it would be possible to withdraw the German troops from Hungary. Horthy finally agreed to this proposal.

In the meantime, the German troops were already on the march. At 2:00 a.m. on March 19, they crossed the border. Of course, it was Sunday.⁶⁰ There was some shooting in isolated instances, as in Oedenburg, Pecs, and Neusatz. At 2:30 a.m., Prime Minister Kallay

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requested clarification from the German military attaché in Budapest, who claimed that the occupation was taking place with the approval of the regent. The deputy chief of staff, Bajnoczy, thereupon ordered the cessation of fire.⁶¹

It was not until noon on March 19 that Horthy returned to Budapest. In Germany, no mention of his visit was made. This was a sure sign that things had not gone well. Altogether, there had been three meetings up to now which had been so unsuccessful that they received absolutely no mention in the press: the meeting with Mussolini at Feltre on July 19, 1943; with King Boris at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on August 15, 1943; and with Horthy at Klessheim Castle on March 18, 1944.

That Horthy had by no means agreed to the occupation of Hungary was evident in the official German communiqué on the events, which contained this passage:⁶²

The German side has repeatedly pointed out lately that the war appears to be heading toward a dramatic climax and perhaps a decisive turning point. Under the circumstances, it was not possible to answer for disregarding a security measure that contributed to the final victory. Not only the German nation which wages the European freedom fight but also its comrades in arms which face the same task have a right to a farsighted and precautionary plan for situations which might result from the menace of the east. In the place of a utopian *cordon sanitaire*,⁶³ the constructive forces of the new Europe have put their *cordon militaire*. The latest measures are to be seen in this context, since they are part of the larger framework of the security of Europe. Hungary is joining the front line, which is lining up for the decisive battle from the Baltics to the Mediterranean.

Remarkable were the words "from the Baltics to the Mediterranean." Obviously, Hitler had already written off Finland. In August 1943, the Finns had made peace overtures via Stockholm. In early March 1944, the Finns had been informed about the Russians' conditions through their legation in Stockholm. In essence, the Russians agreed to restore the status of the Peace Treaty of 1940. However, they insisted on breaking off relations with Germany and internment of the German troops and warships in Finland.⁶⁴

It was clear that Finland would accept the Soviet terms sooner or later. The question of the internment of the German troops, however, remained an unresolved issue. Hitler was not in a position to force a resolution in Finland, as he had done with Hungary. He could not prevent the conclusion of a peace settlement. In spite of this, he made

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several attempts to keep the Finns from taking this step. For instance, he granted an interview to the Berlin correspondents of the Swedish newspaper *Stockholm Tidningen*, which was published on March 19. The last interview of Hitler's life read as follows:⁶⁵

Question: Foreign news items claim that the Führer has attempted to approach King Gustav of Sweden because the Swedish king offered to mediate with Finland. Is this correct?

Answer: No, this is not correct. I do not know why I should have undertaken such a step. I am not aware whether or not King Gustav has tried to bring his influence to bear on Finland in this matter and, above all, when this supposedly took place. Should this be true, however, then it is a question of a purely Swedish affair.

Question: In this context, may I ask you how you assess the situation based on the terms of the armistice?

Answer: I assess the armistice terms announced by the Soviets exactly as they were meant. Of course, their objective is to bring about a situation in Finland in which further resistance would be impossible, so that they can carry out with the Finnish people what Molotov demanded in Berlin at the time. It makes absolutely no difference whatever slogans or pretexts accompany the announcement of the Soviet terms. It is a question of placing the noose around the victim's neck in order to be able to tighten it at the right time. That the Soviet Union feels compelled to undertake such a step proves how skeptically it assesses its own military potential. Nobody can doubt the final goal of Bolshevism: the extermination of the non-Russian, non-Bolshevik nations of Europe. In this case, it is the extermination of the Finns. In order to reach this goal, they unleashed a war of nerves against Finland, as our enemies openly admit.

Question: Repeatedly, the question of a guarantee for Finland on the part of England and the United States of America has been raised. What do you think of such guarantees for Finland?

Answer: The question of guarantees for Finland on the part of England and the United States of America only served the end of making submission more palatable to the Finns. In practical terms, any guarantee by the English or the Americans would be utopian. Neither England nor the United States of America would be in a position to dictate final objectives to a victorious Soviet Union, even if they should want to do this. In reality, however, neither England nor America is in the least willing to intervene honestly in this manner. In both countries, the same powers rule—even though from behind the bourgeois mask—which openly abuse power through violence. As regards American guarantees, Germany already had its own experiences with them following the end of the World War. The solemn Fourteen Points promised by Wilson were forgotten after Germany laid down its arms. In reality, every individual point led to the opposite of what the German Volk had been solemnly promised. The case of Poland is a striking illustration of the value of British guarantees. Moreover, England and America themselves face grave

March 19, 1944

internal crises. The question is not whether they will be in a position to dictate to Bolshevism, but how long they will be able to avoid a Bolshevik revolution in their own countries. As always in the life of nations, a country's own strength is the only guarantee for continued existence.

On March 19, Hitler received the German field marshals and commanders in chief at the Berghof.⁶⁶ They had taken to heart the warning their supreme commander had given them at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on January 27.⁶⁷ They had attempted to satisfy him by providing him with a written declaration of loyalty. In all likelihood, his temporary denial of further bonuses had speeded along their decision to do so.

Field Marshal von Rundstedt, as the senior officer, presented Hitler with the Declaration of Unconditional Allegiance, which was signed by all field marshals in the course of a ceremonial act. Even though Model was not yet a field marshal—he was slated to become one—he also signed the document.

Hitler seemed to be satisfied for the moment. He even ate lunch with his field marshals. He discussed the situation at the southern section of the eastern front with von Manstein and Kleist. However, he refused to hear about a retreat behind the Dniester.

To Hitler's surprise, Imredy declined his request to form a new government in Hungary.⁶⁸ So Hitler demanded that the appointment of a man he felt was reliable—the Hungarian envoy in Berlin Sztójay—as the new prime minister take place by 6:00 p.m. on March 22. After this appointment had been safely executed, Hitler finally allowed the publication of this official announcement:⁶⁹

According to official information from the Hungarian News Agency, a new government has been formed in Hungary. The new prime minister and foreign minister is Döme Sztójay.

At the same time, it was announced that, within the framework of the joint conduct of the war and based on mutual agreement, German troops have arrived in Hungary to stand by the side of the Hungarians in the fight against Bolshevism.

Dr. Edmund Veesenmeyer was named as the Greater German Reich's new envoy to Hungary.

There was no mention of the reasons for the recall of the previous envoy, SA Obergruppenführer von Jagow, who only recently had accompanied Horthy to the Obersalzberg. Soon, however, it became apparent that Hitler had authorized the new envoy Veesenmeyer,

March 27, 1944

whom he had appointed without Hungary's agreement, to avail himself of the office of Reichskommissar for Hungary.

The events in Hungary showed that Hitler had virtually begun to wage war against his own allies. It was easier to gain victories here than against the great powers at the actual front.

On March 23, Hitler sent a "congratulatory telegram of heartfelt words" to the Duce "on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Fascist combat units (*Fasci di Combattimento*)."⁷⁰

On the same day, he exchanged telegrams with the new Hungarian prime minister Sztójay.⁷¹

In addition, he awarded the title "General Seyffardt" to a regiment of the SS Volunteer Panzer Grenadier Brigade *Nederland*.⁷²

At noon on March 25, Hitler again received von Manstein at the Berghof.⁷³ There was another crisis at the southern section of the eastern front. The First Panzer Army under Colonel General Hube was encircled at Kamenets-Podolsk. If it wished to make a breakthrough to the west, then other units would first have to push through in its direction. Hitler declined to bring up additional units and severely reproached von Manstein. The discussion came to nothing.

In the course of a second talk that evening, Hitler appeared more calm and declared the following:⁷⁴

I have thought about things again. I agree with your idea regarding the breakthrough of the First Panzer Army to the west. With a heavy heart, I have decided to bring up a newly activated SS panzer corps from the west and the 367th Infantry Division of the Fourth Panzer Army for the requested assault.

In view of this surprising concession, von Manstein dared to speak about his ideas on stabilizing the front in the east. He recommended a German chief of staff for Antonescu. Hitler declined because of "political considerations."

On March 27, Hitler received Kleist at the Berghof. Kleist saw himself forced to withdraw his Army Group A to the lower Dniester and had come to request the supreme commander's approval of this operation. Hitler was slowly getting fed up with field marshals who kept wanting to retreat. He decided to relieve both von Manstein and Kleist of their duties and summoned them to the Berghof on March 30. There, he received one after the other and told them about their dismissal. As a consolation, he presented each of them with the Oak

March 30, 1944

Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords. Von Manstein entered the following in his diary on March 30:⁷⁵

Evening at the Führer's. After award of the Swords, he tells me that he has decided to head the army group with somebody else (Model). In the east, the time for operations on a large scale, for which I had been particularly well suited, was over. The new style of leadership had to be introduced together with a new name and a new slogan. Thus, the change in command of the army group, the name of which he also intended to change.

He wished to stress that, unlike as had been the case previously with other field marshals (whom he named,⁷⁶ no crisis of confidence stood between us. He continued to have complete confidence in me.

Von Manstein agreed to the change in command and to the new commander in chief Model.

The Führer heartily agreed that Model was particularly suited for this. He would "whizz around" the divisions and get the utmost out of the troops.

Kleist was dismissed in a similar manner. As the two field marshals left the Berghof, their successors, Model and Schörner, were already on the doorsteps. Hitler placed them in charge of the two army groups and promoted Model to field marshal and Schörner to colonel general. Schörner had attracted his attention in the defense of Nikopol.

On April 1, Hitler issued a series of decrees relating to domestic policy. The most important of them concerned Goebbels' appointment as city president of Berlin. Goebbels now exercised executive power in the Reich capital.⁷⁷ The decree read as follows:⁷⁸

In deviation from the provisions of the law on the constitution and administration of the Reich capital Berlin on December 1, 1936 (RGBl. I, p. 957), I charge the Gauleiter of Berlin, Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels, with the administration of the Reich capital. He will bear the title "city president." The position and jurisdiction of the high Reich and Prussian land authorities in relation to the Reich capital shall not be affected by this.

In accordance with the personal guidelines and directives of the city president, the mayor will head the municipal authorities, and the vice president, on whom will devolve the tasks and authorities of the previous city president, will head the administration of the Reich capital, according to the provisions of the law on the administration of the Reich capital Berlin.

The Reich minister of the interior will issue the legal and administrative regulations necessary for the implementation of this decree.

Hitler's other decrees also dealt with measures for a greater concentration of executive power in the various Prussian provinces (Hesse-Nassau, Saxony, and Hanover), in which the responsible

April 6, 1944

Gauleiters had not yet been Oberpräsidenten.⁷⁹ The most remarkable of these decrees ordered the division of the province Hesse-Nassau into two independent provinces “Kurhessen” and “Nassau.” The Oberpräsident of Hesse-Nassau had been Prince Philip of Hesse, who had been arrested in September 1943. Now his duties passed to the Gauleiters of Kurhessen and of Nassau.

“New names” and a “new slogan” were what Hitler had said he wanted for the southern sector of the eastern front on March 25.⁸⁰ By appointing Model and Schörner, he had got his “new names.”

Hitler announced his “new slogan” in Directive No. 54, also known as “Operational Order No. 7,” on April 2. Actually, as it turned out, his new slogan was the old one:

The Russian offensive has passed its peak. Russia has exhausted its troops.

Hitler had already prophesied as much on October 3, 1941, when he had said that this “opponent has already broken down and will never rise again!”⁸¹ Directive No. 54 read as follows:⁸²

Directions for further conduct of the struggle by Army Group A, South and Center.

1) The Russian offensive in the south of the eastern front has passed its peak. Russia has exhausted and dispersed troops. The moment has come to block the Russian advance conclusively.

With this in mind, I have taken various measures. While holding the Crimea, it is absolutely necessary to keep, or to be precise, to win back the following line: northeastwards, Kishinev-Iasi-Targul Neamt-eastern spurs of the Carpathians between Targul Neamt and Kolomea-Tarnopol-Brody-Kovel. [Technical details follow].

Hitler’s directives increasingly stood in striking contrast to reality. The Russian offensive had by no means passed its zenith. The Crimea could not be held. It was lost on May 13, as the OKW report admitted for the record.

On April 6, Hitler formally appointed state secretary Backe as Reich minister for nutrition and agriculture.⁸³

During the noon discussion of the situation on the same day,⁸⁴ the topics—in addition to the military situation in the east, west, and Italy—included rumors about a gift from Hitler to Franco. Some old Spanish cannons from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been taken as booty in France, and there was talk about their return to Spain. Hitler energetically denied this:

April 20, 1944

I have no idea. As a matter of principle, I never give away historical things. I give away cars. I was supposed to give away Nefertiti⁸⁵—they took Göring in on this—to improve our relations with Egypt. Then they proved that she came here because of some vile action. A Jew had taken her out of the country fraudulently. Then I said: All right, I will extradite the Jew. But they rejected this. We could have lost Nefertiti that way. You just cannot give away art treasures like that. Besides, is it in our interest to be caressed by these rogues (*Schlawiner*) [the Spaniards]?

On April 10, the day Odessa had to be given up, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Pavelich on the Croatian state holiday. He sent another one to Filov, a member of the Bulgarian regency council, on his birthday.⁸⁶

On April 17, Hitler attended the funeral ceremony for Gauleiter Adolf Wagner at the Congress Hall of the German Museum in Munich. He awarded him the Golden Cross with Oak Leaves of the German Order and laid a wreath. Goebbels delivered the eulogy.⁸⁷ Another wreath from the Führer was laid for the “commander of the guard on duty at the Eternal Guard”⁸⁸ at the northern pantheon at the Königlicher Platz, where Wagner was buried on Hitler’s orders. Hitler appointed Wagner’s successor Giesler as Bavarian prime minister, which made him the successor of Ludwig Siebert, too. In a solemn ceremony at the Führerbau on the Königlicher Platz, Hitler personally presented Giesler with his certificates of appointment.⁸⁹

On April 20, Hitler named Albert Hoffmann, who had only substituted for Giesler in the Gau Southern Westphalia, as Gauleiter.⁹⁰

At the Berghof on the same day, he accepted the congratulations from the Wehrmacht on his fifty-fifth birthday, which were conveyed by Keitel, Dönitz, Milch, and Himmler. In addition, Hitler received a delegation of the Waffen SS, which presented him with a donation for the Kriegswinterhilfswerk in the amount of nearly two-and-a-half-million Reichsmarks, made by the SS Panzer Corps *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*.⁹¹ As in 1943, in view of the dwindling number of foreign dignitaries who extended their congratulations, the following summary communiqué was published. It did not contain any names:⁹²

This year again, the Führer received a great number of congratulations on his birthday not only from various people of the German Volk, but also from abroad. Numerous foreign heads of state and statesmen expressed their best wishes in telegrams, and many other leading persons at home and abroad marked this day.

April 26, 1944

The foreign heads of missions accredited in Berlin expressed their own best wishes—as did other heads of state, governments, and nations they represent—to the Führer by entering their names into the guest book at the Presidential Chancellery.

On the afternoon of April 20, Hitler received Colonel General Hube at the Berghof. Hube had succeeded in breaking out of the encirclement at Kamenets-Podolsk with the First Panzer Army. Hitler awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds.⁹³

The celebration afterwards lasted past midnight. At 4:00 a.m. on April 21, Hube took off in his plane. It took the wrong course, however, and crashed into a mountain shortly after takeoff. With the exception of Ambassador Hewel, who was also on board, all passengers were killed.

This incident gave rise to rumors that Hitler had had Hube killed. The high award received on the day before would not suffice to disprove this. The cause of these rumors was the strange information policy adopted in the Hube case. On April 23, when Hube had long been dead, the German papers were forced to publish this official announcement:⁹⁴

The Führer awarded the Oak Leaves with Swords and Diamonds to Colonel General Hans Hube, commander in chief of an army, as the twelfth officer of the Wehrmacht.

An order of the day by Hitler⁹⁵ was published on April 26. It stated that Hube had been killed in a plane crash on April 21.

On April 22 and 23, Mussolini visited Klessheim Castle. On the talks between Hitler and the Duce, the following communiqué was published:⁹⁶

The Führer and the Duce met on April 22 and 23. In the course of the discussions, which were characterized by the spirit of the long-standing friendship between the Führer and the Duce, all political, military, and economic problems were discussed concerning the two countries and their common goals. The Duce informed the Führer of the resolution by the Republican-Fascist government to continue its deployment actively on the side of the allies of the Tripartite Pact.

On April 25, Hitler signed a decree on the military duty and duties with the Reich labor service of stateless persons.⁹⁷ From now on, they could be drafted just like German citizens.

On April 26, Hitler issued this order of the day on the death of Colonel General Hube:⁹⁸

On April 21, 1944, following his promotion to colonel general and his receipt of the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds awarded in

April 29, 1944

recognition of his outstanding bravery and the conduct of his army, Colonel General Hube died in a plane accident. He gave a shining example of bravery and the unshakable belief in the final victory to his soldiers in the heaviest fighting; he was the fatherland's shield and sword on all fronts. On the battlefields of this war, his panzer army had an outstanding part in the most decisive victories. His enthusiastic faith in our National Socialist soldiership was reflected in the power and strength of his men, who regarded him as the embodiment of the unity of soldiership and National Socialism. Always exclusively deployed at the focal points in the most difficult missions, Colonel General Hube has earned undying glory in the army and among the German Volk. Following the award of the highest German medal of bravery, a sudden death tore him from the fight for our Greater German Reich. The army lowers the Reich war flag before this great soldier, who lived only for the Volk and the future of Greater Germany. His name will never be forgotten by his brave army, our army, and the entire German Volk.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler attended the state ceremony for Hube in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. After Göring's eulogy, Hitler laid a wreath on Hube's coffin.

On April 27, Hitler had this expression of thanks published:⁹⁹

I have received so many congratulations on my birthday that it is impossible for me to reply to them individually. I ask all those who sent me congratulations on my birthday to accept my heartfelt thanks.

Adolf Hitler

This was the last such announcement. On the same day, the public was informed that Hitler had retired state secretary Leopold Gutterer, who worked for the Reich ministry for public enlightenment and propaganda, "on his request, because of health reasons." He appointed the previous head of the ministerial office, Dr. Werner Naumann, as state secretary.¹⁰⁰

On April 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese emperor on his birthday.¹⁰¹ There was no mention in the press of an exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Hirohito on the "national holiday of the German Volk," as in previous years. Apparently, the Japanese emperor now had understood that this holiday had only symbolic meaning.

The only contribution which Hitler made to the May Day celebrations was the appointment of several "Pioneers of Labor." Among them were the Reich minister of transportation, Dorpmüller,

May 2, 1944

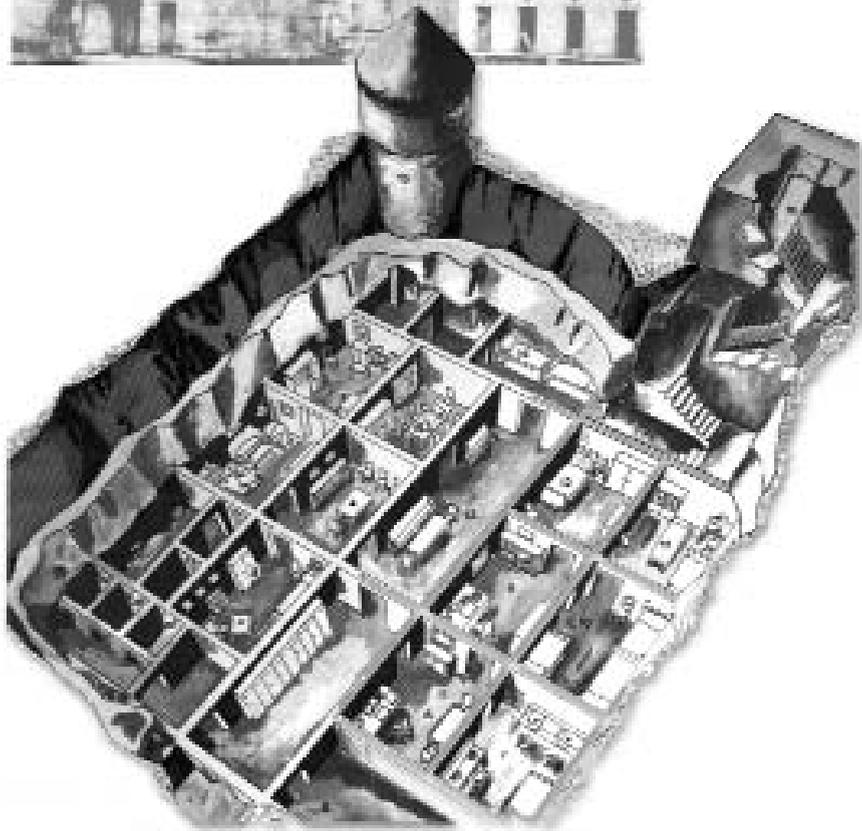
the Saarland councilor of commerce Röchling, the aircraft designer and manufacturer Professor Dornier, and the industrialist Albert Vogler.¹⁰²

On May 2, a news item from Radio Budapest was published, according to which a “resettlement of Jews in ghettos” was taking place in Budapest and other major cities in Hungary. This made more clear than anything else that it was no longer Horthy who exercised power in Hungary, but Veessenmeyer and the SS.¹⁰³



LVIII Hitler with Bormann

Photo: Publisher's archives



LIX Führer bunker

Photo: Publisher's archives

2

On May 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the president of the Chinese Japanese-dominated government, Wang Ching-wei, on his birthday.¹⁰⁴

On the same day, Hitler expressed his condolences in a telegram to Riga on the “heroic” death of the Latvian Voldemar Weiss, who had earlier been awarded the Knight’s Cross.¹⁰⁵

On May 9, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the composer Professor Hans Pfitzner on his seventy-fifth birthday.¹⁰⁶

The next day, King Michael of Romania and state leader Marshal Antonescu received congratulatory telegrams from Hitler on the Romanian national holiday.¹⁰⁷

On May 12, Hitler sent this telegram to the Japanese emperor:¹⁰⁸

Your Majesty!

Under the profound impression of the heroic risk of life of your fleet commander, Admiral Mineichi Koga, and in recognition of his historic services in the joint struggle of our arms, I have awarded the fallen hero the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

Also on May 12, Hitler received the Slovaks Tiso, Tuka, Catlos, and Tidogaspar at Klessheim Castle. The following communiqué was published on the talks:¹⁰⁹

The Führer received the Slovak state president Dr. Tiso, who arrived for a visit on May 12, together with the Slovak prime minister Tuka, War Minister Catlos, and propaganda chief Tidogaspar.

The Führer and the Slovak state president had a heartfelt exchange of views on the relations between the Reich and Slovakia, which are characterized by the spirit of friendship. In the course of the discussions with the Slovak state president and the Slovak prime minister, which were attended by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Keitel, the Führer expressed his determination to fight his way uncompromisingly through this war—forced on us by the enemies of the Reich and their allies in the east and

May 16, 1944

west—until its victorious end. Then he wishes to realize those principles that will guarantee the great and small nations a decent and secure life, free of the Jewish exploiters of the Volk and free of capitalist and Bolshevik oppression.

Hitler's words were obviously meant to parody the principles of the Atlantic Charter.¹¹⁰

On May 13, Hitler had to admit the loss of the Crimea. The OKW report read as follows:¹¹¹

The last German-Romanian troops have been transferred from the Crimea to the mainland on May 13.

In a unique withdrawal, units of the German-Romanian war [*sic*] and navy formations, as well as transport units of the Luftwaffe, have, in spite of heavy enemy resistance, guided the allied troops deployed in the Crimea back to the mainland.

This was remarkable because Hitler had still called the possession of the Crimea crucial to the war effort, since its loss might lead to the “caving in” of Bulgaria and Romania.¹¹² Still in Operational Order No. 7 of April 2, he had demanded the retention of the Crimea at all costs.¹¹³

Now Hitler celebrated the loss of the Crimea as a “unique withdrawal,” even though it had been forced on him by the Russian attack.

On May 16, Hitler ordered the beginning of rocket fire directed against the British Isles for mid-June. The Führer's order on the deployment of long-distance weapons against England read as follows:¹¹⁴

The Führer has ordered the following:

1. To open long-distance fire at England in the middle of June. The exact time will be indicated by Commander in Chief [Oberbefehlshaber] West, who will be assisted by the general command of the Sixty-Fifth Army Corps and the Third Air Force Fleet to manage the long-distance firing.

2. Use: a) air torpedoes of type 76;¹¹⁵ b) Henkel 111¹¹⁶ for launching of air torpedoes of type 76; c) long-range artillery; d) fighting units of Third Air Fleet.

3. Execution

a) Against the main target—London.

After the lightning-fast opening of fire launched at night by means of air torpedoes type 76, whose devices, together with the bombs (mainly incendiaries) of fighting units, will hit the target, and the air raids [take place] upon the towns within the action area of the long-range artillery, go on to launch continuous night fire at London.

In favorable weather conditions, making enemy air activity impossible, the firing can be continued in the daytime. Harassing fire, combined with strikes of various duration and intensity, must be measured so that the supply of ammunition will be kept in harmony with production and delivery.

May 22, 1944

Therefore, six hundred air torpedoes of type 76 must be held in reserve for OKW and may be fired only with permission of OKW.

B) An order to change to other targets will be given in due time.

4. It is important to envisage cooperation of the fighting units of the air force and to put off other tasks of the air force, at least at the time of the initial strike. Before launching the fire attack, defense of the anti-aircraft artillery and of the ammunition depots must be provided for and organized by means of fighter and bomber aircraft. All preparations must be made, taking into account that the roads leading to the anti-aircraft guns will be exposed to enemy attack and destruction in the strongest way.

To keep secrecy in force, item 71 of order No. 663 082/43 of December 25, 1943, g. Kdos chefs.

On May 17, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Chief of Staff Schepmann on the occasion of a conference of high-ranking SA leaders. In his reply, Hitler thanked Schepmann and stressed:¹¹⁷ "The SA will always have my full support in the fulfillment of the tasks I set for it."

The military situation in Italy had in the meantime become critical. On May 11, the Anglo-Americans had launched their large-scale offensive, which led to breakthroughs in the German "Gustav line" (Cassino position) on May 15 and 16. The heavy losses of Kesselring's divisions over many months had been in vain. Step by step, the Allies advanced to the north and forced the German armies back.

At the evening discussion of the situation on May 18,¹¹⁸ Hitler had no alternative but to face up to the situation, which was quite depressing for him. Nevertheless, he still delivered a "funeral sermon" and declared the following:

If he [the enemy] nonetheless loses fifty percent of the attacking infantry, then this is proof of how miserably he is going about it. After all, the method he is employing is quite a cheap procedure, at least given the present positions: with a great waste of matériel, he shoots our nonexistent shelters to pieces. There is nothing there. Those few shelters in the rock are ridiculous. They would never have got Monte Cassino, if there had not been the breakthrough in the south.

If ifs and ands were pots and pans, there would have been no losses for Hitler, only victories.

On May 22, Hitler and Mussolini exchanged telegrams on the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the German-Italian treaty of friendship and alliance. It was the last time that Hitler would send a telegram on this occasion.¹¹⁹

June 4, 1944

Duce!

In the treaty of friendship and alliance concluded five years ago, our two nations avowed their intention to stand together in friendship and concord for the preservation and the securing of their vital rights. In commemoration of this historic hour, I convey to you, also in the name of the entire German Volk, my sincere and heartfelt greetings and best wishes. At the same time, I express to you my staunch conviction that, irrespective of all the difficulties which must be overcome, the victory of the Tripartite Pact powers will stand at the end of this fateful struggle as the most certain guarantee of the happy and free future of our people.

Adolf Hitler

On May 27, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on the country's independence day.¹²⁰

On the same day, Hitler received the imperial Japanese ambassador Oshima at the Berghof. They entered into "a lengthy exchange of views on current questions of German-Japanese cooperation in the joint conduct of the war by the two nations."¹²¹

In spite of the wording of the communiqué, there could be no talk about "German-Japanese cooperation" or a "joint conduct of the war" in reality. What both countries shared were the severe military setbacks they had to suffer from the Anglo-Americans.

On June 2, a new government was formed in Bulgaria, under Ivan Bagrianov.¹²² This was a sign that the situation there was also becoming critical in view of the Russian advances.

On June 3, the German defense of the Alban Mountains in Italy collapsed. The Italian capital could no longer be held. Hitler made a virtue of necessity and ordered the evacuation of Rome. The high command of the Wehrmacht announced the following on June 4:¹²³

Since the front has come ever closer to the city of Rome in the course of the fighting, there was the danger that this oldest center of culture in the world might become involved in the immediate fighting. To avoid this, the Führer has ordered the withdrawal of German troops northwest of Rome.

In spite of Hitler's announcement, the loss of Rome meant a great military and political defeat for the German leadership. However, the attention of the international community would soon be drawn away from this secondary theater of war to the main theater in the west.

On June 4, Hitler received the new Croatian envoy, Vladimir Kosak, at the Berghof.

June 4, 1944

The next day, the new Romanian envoy, Alexander Hoffmann von Magysösetag, visited him there.¹²⁴

Early on June 6, the Anglo-American invasion armies, from bases in England, started to land along the coast of Normandy.¹²⁵ Montgomery was in command (of the ground troops; Eisenhower was in command of the entire invasion). Since the days of Napoleon, the world had seen nothing like it. Heavy naval-artillery bombardment and attacks by the Royal Air Force had preceded the invasion. While the first decisive fighting on the ground was taking place, Allied naval and air forces pinned down the German bases behind the front and made bringing up reinforcements impossible. Parachutes and transport gliders landed great numbers of Allied airborne troops. Within a few hours, the first beachheads were fortified and secured. The German troops were no longer in a position to score any lasting successes.

Hitler was having breakfast at the Berghof when news of the beginning of the invasion arrived.¹²⁶ Keitel and Jodl rushed to him from their quarters to inform the supreme commander of the latest developments. Hitler acted as though they were bringing him news of a great victory. He immediately stepped up to a map of the French coast and had Keitel outline the situation for him. He then said: "The news could not be any better! As long as they were in England, we could not get hold of them. Now, we finally have them somewhere where we can beat them." When Göring arrived, Hitler immediately took him to the map table and told him: "They are landing here—they are landing there: exactly where we expected them."

It was true that, on December 27, Hitler had called the front of the Fifteenth and Seventh German Armies on the Cotentin Peninsula "... especially dangerous."¹²⁷

Later, he also repeatedly mentioned Normandy. However, this was not any "bright idea" by Hitler but reflected a sober assessment of the situation, which had also led the Allies to decide on this operation. Normandy was just across the Channel from southern England, and the crossing was the shortest here, since the area of Dover-Calais was under fire from German long-range artillery.

It is therefore out of place to speak about Hitler's "uncanny intuition" in the context of the Allied invasion of Normandy.¹²⁸ It is remarkable, however, that he was unable to put up serious opposition to the

June 6, 1944

invasion at this “expected” location for even a day. After all, Hitler had many times declared in earlier years:

A place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!¹²⁹

We had provided for every eventuality from the start.¹³⁰

Nothing is impossible for the German soldier!¹³¹

I have read several times now that the English intend to launch a big offensive somewhere. I would like to ask that they tell me beforehand. I then would like to have the area evacuated. I would like to spare them the difficulties of a landing. And then we could introduce ourselves once again and discuss matters—and this in a language they alone understand!¹³²

I can assure him: no matter which place he chooses next, he can consider himself lucky if he stays on land for nine hours!¹³³

On January 1, 1944, he could still exclaim:

No matter where the plutocratic world will undertake the threatened attempt to land in the west, it will fail!¹³⁴

It is an open question whether Hitler’s optimism on June 6 was real or whether he was just trying to impress his “unshakable certainty of victory” on his entourage. In any event, on the afternoon of June 6 he still acted as though the beachheads would be destroyed within a matter of hours.

In order to remind the German troops at the invasion front of their duty in this regard, he ordered the commander in chief, west, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, to force the Allies back to sea on the same day. This order was relayed to the Seventh Army at the coast, as follows:¹³⁵

The commander in chief, west, as instructed by the OKW, emphasizes that the enemy beachheads are to be destroyed on the evening of June 6, since there are fears of reinforced airborne landings and further naval landings. The invasion there must be cleared up before day’s end.

In spite of Hitler’s orders, the “invasion” was not “cleared up” on June 6 or on any of the following days. No matter how bravely the German troops fought, they were hopelessly inferior to the Anglo-American army, navy, and air force.

Hitler had said that the Allies ought to “consider themselves fortunate” if they managed to stay ashore for nine hours. Indeed, these were the most critical hours. However, once they were over, and the Allies were still on the beaches and continued to advance, it was clear that the landing had been a success, and the most decisive battle of the Second World War had begun. Not only did the German generals realize this

June 16, 1944

but so did the public in Germany. After all, Hitler had said as much himself: "If they attack in the west, then this attack will decide the war."¹³⁶

On June 7, Hitler received the new Hungarian prime minister Sztójay at the Berghof. The communiqué read as follows:¹³⁷

Führer Headquarters, June 8, 1944

The Führer received the royal Hungarian prime minister Döme Sztójay, who arrived for a visit together with the royal Hungarian chief of staff, Colonel General Vörös, on June 6. In a heartfelt exchange of views, the relations between the Reich and Hungary, which are characterized by the spirit of friendship, were discussed, as well as current questions of German-Hungarian cooperation in the joint conduct of the war by the two nations. The various talks were attended by the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, and by Field Marshal Keitel.

Hitler again made a big scene in front of the Hungarians and declared that all he had ever wished had come true, thanks to the invasion: "Now I finally stand face-to-face with my real enemies!"¹³⁸

On June 11, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the composer Richard Strauss on his eightieth birthday. On June 15, he sent further telegrams to Marshal Antonescu on his birthday and to Prince Cyril of Bulgaria on the birthday of King Simeon II.¹³⁹

Hitler's boast that the invasion would be repelled within nine hours had proved an embarrassment. Of course, he did not admit this. He had an idea on how to postpone the final catastrophe: with the help of his new *V-Waffen* (*Vergeltungswaffen*; retaliatory weapons).

As mentioned before, Hitler had ordered the bombardment of England with long-range rockets to begin in mid-June.¹⁴⁰ This proved to be a timely choice insofar as it diverted attention from the invasion front. It would instill new hope in his generals that a miraculous turn of events might still come about in the war, a last-minute rescue. Even though he had ordered this months ago, he acted as though it represented his response to the invasion and would soon make it disappear.

The OKW report of June 16 read as follows:

Last night and this morning, southern England and the city of London were bombed with a new type of high explosives.

In view of this, Hitler believed that he could risk facing the generals in the west. On June 17, he departed from Berchtesgaden by plane and

June 16, 1944

flew to Metz, then drove to Margival north of Soissons.¹⁴¹ There he discussed the situation with von Rundstedt, Rommel, and several other generals from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.¹⁴² Rommel had taken over command of Army Group B (i.e., northern France, Belgium, Holland), in addition to his role as inspector of the coastal fortifications.

According to Speidel, Hitler looked sallow and as if he had not had enough sleep. He was nervous, playing with his glasses and all sorts of color pencils, which he held in his hand. While the field marshals were standing, he sat hunched over on a stool. His earlier power of suggestion appeared to have vanished. After a brief and cool welcome, the Führer expressed his displeasure, speaking about the successful landing of the Allies with his voice raised and full of bitterness. He tried to put the blame on the local commanders.

In November 1942, after the disaster at El Alamein, Rommel had already told Hitler that, in his opinion, no army would in the long run be able to withstand the Allies.¹⁴³ Now, he reasserted that he felt that the struggle was hopeless in view of the enemy's enormous superiority on land, at sea, and in the air. Hitler simply ignored him. He would one day show this defeatist!

Then Hitler took control of the discussion again. He began an enthusiastic lecture on the new rockets. He said that this "V-1 weapon" would have an "effect that would decide the war" and would make the English "ready for peace." The senile English would certainly collapse in face of this.

The generals were impressed with Hitler's exposition. They demanded the deployment of the new weapon against the Allied beachheads. However, the general responsible for the V-weapons, Heinemann, warned them about "unpredictable scattering" of the rockets. He claimed that they could go "fifteen to eighteen kilometers" off course, although up to two hundred kilometers would have been a more realistic figure. The generals began to complain about the failure of the Luftwaffe. Hitler quickly calmed them by saying that soon "masses of jet fighters" would chase the English and American aircraft from the skies.¹⁴⁴

The mid-day meal had to be relocated inside a bunker because of the threat of an air raid. Another situation briefing took place. Rommel again repeated his negative assessment of the prospects of the war in the west and alluded to the necessity of drawing the political consequences. Hitler immediately cut him off and said: "Do not concern

June 19, 1944

yourself with the future course of the war but with your own invasion front.”

It would certainly have been nice had Hitler also shown a bit more concern for it. The generals invited him to the headquarters of Army Group B at La Roche-Guyon. Hitler pretended to accept this invitation for June 19. However, he did not feel like risking his own precious life. Hurriedly, he left France on the next day.

On that June 18, he went by plane from Metz to Berchtesgaden.¹⁴⁵ The evening discussion of the situation revealed to Hitler that the Americans had broken through to the western part of the Cotentin Peninsula (near Barneville) that morning. The decisive words exchanged during this discussion were laconically brief:¹⁴⁶

Hitler: “You reported that the Americans broke through. Now, are they through or are they not?”

Jodl: “They are through.”

The Americans had really broken “through,” and this meant that the Allies would shortly take Cherbourg. Additional landings would then be possible on a much larger scale.

However, Hitler continued his ostrich-like policy and remained at the Berghof. He sent out diplomatic congratulatory telegrams, like the one to Horthy on his birthday on June 18.¹⁴⁷

For the rest, he staked his hopes on the psychological effect of the new German “wonder weapons,” the *V-Waffen*. As revolutionary as they were, one could not speak of a great military significance of these rocket bombs at the time, given the status of the technology. The V-1 was an unmanned monoplane carrying a bomb, powered by a simple kind of jet engine (i.e., pulse jet). Agile British fighters and anti-aircraft equipment were largely capable of intercepting the V-1 missiles prior to impact. This was no longer the case with V-2 bombs, which were deployed from September 1944 on. Unlike its predecessor, the V-2 was not merely an improved bomb with wings, but an advanced model of rocket technology. Designed as a rocket bomb with a preset guidance system, the V-2 was the first long-range ballistic missile in the world. The V-2 was fourteen meters (forty-seven feet) long, weighed twelve point six tons, traveled at a maximum speed of fifty-five hundred kilometers per hour (thirty-four hundred miles per hour), carried a one-ton warhead, and had a range of three hundred twenty kilometers to four hundred kilometers.

June 20, 1944

In the period up to March 1945, a total of nine thousand V-1 rockets hit England, a number augmented by approximately eleven hundred to fifteen hundred V-2 models fired. While little is known on the precise effects this bombardment had in England, various detailed studies of the period between October 1944 and March 1945 show the magnitude of bomb strikes in Belgium.

Having lost the rocket launching ramps located in northern France and Belgium to the Allied advance, Hitler decided to use the remaining V-rocket capacity to terrorize the Belgian civilian population. Rumors quickly spread that the harbor of Antwerp was the main target of this undertaking, and numerous hits in the surrounding area substantiate this hypothesis. A veritable shower of V bombs came down over nearly two-thirds of Belgium at the same time, a fact indicative of the V weapons' inability to reach a precise target.¹⁴⁸

From a military point of view, neither of the missile models could be aimed at precise targets: a missile was liable to miss by up to two hundred kilometers—too great a risk for military strategists to take. Therefore, the new V weapons could only serve as an instrument of terror. However, Hitler's terrorization of the English civilian population by his rocket-fire brought no success. On the contrary, it merely induced the Allies to speed up their advance and increase their bombardment.

On June 22, the Russians launched a major offensive in the area Vitebsk-Bobruisk. It was the third anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union. Within two weeks, twenty-five German divisions and the entire Army Group Center were destroyed. Many German generals were taken captive.

In the east and in the west, the end was rapidly nearing. Even within Germany, signs of crisis were becoming more evident. During the second part of June, there was an increasing number of reports by the German press on inexplicable deaths: party leaders, high-ranking officials, and generals in particular suddenly died either of heart disease or in accidents.

On June 20, the mayor of Cologne, Winkelkemper, died of "heart failure" at the age of thirty-eight. Hitler had Gauleiter Grohé place a wreath at his funeral.¹⁴⁹

In the City Hall of Bremen on June 21, a funeral ceremony ordered by Hitler for SA Obergruppenführer Böhmcker took place. The mayor of the Hanseatic town had died of "heart failure." Hitler awarded him

June 28, 1944

the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross and had Gauleiter Paul Wegener lay a wreath.¹⁵⁰

On June 23, the former commissar general of Dnepropetrovsk, Claus Selzner, who was a close colleague of Ley, died "following a short illness" at the age of forty-five.¹⁵¹ At his burial in the Gau Westmark on June 25, Bürckel conveyed the Führer's last greetings in the form of the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross. Bürckel surely did not expect that he would also be dead only three months later.¹⁵²

On June 23, General of Mountain Troops Karl Eglseer "died in a tragic accident."¹⁵³ On the same day, General Emil von Wickedede also became the victim of "an accident."¹⁵⁴

Also on this day, Colonel General Dietl had a "plane accident" and died.¹⁵⁵ Of the three accidents which took place on June 23, the last was undoubtedly the most suspicious. Besides Rommel, Dietl was the only German general who had become very popular with the people. In his eulogy for Dietl,¹⁵⁶ Hitler did not in any way mention Dietl's activities in Finland during the last three years. He only spoke about Dietl's service in peacetime and his mission to Narvik. It was highly likely that Dietl had to die at a time when the threat of a separate peace between Finland and Russia was becoming quite real.¹⁵⁷ The day before his death, Dietl visited Hitler at the Berghof. It seemed entirely possible that whatever Dietl said about Finland and the possibilities there did not please Hitler. Most conspicuously, Dietl's death was not made public until June 30, one week after his crash at the Semmering Pass.¹⁵⁸

The next peculiar death occurred on June 27. The man in question was none other than Colonel General Dollmann, the commander in chief of the Seventh Army fighting on the invasion front. Three days later, the public was informed that he had "suddenly died."¹⁵⁹

On June 28, Hitler named the Reich students leader Gauleiter Scheel to the post of leader of Reich lecturers.¹⁶⁰

At the Berghof on June 29, Hitler met for a discussion of the situation on the western front with the commanders in chief and several other generals.¹⁶¹ Among others, Göring, von Rundstedt, Rommel, Sperrle, and Guderian attended the conference.

Again von Rundstedt and Rommel tried to make Hitler understand how fruitless further resistance in the west would be. Sperrle said that the necessary plane crews would simply not be available, even if Göring managed to add eight hundred fighters to the existing formations, as he said he would.

July 1, 1944

Hitler was very upset about this lack of crews. Then, however, he again spoke of his new “wonder weapons,” which would win the war for him. Just as the death of the Russian empress in the Seven Years’ War had done for Frederick the Great, so these new weapons would bring about the “miracle of a turn in the war.” During the last days of the Führer, his opponent Roosevelt would indeed die; but even this coincidence, regarded as a “miracle of Providence,”¹⁶² could change the situation no more than the V weapons could.

Speidel reported that the rest of Hitler’s talk contained some rather “wild notions.” However, these “wild notions” did not prevent Hitler from drawing the “proper conclusions” from this meeting by dismissing a number of generals, among them von Rundstedt and Sperrle.

On June 30, Hitler issued the following order of the day on Dollmann’s death:¹⁶³

On June 27, Colonel General Dollmann was torn by a sudden death from the midst of his brave army, which is fighting a difficult defensive battle. In the struggle for our Greater German Reich, Colonel General Dollmann has earned particular merit on all battlefields in France through his outstanding personal conduct and his untiring efforts. Colonel General Dollmann successfully carried out the daring feat that our enemies considered impossible: by attacking from across the Rhine the supposedly invincible Maginot Line, he achieved a breakthrough there, in the firm belief in the spirit of sacrifice, bravery, and expertise of his army. His intrepidity and his great sense of responsibility led his soldiers from victory to victory. By the outstanding conduct of an army at the Atlantic coast, he helped to create the prerequisites for the defense against the invasion, frustrate the long-range plans of our enemies, and deny the enemy the goal of the landing. A sudden death has torn him, the best and the bravest soldier of his army, whose belief in our National Socialist Greater German Reich will always be an example for his soldiers of this struggle for our Fatherland. His name shall remain unforgotten by his army and by the entire German Volk. The army lowers the Reich war flag in proud mourning before the dead commander in chief of a brave army.

Adolf Hitler

In addition, Hitler awarded Dollmann the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross on July 1. Von Rundstedt received the same award on this day.¹⁶⁴ This was meant as a consolation for his imminent dismissal.

On July 1, Hitler issued the following order of the day on Dietl’s death:¹⁶⁵

On June 23, 1944, Colonel General Dietl died in a plane accident. As an outstanding soldier in the struggle for our National Socialist Greater Germany, Colonel General Dietl stood out for his fight in Norway and Finland. He led

July 1, 1944

his men from victory to victory. His battle for Narvik will remain unforgotten. He fought against a greatly superior enemy and under the harshest conditions. Colonel General Dietl will remain an embodiment of the belief in our National Socialist Germany and its victory for all our soldiers and the entire German Volk. He is an example of unyielding harshness and never-ending loyalty until death.

As the bravest of the brave, he was decorated with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, as the first soldier of our proud Wehrmacht, on July 19, 1940. As a fanatical National Socialist, Colonel General Dietl personally dedicated himself to our movement for the Greater German Reich from the beginning, in unswerving loyalty and passionate faith. I therefore lose in him one of my most loyal comrades of a long, shared time of struggle. His name will live on in his proud mountain army and, beyond this, be tied with that of our brave Finnish ally. It will be regarded as a symbol of this brotherhood in arms.

His army bears his stamp in its spirit of sacrifice and unconditional belief in the final victory. In recognition of his constant heroic services, I award Colonel General Dietl the Oak Leaves with Swords to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. In proud mourning, the army lowers the Reich war ensign in honor of its "Hero of Narvik."

On that afternoon, Hitler delivered this eulogy for Dietl at the official ceremony in Berlin:¹⁶⁶

It is very hard for me to speak on an occasion that has taken from me not only one of my best soldiers but also one of my most loyal friends. The military accomplishments of Colonel General Dietl will go down into history. His personality can be fully appreciated only by a man who was so fortunate as to know him over many years.

When I faced this man for the first time, he made it possible for me in his company to influence a German regiment for the first time. As the first officer of the German Wehrmacht, he placed his unit at my disposal in order to exercise political influence upon it. One hour after I had spoken to the third company of his regiment, this man gave me his hand and said that he would from then on be my follower. And this he stayed, year after year. First, in the bitter years of our struggle, in which, as a completely unknown man, I faced a mountain of difficulties which could hardly be overcome. Our relationship remained the same, as he later became a member of the new Wehrmacht, and, in particular, when he was called on to play a leading role, which I had reserved for him at the time, based on my personal knowledge of the man and the soldier. Because, in questions of soldiership, you can never separate the man from his purely soldierly expertise. In the end, it is always the man and his mental attitude which lead his soldierly abilities to success.

As I personally made the decision at the time to put General Dietl in charge of the expedition to Narvik, I did so because I believed that I recognized the man in him who would be able to win an apparently lost cause by his faithful confidence. If today, in the fifth year of the war, we often face difficult

July 1, 1944

situations, none of these situations can be compared with the mission that I gave this previously unknown German general. His mission was to take a handful of soldiers and advance to a harbor, through the middle of a superior enemy fleet. It was a harbor that seemed so very far away to the German Volk. There, he would be completely on his own and would have to try not only to hold this harbor perhaps for weeks or months, but also to build up a position there so that later other units would be able to move up. Later joined by two thousand shipwrecked sailors and naval officers who had barely saved themselves, cut off from supplies, without provisions, ammunition, heavy weaponry, this man and twenty-five hundred soldiers, his mountain infantrymen, faced a far superior enemy on their own.

It is a miracle how he achieved all that at the time, and how he finally brought about a reversal of the situation in Germany's favor. It is a miracle not only in terms of the deployment of great soldierly abilities, but also of a man's personality. The quality of the man was made up by his rare ability to combine the love of the soldier, the attention to the individual with a merciless toughness—whenever necessary—in making demands. Colonel General Dietl achieved, perhaps most clearly, a synthesis in his person of being relentlessly tough in making demands on the one hand, and living the concern for his men on the other. And, for this reason, these men, from whom he had demanded and continued to demand the nearly impossible, were attached to him in boundless admiration and love.

Herewith, he created the stereotype of the National Socialist officer. He was an officer who was not soft when asking and demanding, not weak when deploying his men. Instead, he knew that no sacrifice was too great or too dear to be made for this struggle. On the one hand, an officer must make the toughest and harshest demands, while, on the other, he must make the fate of his subordinates his own, as their true friend and father. He was a National Socialist, not according to the cliché, but in will, mind, and heart. This is how I appraised him from the beginning. I believed I could expect this of him, and he later fulfilled this promise.

It was a matter of course that I had a close personal relationship with this officer for this reason. In my opinion, he was the first officer of the German Wehrmacht who penetrated my world of thought and declared himself for it blindly and uncompromisingly. Later, at a time when I was forced to make difficult and hard decisions, I came to respect him all the more.

Especially in the years from 1933 to 1936, when, with a view to the German future, I had to take endless risks, this man stood unshakably behind me. And he continued to do so to his last days.

When he visited me the last time—because of the new military situation in Finland—you could feel in his words the same unconditional confidence to be able to deal with any situation also in the future, no matter under what circumstances, and, if need be, to master even the most difficult tasks. He was inspired by the conviction that, of course, in the end there would be our joint victory. Yes, he was inspired by the knowledge that no great success has ever been scored on this earth that was not gained by the greatest sacrifices and

July 3, 1944

pains, and that you must reject the views of those who imagine that the great men of world history and the success of their deeds had been predetermined as a matter of course. Colonel General Dietl belonged among those who felt deep down that the greatness of a feat grows in proportion to its difficulty. So he fashioned his life accordingly and fought for the German Volk and its future.

For me, this brave and loyal friend has been a support, a support above all in the German officer corps. He belonged to those who, in hard times, helped to radiate confidence and to make others firm and tough. I can never thank him enough for this. May his example inspire and fill many German officers and generals with enthusiasm.

May they all learn to become likewise tough and kind in individual instances, likewise merciless in their demands and understanding in their relations with the men and their cares. Above all, may they learn under any circumstances to radiate confidence, especially in times of crisis, in order to uplift the individual man and repel all thoughts that a struggle, behind which stands the entire fanaticism of a nation, could end in anything other than victory, no matter how the situation might look at the moment.

The most wonderful thing about him was that, in his own life and in his later struggle as a soldier, he successfully managed so many situations that almost made you and many other men despair. He did not teach us how to do this as a theoretician but, as one of the greatest practitioners in our recent German history, he exemplified it to us through his own life.

My personal friendship with him makes it especially painful for me to commemorate him. When I today take leave of this friend, I do so with the most bitter sentiments of a badly hit man, but, on the other hand, I do so with unbending zeal, so that this sacrifice on the altar of the fatherland will be a new obligation to all of us.

On July 2, Colonel General Dollmann was buried in the military cemetery in Paris. Von Rundstedt, Rommel, and Sperrle attended the funeral. Von Rundstedt laid a wreath from Hitler.¹⁶⁷

On the same day, Hitler congratulated Professor Albrecht Schmidt on his eightieth birthday and expressed "recognition of his services in defense chemistry."¹⁶⁸

On July 3, Hitler informed von Rundstedt of his dismissal in a handwritten letter. He appointed Field Marshal von Kluge as commander in chief, west. Von Kluge had reported back to him after an extended vacation. This communiqué was published:¹⁶⁹

In the place of Field Marshal von Rundstedt, who is handicapped by his health, Field Marshal von Kluge has taken over command in the west. The Führer has expressed his particular thanks in a handwritten letter to Field Marshal von Rundstedt, who has highly proved himself in the most difficult situations, and also held out the prospect of his deployment for special tasks.

July 4, 1944

In Hitler's eyes, the appointment of a new man had once more saved the situation.

On July 4, Hitler delivered a speech at the Platterhof in the course of a meeting at the Obersalzberg with leaders of the war economy which Speer had arranged.¹⁷⁰ It was the last address which Hitler delivered in front of civilians. About two hundred of Speer's coworkers and specialists from the armament industry were gathered. The "Reich equalizer of burdens" (*Reichslastenverteiler*), Dr. Fischer; the "commissar general for special production tasks," Langenohl; general director Kessel; and the "head of the main committee for electrical engineering," Dr. Lüschen, were present among others.

Four weeks had passed since the invasion. It was unlikely that anybody in Hitler's audience ignored the fact that the war had been lost. Nevertheless, Hitler apparently felt that it was opportune to deliver another long lecture on National Socialist economic policy. He went far back, repeating old ideas which, eleven or twelve years ago, had impressed German industrialists. He spoke about manpower and production, covering the currency by labor, and the communist ideal of equality. He used old clichés, like the history of windowpane, which "four hundred years ago had rarity value and eight hundred years ago was an unheard-of luxury."

No matter how much Hitler raised his voice and how often he repeated the once so effective punch lines—nobody applauded. What a striking contrast to his talk at the Industry Club in Düsseldorf twelve years ago!¹⁷¹ At the time, the leaders of the economy had first displayed great restraint, then increasingly begun to applaud him during the speech, and, in the end, they had enthusiastically approved of Hitler's ideas and forecasts. Now, the atmosphere was frosty from beginning to end.

Hitler could still force his listeners to attend his speeches, but he could no longer persuade them to believe what he told them. Only in one instance did Hitler receive twenty seconds of applause during his speech. It was somewhat embarrassing since his listeners clapped after the following statement:

I am of the conviction that no other man could have done what I have done. Somebody else would not have had the nerves.

Hitler's listeners were somewhat amused as he began to speak about new inventions which he had allegedly closely scrutinized. If, for

July 4, 1944

example, someone approached him with a new corset with new “alloy whalebone socket,” he would reply as follows:

Sir! I will not have any corsets made in Germany because I do not want to ruin the German woman!

Even though the war had blown Hitler’s currency theories sky-high, he attempted to make his audience believe that they were still correct in the war, or at least not detrimental to the war effort.

Gentlemen! In this case, the war provides advanced financing for later accomplishments, later work, later basis for nutrition, and at the same time a tremendous training for the accomplishing of those tasks, with which we would have been confronted in the future anyway.

In this context, Hitler spoke of mass production, for which the war represented a great training ground. The war necessitated “mass-produced articles, millions of guns, hundreds of thousands of machine guns.”

It leads by necessity to a clear separation between, on the one side, the purely military orderer, and, on the other side, the technical designer in connection with the production engineer—that is, whoever is charged with mass production will be the one to furnish the best designs. Weapons are only of use wherever they appear in masses.

After Hitler had pointed out the “gigantic work” of the new Reich Minister Speer, he expressed his fear that peace production would one day suffer because of the concentration on war production. He warned as follows:

It is a matter of course that there must be constant intervention right now so that we do not miss out on any innovations on the one hand and do not lose our footing in production on the other so that—should peace break out tomorrow—we will not have oriented and organized our entire economy with just one goal in mind and therefore not be in a position to take up peace products like that.

Gentlemen! I do not care about peace today, I only care about victory! If we win this war, the German economy will receive such gigantic orders that it will be able to continue mass production in any event.

The steel that will be needed in peacetime for construction alone cannot be provided solely by our present steelworks!

If we lose the war, gentlemen, no readjustment will be necessary. It will only be necessary that everybody thinks about his own readjustment from this life into the next, whether he wants to do it himself, whether he wants to let himself be hanged, whether he wants to get a shot through the base of the skull,

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whether he wants to starve or go work in Siberia. Those are the only choices which the individual will then have to make.

I am not considering any bad compromise!

Once our victory has decided this war, private initiative in the German economy will enter its greatest epoch.

My efforts must always be directed to choose and select the most competent heads. I keep sniffing around all the time, and I have “agents” who always watch out: is there talent here, is there a genius here?

Hitler did mention the present difficulties and tried to console his listeners by saying that they would be overcome. He again told the anecdote—which was already strange enough when he mentioned it for the first time in 1938—about the man who had supposedly said to him that if he [the Führer] kept things up, Germany would collapse.¹⁷²

I told the big financier: You know, the German Volk has lived for, let us say, hundreds of thousands of years. . . . The German Volk survived the Romans, it survived the invasions by the Huns, countless wars, the Thirty Years’ War, the Seven Years’ War, the War of the Spanish Succession, the World War. It will survive this, too.

In view of this consolation, Hitler felt that his troubles were not too great:

Difficulties are there to be overcome!

The war in the air meant simply “to find ever new alternatives, in spite of the constant evasions.” All these difficulties were merely trials. However, this time Hitler said that it was not the “Lord God,”¹⁷³ but the “Devil” who was trying the German Volk.

We will survive this time. It often seems to me as though we have to go through all the trials of the Devil, Satan, and Hell, until we finally gain the final victory. This is not the first time this has happened in German history. Whoever does not have a hard time in life cannot really rejoice in what he has accomplished. The birth certificate of a new empire is always best written in blood, in blood and misery. We know from experience that this is the most sturdy, the most durable. We will manage all this.

In what followed, Hitler admitted a few “setbacks in technical respects.” By using electric radiation-detecting devices, the enemy had succeeded in “eliminating the U-boat warfare, you could say.” Moreover, he had started the “mass production of airplanes and tanks.”

Hitler’s statements were truisms, as any German could have told him by this time. But what could be done about these problems?

Hitler offered only empty phrases:

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The German soldier is the best! The restoration of a complete technological balance will create the conditions for swinging around the wheel of the war.

But how did Hitler intend to restore “technological balance” when things were getting worse and worse by the day? Hitler knew no other way out than to refer to the year 1939 and claim that things had been much worse at the time.

At the time, when Italy, in spite of its obligations, did not enter the war, we faced a great crisis! But all of us had the courage at the time not to retreat.

I was fifty years old at the time. I know what tremendous strain on the nerves such decisions represent. I do not know whether, in the next ten or twenty years, a man stronger than I am will succeed me!

Hitler also discussed the situation in France. He claimed that the Allies would “get the surprise of their lives” there.

The war can therefore not be measured in terms of current events. In such a mighty struggle of impact on world history, somebody can tell me: “Yes, you have now lost the tip¹⁷⁴ of Cherbourg.” I can only say [in reply]: they [the Allies] stood at the Rhine once!¹⁷⁵

They say, they [the Allies] will conquer all of France, and I say, we forced them back there!

Let us wait and see whether they will conquer France.¹⁷⁶ Yes, only . . .¹⁷⁷ get the surprise of their lives! Our spirit of invention will help us shortly to issue those weapons that are necessary to restore the technological balance.

Of course, Hitler had to make several references to numbers and to questions of race. He tried to get his listeners to forget how critical the situation actually was.

We have over a hundred thirty million people within the territory of the Reich. All of Europe, which must work for us today, amounts to over two hundred fifty million. And we shall not accomplish anything with that? That’s ridiculous! The American engineers are mostly of German origin. It is Swabian-Alemannian blood that these people have. And I have the same crowd of Alemanni. They work for us. It would be sad if we couldn’t do anything with that. Superiority of the enemy? You can tell how little they are superior to us!

At the end of the speech, Hitler again brought up the idea that the gods loved him because he demanded the impossible. In the end, they would grant him their blessings. He declared the following:

The tasks which I set are tremendous. But always think of the old saying: the gods love him who demands the impossible of them. If we accomplish the impossible, then we will surely receive the approval of Providence.

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Perhaps I am not what they call a sanctimonious hypocrite or pious. I am not that. But deep in my heart, I am a religious man; that is, I believe that the man who, in accordance with the natural laws created by God, bravely fights and never capitulates in this world—*that this man will not be abandoned by the Lawgiver*.¹⁷⁸ Instead, he will in the end receive the blessings of Providence.

When Hitler had ended, half a minute of dutiful applause followed. Speer said a few words of thanks and exclaimed *Sieg Heil*.

And so Hitler's last public appearance ended on the stage of rhetoric where he had earlier celebrated such great triumphs. His farewell performance was pitiful, sad, and eerie.

On July 7, a few soldiers, especially detailed for this duty, paraded new army uniforms and pieces of field equipment in front of Hitler at the Berghof, in the presence of Speer and Major General Helmut Stieff. Allegedly, there was a plan to hide a bomb in the field pack of one of the soldiers and blow him up along with Hitler.¹⁷⁹

Regardless of whether this assassination attempt was supposed to be carried out on July 7 or at another opportunity, it underlined the fact that the assassins did not dare to face Hitler themselves. They preferred to kill innocent people along with Hitler, since they wished to stay alive themselves. The excuse that it was not possible to shoot Hitler with a pistol because he was constantly guarded by SS men is not compelling.¹⁸⁰ Many of Hitler's entourage agreed that it would have been quite possible to shoot him on numerous occasions, without his servants or guards being able to prevent this.¹⁸¹

Hitler had not been at his headquarters in East Prussia for four months. He preferred the more private and comfortable atmosphere of the Berghof. It was likewise understandable that the men at the Wolfsschanze headquarters thought that it was a good idea to relocate to safer zones, at least insofar as the high command of the army was concerned. After all, the Russians had not only taken Minsk in the course of their great offensive in the central sector, but they had also begun to advance on Vilnius. It was only a question of months or weeks until they would reach the borders of East Prussia.

In early July, Chief of Staff Zeitzler began transferring the army high command from Rastenburg to Zossen.¹⁸² Hitler was outraged when he heard of this. He ordered an immediate return to East Prussia. However, this meant that he also had to return to Rastenburg, whether he liked it or not. He scheduled his arrival for July 15.

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Before he left, however, a series of situation briefings took place at the Berghof, like those of July 6 and 11. They dealt mostly with the mobilization of the home army (*Heimatbeere*). Colonel Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg among others attended these meetings. Since July 1, he had been serving as chief of staff to Colonel General Fromm, the commander of the replacement army.¹⁸³

The resistance movement felt it had finally found its man in von Stauffenberg. The Count would carry through on the attempt on Hitler's life. The leading heads of the resistance movement had great plans on what they would do, whom they would appoint as ministers, what appeals they would issue, and so on, but all these plans presupposed that Hitler was dead. However, not one of these men dared to kill him or obtain his dismissal from office through the Reichstag. They were greatly relieved when Graf von Stauffenberg offered to take care of Hitler.

It was sad that the heads of the resistance movement had to turn to the Count in this matter. After all, von Stauffenberg had been seriously injured in the campaign in Africa. He had lost his left eye, his lower right arm, and two fingers of his left hand. Moreover, he still carried shrapnel in his skull, and it had to be removed.¹⁸⁴ In every respect, the Count cut a tragic figure; he was physically weakened and nervous, although undoubtedly ambitious. His method was no different from those of the other would-be assassins who had previously tried to kill Hitler. He was also prepared to answer for innocent people being killed along with Hitler. But he wanted to stay alive since he counted on an appointment as state secretary with the war ministry in the planned Goerdeler cabinet.¹⁸⁵

An assassin who is not prepared to sacrifice his own life in the attempt is ill-suited to such an undertaking. Normally, his life is over after the attack: if the attempt fails, then he will either be shot on the spot or put on trial shortly afterward and executed. If the attack succeeds, then the followers of the victim will try to kill him or, in many cases, his fellow conspirators will seek to eliminate him later. As far as it is humanly possible to tell, Graf von Stauffenberg was destined to die. He deserves to have his memory honored as a man who dared more than the other members of the German resistance movement, and as one of Hitler's victims, like so many million people of all nations, who suffered a horrible death.

July 13, 1944

At the talks at the Berghof, von Stauffenberg did not activate the bomb which he had brought along. He claimed that he failed to do so because Himmler was not present.¹⁸⁶

On July 12, Hitler issued a directive on the tightened concentration of all questions regarding naval transports within the Wehrmacht.¹⁸⁷

On July 13, before leaving the Obersalzberg, Hitler issued a series of decrees concerning domestic policy. They served the goal of augmenting the deployment of civilians in the war.¹⁸⁸

The decree on the "Listing and Processing of Stocks for the Armament Industry and the War Economy" began with these words:¹⁸⁹

The military situation demands the increased deployment of all goods for the purposes of the armament industry. It necessitates in particular the increased listing and processing of all stocks consisting of commercial raw materials, half-finished and finished products, for urgent tasks in the war. In the interest of securing uniform measures, I order the following:

[Technical details follow.]

Even though "total war" had repeatedly been proclaimed before, and everything had already been enlisted in the war, every little bit of what remained of goods was now supposed to be scratched together.

A second decree by Hitler dealt with the reinforced concentration of means of road transportation. In other words, the Reich minister of transport was supposed to comb through the few remaining civilian vehicles. The decree stipulated the following:¹⁹⁰

In the interest of an augmented concentration and uniform conduct of civilian road traffic by the Reich minister of transportation, I order for the duration of the war and in suspension of regulations to the contrary:

§ 1

1. The Reich minister of transportation will be authorized to issue ordinances for the deployment of civilian means of road transportation (streetcars, motor vehicles, sidecar combinations) and give orders made necessary by the conduct of the war.

[Technical details follow.]

Hitler's decree on the "Replacement of the Previous Military Government in Belgium and Norway by a Civilian Administration" was also seen as domestic policy. Hitler had refrained from doing so out of consideration for the Belgian king. Now, however, he felt that it was high time for annexing Belgium and northern France to the Reich. For this reason, he appointed Grohé, the Gauleiter of Cologne-Aix-la-Chapelle, as Reichskommissar for the occupied territories in Belgium

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and northern France on July 13.¹⁹¹ He proceeded in a similar manner as with Norway and the Netherlands at the time. It was grotesque that he did so, however, at a time when Belgium and northern France were again being transformed into front sectors. A few weeks later, the Allies would occupy this "Reichskommissariat."

It was remarkable that, in two of the decrees issued on July 13, Hitler concerned himself with the possibility of "Enemy Advances into German Reich Territory" and ordered certain measures to be taken. The decree on the "Authority of Command" read as follows:¹⁹²

In the event of enemy advances into German Reich territory, I order the following:

I

The civilian offices of the national and local governments will continue their activities in the theater of operations,

II

1. The military commander in chief on whom I shall confer the exercise of executive power will direct his requests, resulting from the military necessities in civilian affairs, to the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations.

2. In the immediate combat zones, whose borders will be determined by the military commander in chief in concurrence with the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations, the high military command offices will be authorized to issue directly to the offices of the national and local governments those directives necessary for the carrying out of their combat mission. Should unexpected events necessitate immediate action, and should it not be possible to reach the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations, then the military commander in chief will have the same authority in the entire theater of operations. The Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations will be notified of the measures taken in the most speedy manner.

3. I shall appoint the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations.¹⁹³

III

1. The Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations will advise the military commander in chief in all questions concerning the civilian administration and the economy. He will be entitled to issue the necessary directives to the civilian offices of the national and local governments.

2. Should the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations make requests, he should direct them to the responsible high-ranking SS and police leader in all affairs of the police, to the plenipotentiary of the Reich minister for transportation in all affairs of the Reichsbahn and inland navigation, to the plenipotentiary of the Reichskommissar for ocean navigation in all questions of ocean navigation, to the responsible chairman of the armament committee with the Reich minister for armament and war production in all questions of armament and war production.

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IV

The Reich defense commissars, whose administrative districts belong partly or totally to the theater of operations, shall appoint a liaison who will serve as adviser to the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations.¹⁹⁴

[Technical details follow.]

The decree on “Cooperation between Party and Wehrmacht” read as follows:¹⁹⁵

In the event of enemy advances into German Reich territory, I order the following:

I

The offices of the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations shall continue their activities in the theater of operations.

II

1. The military commander in chief on whom I shall confer the exercise of executive power shall direct his requests, resulting from the military necessities in affairs of the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations, to the Gauleiter for the theater of operations.

2. In the immediate combat zones, whose borders will be determined by the military commander in chief in concurrence with the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations, the above-named military command offices will be authorized directly to issue to the offices of the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations, those directives which will be necessary for the carrying out of their combat mission. Should unexpected events necessitate immediate action, and should it not be possible to reach the Gauleiter for the theater of operations, then the military commander in chief will have the same authority in the entire theater of operations. The Gauleiter for the theater of operations will be notified of the measures taken in the most speedy manner.

3. I shall appoint the Gauleiter for the theater of operations.

[Technical details follow.]

On July 13, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Pavelich on his birthday.¹⁹⁶

On July 14, he left the Berghof for the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia. It was a last good-bye, since he would never return to the Obersalzberg.

On July 15, Hitler discussed reinforcing the home army and activating Volk grenadier divisions at the headquarters in East Prussia.¹⁹⁷ Von Stauffenberg attended the meetings, but again hesitated to activate the bomb, even though Himmler was present this time.

Also on July 15, Rommel sent a telex message to Hitler. He informed him that the “situation in Normandy is becoming more

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difficult by the day.” The message ended on this note:¹⁹⁸ “The troops are fighting heroically everywhere, but the unequal battle is nearing its end. I must ask you immediately to draw the conclusions from this situation. As the commander in chief of the army group, I feel obliged to put this plainly.”

What type of “conclusion” was Hitler supposed to draw from the situation: step down and renounce the throne? Certainly, Rommel did not believe that Hitler would be ready to do this. Experience had shown that Hitler normally reacted to such situations by dismissing old generals and appointing new ones. Did Rommel want this?

According to Speidel, Rommel said the following after he sent out the telex to Hitler: “I gave him a last chance. If he does not draw the conclusions, we will take action.”

What type of “action” was Rommel talking about? Would he lead a revolt? Would he arrest Hitler? Rommel was a military man, and the last man who would have arrested Hitler. The Führer was the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. How could one expect a German general to arrest his supreme commander? Indeed, not one of the more than three thousand German generals and admirals¹⁹⁹ dared to do this or face Hitler with a pistol in his hand. Even the generals who appeared on the scene on July 20 acted in the belief that Hitler was dead.

Admittedly, there were many generals who discussed what they would do once Hitler was dead, that is, once the legitimate national authority no longer existed and they had a free hand. But the problem was that he was not dead. It would still take months until he was finally ready to put a bullet through his brain himself.

Following July 17, Rommel no longer had to worry about what type of “action” was expected of him. On the road between Livrot and Vimoutiers, his car was hit by fire from Allied fighter-bombers. His driver died, and Rommel suffered a concussion.

On July 18, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on the Spanish national holiday.²⁰⁰

On July 19, Hitler received Kesselring at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds and congratulated him on his fortieth service anniversary.²⁰¹ Hitler was very impressed with Kesselring’s ruthlessness in deploying the German soldiers in the fight against the Allies in Italy, although the heavy German losses only delayed the advance of the Anglo-Americans but did not prevent it.

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For the afternoon of July 20, Hitler planned a reception for Mussolini at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁰² For this reason, he rescheduled the noon discussion of the situation for 12:30 p.m. instead of 1:00 p.m. as was the usual time. The bunker where the briefings normally took place had been closed for some time because of construction work to reinforce the concrete floor. A barracks which usually housed guests now served as a temporary room for the meeting. This change was not favorable for the assassination attempt, because the windows and walls of the barracks— in contrast with the massive concrete of the bunker—naturally diminished the effect of the explosion. Von Stauffenberg was again summoned to attend the meeting; he was to report on the mobilization of the home army.

First, however, General Heusinger made a presentation on the situation at the eastern front. In the meantime, von Stauffenberg put the briefcase with the bomb beneath the table where Hitler was sitting. Saying that he had to make a telephone call, he left the barracks.

Just when Hitler was trying to locate something on a map and leaning over the heavy oak table at 12:40 p.m. or 12:42 p.m., the bomb went off. Hitler was catapulted up along with the tabletop. He suffered bruises on his right arm and back, and some scratches on his left hand. His ear drums were hurt, and his hair was singed, but other than that he was fine, even though his pants were in shreds.

Many of the other participants in the conference were so seriously injured that they later died: Reichstag stenographer and senior executive officer Heinrich Berger, who had been detailed along with other Reichstag stenographers to attend the situation briefings and could hardly be blamed for Hitler's politics; Hitler's chief Wehrmacht adjutant Lieutenant General Rudolf Schmundt, Luftwaffe chief of staff General Günther Korten, and Colonel (G.S.) Heinz Brandt. The following suffered serious injuries: Air Force General Karl Bodenschatz, Rear Admiral Karl-Jesko von Puttkammer, Major General Walter Scherff, Lieutenant Colonel (G.S.) Heinrich Borgmann, and Captain Heinz Assmann.

The following men were only slightly injured: Keitel, Jodl, Infantry General Walter Buhle, Lieutenant General Adolf Heusinger, Rear Admiral Hans-Erich Voss, SS Gruppenführer Hermann Fegelein, Colonel Nicolaus von Below, Lieutenant Colonel Heinz Waizenegger,

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Major (G.S.) Herbert Büchs, Major von Jahn, and SS Hauptsturmführer Otto Günsche.

Undeniably, Hitler was lucky to survive the explosion with barely any injuries. This was due less to a “miraculous rescue” than to a chain of certain coincidences, since most of those present sustained only slight injuries.

Von Stauffenberg had waited at a signal bunker, about eighty meters away, until he saw the explosion and the barracks collapse. Convinced that Hitler was dead, he headed for the exit. Even though the gate was already closed, he managed to persuade the guards to let him out, after some discussion. It was 12:44 p.m.

The Count had a car take him to the airfield as quickly as possible. After all, he intended to play a leading role in the revolution which would now begin in Berlin. On the way, his chauffeur noticed that he threw a small package containing explosives no longer needed out of the window.

In the meantime, Hitler had himself treated by his physician Dr. Morell. His servant Linge brought him a new uniform. Hitler remained admirably calm. He ordered Linge to look for additional explosives, because he initially thought that construction workers had hidden the bomb beneath the floor. All the construction workers at the headquarters were kept in custody for the time being.

Soon, however, it was discovered that the actual assassin had been von Stauffenberg. His departure just before the explosion had attracted notice. And, hastily, he had departed by plane at 1:00 p.m. The package with the remaining explosive which he had thrown away was recovered. Immediately, Hitler ordered von Stauffenberg’s arrest in Berlin, in the event that he had not escaped behind the Russian lines, as some suspected.

In the meantime, von Ribbentrop, Göring, and Himmler had arrived at the headquarters in order to prepare for Mussolini’s reception. The interpreter, Envoy Schmidt, had also arrived.

The Duce was scheduled to arrive at a nearby station at 2:30 p.m. However, his train ran one hour late. Hitler personally went to the station to pick up his guest. He was in complete control of himself. He was only experiencing some problems in using his right arm so that he had to extend his left hand in greeting. Mussolini had quite a fright when he heard that there had just been an assassination attempt at the headquarters. Since it was beginning to rain a little, Hitler put on his

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black cape, and the entire company, including Göring, Himmler, von Ribbentrop, Bormann, and so on, returned to the headquarters by foot.

As they reached the site of the explosion, Hitler, Mussolini, and Schmidt entered the heavily damaged barracks. Hitler coolly described the explosion to his friend as follows:²⁰³

It happened here. I stood here, at this table. I was leaning on the table with my right arm like this in order to look at something on the map, when suddenly the tabletop came flying at me and threw my arm upward. Here, directly at my feet, the bomb exploded.²⁰⁴

For some time, none of them said anything. Then Hitler sat down on a box, and Schmidt had to bring up one of the few usable chairs for Mussolini. As they sat face-to-face in the rubble, Hitler began to speak again in a low voice:

As I let things pass again before my mind, my miraculous rescue proves that, while others present in the room sustained serious injuries, and one²⁰⁵ was even catapulted out of the window by the air pressure, nothing happened to me—fate spared me—especially since this wasn't the first time that I escaped death in such a miraculous fashion.

After my rescue from certain death today, I am more convinced than ever before that I am destined to bring to a happy conclusion our great common cause!

Hitler's "miraculous rescue" by Providence meant one thing: triumph of the god-man over all earthly challenges and "trials of the Devil, Satan, and Hell."²⁰⁶ Hitler found the new attitude he would strike, the new slogan he would use. Now, at a time when the opposition of his inner circle was becoming clear, he felt that he could again speak to the public, armed with this new catchword.

Hitler had not spoken to the German Volksgenossen since January 30, because he faced a constantly deteriorating situation. Even then, he had addressed them only on the radio. This time, he was not ready to do much more, but he did want to speak. He would personally inform the Germans of his "miraculous rescue" and show his opponents that divine Providence stood by him. It did so because he was steadfast; he refused to capitulate; he was ready to fight on to "the last battalion," even until "five minutes past twelve."

Mussolini was much impressed with Hitler's poise and his remarkable coolness. He declared: "After what I have seen here, I agree with you completely. This was a sign from Heaven!"

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The two dictators rose in order to continue their conversation in the bunker. The tone was subdued on this day. Schmidt reported that he felt there was “an aura of farewell” in the air at their relatively inconsequential talks. Indeed, it was the last time that Hitler and Mussolini would meet face-to-face. In the course of the past decade, they had met seventeen times. The circumstances at their last meeting presaged the violent death they would each meet only months later at nearly the same time, though in different locations—the one in Berlin, the other south of the Alps.

The following communiqué was published on the talks:²⁰⁷

The talks between the Führer and the Duce were marked by a spirit of great warmth. The Führer and the Duce examined the situation and, among other things, discussed the question of the Italian prisoners of war.²⁰⁸ They set guidelines for the resolution of this question in the spirit of the moral and material obligations of the two countries. This solution provides for the prisoners of war to be granted the status of free laborers or deployed as helpers within the German Wehrmacht.

The discussions at the Führer headquarters were attended by Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, and Field Marshal Keitel. On the Italian side, Marshal Grazini and under state secretary in the foreign ministry, Count Mazzolini, attended.

The talks between Hitler and Mussolini had repeatedly been interrupted as new information arrived from Berlin. Upon the false news of Hitler’s death, several generals had gathered at the Reichswehr ministry located at Bendlerstrasse. The following men had planned to take power: Field Marshal von Witzleben; the former chief of the general staff, Colonel General Beck; Colonel General Hoepfner, a former panzer commander who, in front of Moscow, had been demoted by Hitler and dismissed from the Wehrmacht; and Infantry General Olbricht.²⁰⁹

Olbricht, together with Colonel Graf Stauffenberg who in the meantime had arrived in Berlin, undertook to persuade the commander of the replacement army, Colonel General Fromm, to side with the new “government.” However, Fromm was a cautious man and wanted to know first whether Hitler was really dead or not. At 4:00 p.m. he telephoned the Führer headquarters. He spoke with Keitel, who told him that, while there had been an assassination attempt, Hitler had sustained only minor injuries.

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That was enough for Fromm. He knew what he owed the legal government and recommended that von Stauffenberg shoot himself right away. But neither von Stauffenberg nor Olbricht agreed to this. They were cornered and so they decided to arrest Fromm. They placed him under house arrest at his apartment, which was located in the same building, and requested his “word of honor” that he stay there.

Now the events of November 8, 1923, repeated themselves. At the time, Hitler and his comrades had detained the commander of the Reichswehr in Munich, von Lussow, on his “word of honor.” Both generals—von Lussow as well as Fromm—were opponents of Hitler but both could think only of proving their loyalty to the legal government authority. In 1923, Hitler had been a putschist. In 1944, he was the head of state and government, as well as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. Fromm’s decision was clear.

Once Witzleben found out that the assassination attempt had failed, he became quite indignant, got into his Mercedes, and drove home. The other generals were not as quickly informed of the true facts, since the putschists had given the code word “*Walküre*” (Valkyrie), which sounded the alarm for the replacement army in the case of domestic unrest, and had proclaimed “the Führer’s death.”

The military commander of Paris, General Heinrich von Stülpnagel, had all high-ranking SS and SD officers in the city arrested. They did not put up any resistance and submitted to the arrest in a “collegial” manner, so to speak.

The commandant of Berlin, Lieutenant General Paul von Hase, ordered the guards battalion *Grossdeutschland* to occupy the governmental district. However, at the urging of Lieutenant Colonel Hans Hagen, a Nazi Party security officer, the commander of the battalion, Major Otto Remer, first inquired of Goebbels personally whether or not Hitler was really dead. At 5:00 p.m., the major went to the propaganda ministry. Goebbels had just spoken on the telephone with Hitler, who had told him all about the assassination attempt. Immediately, he put another call through and handed the receiver to Remer, who clearly heard Hitler say the following:²¹⁰

Major Remer, can you hear my voice? Major Remer, they tried to kill me, but I am alive. Major Remer, I am speaking to you as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. Only my orders are to be obeyed. You must secure Berlin for me. Deploy every means of force that you feel necessary. Shoot any person who tries to disobey my orders.

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This telephone call was the end of the “revolution.” There was no need for Remer to deploy “means of force.” The troops returned to their quarters. Lieutenant General Hase surrendered his pistol to Goebbels. A few putschists still held out at the Reich War Ministry in the Benderstrasse, but Fromm, though under arrest, had secretly sent three generals out to help.

However, Fromm had nevertheless become suspicious in Hitler’s eyes. After all, his chief of staff von Stauffenberg had carried out the assassination attempt. The replacement army in Berlin had been put on alert. Hitler felt that Fromm had to have been involved in the conspiracy in some manner.

On the spot, Hitler decided to set an example and put a civilian in command of the renegade generals. So he appointed Himmler as the new commander of the replacement army.

In addition, Hitler dismissed Zeitzler, who had dared to relocate the headquarters from Rastenburg to Zossen, without asking his approval. He considered giving the position to Guderian. At 6:00 p.m., he telephoned Guderian’s chief of staff, General Thomale, in order to ask Guderian to the headquarters on the following day.

Hitler stated his contempt for the putschists in a conversation with his manservant Linge:

They are no revolutionaries, these conspirators, they are not even rebels. If Stauffenberg had pulled out a gun and shot me, he would have been a man. What he did was cowardly.

Göring, Dönitz, von Ribbentrop, and Hitler’s Unterführers who gathered at the headquarters were somewhat depressed by the assassination attempt. They were nervous and blamed one another for the bad military and political situation.²¹¹ Hitler listened to their verbal exchanges for a while and then struck a pose: if anybody had a right to shout in this case, it was he! And he began to launch a tirade against the conspirators. He shouted that he would exterminate them. Their wives and children would be brought to concentration camps, and nobody would be spared.

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3

Hitler was especially angry with the House of Hohenzollern and with the crown prince, whom he mistakenly believed to be behind the assassination attempt, as in Italy, where the royal house represented a stabilizing influence to which the people turned in the midst of chaos. However, Hitler greatly overestimated the importance of the former ruling house in Germany and its influence on the public.²¹²

As Hitler accompanied the Duce to the station, he stopped where the construction workers were arrested and told them:

I knew from the start that it was not you. It is my profound belief that my enemies are the “vons” who call themselves aristocrats. You are free now.

At 6:30 p.m., Hitler had Goebbels disseminate the following official statement on the radio:²¹³

A bomb attack was made on the Führer today. The following members of his entourage were seriously injured: Lieutenant General Schmundt, Colonel Brandt, coworker Berger. Slight injuries were sustained by the following: Colonel General Jodl; Generals Korten, Buhle, Bodenschatz, Heusinger, and Scherff; Admirals Voss and von Puttkammer; Captain Assmann, and Lieutenant Colonel Borgmann. The Führer sustained no injuries other than some minor burns and bruises. He immediately resumed his work and, as planned, he received the Duce for a lengthy exchange of views. Shortly after the attack, the Reichsmarschall arrived at the Führer's.

In the course of the evening, an announcement stated that Hitler would personally deliver an address. From Königsberg (Kaliningrad), it was aired shortly after midnight by all German radio stations. It was relatively short. Hitler repeatedly maintained that “a very small clique,” “a very small coterie,” had been involved in the assassination attempt. It would become clear over time that this had not been the case. One field marshal, numerous generals, and even a SA Obergruppenführer²¹⁴ had

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participated. Nearly five thousand persons were executed. Hitler made it clear on July 20, that such terrible reprisals had to be expected: "This time, we shall settle accounts in the way we are used to as National Socialists."

Hitler's radio address read as follows:²¹⁵

German Volksgenossen!

I do not know how many times an assassination attempt on me was planned and carried out. I speak to you today for two reasons:

1. so that you can hear my voice and know that I was not injured and am in good health;

2. so that you learn about the details of this crime, which is without equal in German history.

A very small clique of ambitious, unscrupulous, and at the same time criminal, stupid officers hatched a plot in order to eliminate me as well as exterminate the staff of the German Wehrmacht leadership. The bomb that was placed by Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg went off two meters to my right. It seriously hurt several coworkers precious to me; one of them died. I am not injured, with the exception of a few very small bruises and burns. I regard this as confirmation of my mission by Providence to continue pursuing the goal of my life, as I have done up to now. Let me solemnly avow before the entire nation that since the day I moved into Wilhelmstrasse I have had only one thought: to fulfill my duty to the best of my knowledge and belief. Ever since I realized that this war was unavoidable and could no longer be delayed, I knew nothing but worries and work and, in countless days and nights that I stayed up, I lived only for my Volk!

In an hour in which the German armies stand in the midst of a most difficult struggle, a very small group was found in Germany, as in Italy, that believed it could carry through a stab in the back as in the year 1918. However, it was terribly mistaken this time. The claim of these usurpers that I am no longer alive is being contradicted at this moment, as I speak to you, my dear Volksgenossen. This circle made up of these usurpers is a very small one. It has nothing to do with the German Wehrmacht and, above all, with the German Army. It is a very small coterie (*Klüngel*) of criminal elements which will be mercilessly exterminated. I therefore order at this moment the following:

1. That no civilian office is to accept any orders from any office appropriated by the usurpers.

2. That no military office, no leader of troops, no soldier is to comply with any type of order by these usurpers. On the contrary, everybody has the duty either to arrest the person forwarding or issuing such an order immediately or, in the case of resistance, to gun him down at once.

So as finally to assure order, I have appointed Reich Minister Himmler as commander of the replacement army. I have asked General Guderian to join the general staff in order to replace the chief of the general staff, presently

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unavailable due to an illness, and appointed a second battle-tested leader from the eastern front as his assistant.

Nothing changes in any other office in the Reich. I am convinced that by crushing this very small clique of traitors and conspirators, we finally create an atmosphere back in the homeland of the type which the fighters at the front need. After all, it is impossible that hundreds of thousands and millions of brave men give everything, while a very small coterie of ambitious, pitiful creatures at home constantly tries to undermine this attitude. This time we will settle accounts in the way we are used to as National Socialists.

I am convinced that every decent officer, every brave soldier will understand this at this hour.

Germany's fate, had this attempt today succeeded, can be imagined by only a very few people. I am grateful to Providence and my Creator not because He preserved my life—my life is nothing other than care and work for my Volk—but because He gave me the opportunity to continue bearing these cares and too persevere in my work, as best as I can before my conscience.

Every German, no matter who he might be, has the duty to oppose these elements mercilessly, either to arrest them at once or—if they should resist—to gun them down without further ado. Orders have gone out to all troops. They will execute them in blind faith and in accordance with the type of obedience which the German Army knows.

I may joyfully greet you once more in particular, my old comrades in arms, since I again had the privilege to escape a fate that did not mean anything horrible to me, but would have meant something horrible for the German Volk.

I also regard this as the warning finger of Providence that I must continue my work and, therefore, I shall continue my work!

On the night of July 20–21, Hitler issued this order of the day to the army:²¹⁶

Führer Headquarters, July 21, 1944

Soldiers of the Army!

A small circle of unscrupulous saboteurs has made an attempt on my life and on the staff of the Wehrmacht leadership in order to seize government authority. Providence has made this crime fail. The immediate energetic intervention by loyal officers and soldiers of the army in the homeland eliminated or arrested the clique of traitors within a few hours. I had expected nothing different. I know that you will continue to fight bravely in exemplary obedience and loyal fulfillment of your duties as before, until the victory will in the end be ours in spite of everything.

Adolf Hitler

Having finished this proclamation, Hitler finally went to sleep.

In Berlin, in the meantime, Fromm had again taken control of the war ministry and arrested the leading conspirators. He was eager to

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summon a drumhead court-martial so that the persons arrested could be sentenced to death and executed on the spot.²¹⁷ Fromm was trying to save his own skin: by taking swift action, he hoped to eliminate those who knew about his ambiguous stand and curry favor with Hitler. However, he was mistaken in this. Whoever issued death sentences without Hitler's approval committed a sacrilege by appropriating a privilege of power which Hitler considered his very own. Whoever dared to do this had to die.²¹⁸

The consequences of the failed assassination attempt were grave. Undoubtedly it resulted in a deterioration of the domestic situation in Germany.

A veritable psychosis took hold of the military and political Unterführers of the Third Reich. They competed with one another in proving their devotion to Hitler and sending him telegrams that paid homage to him.

Himmler was compelled to launch a relentless campaign of persecution of all opponents of the regime. Up to this point, he had pretty much let the reins go slack and not done anything about the activities of the resistance circles around Beck, Goerdeler, Canaris, and others, even though he was aware of them.

Although Himmler was devoted to Hitler, he was not so stupid that he had not long ago realized that Hitler's policies were bringing ruin to all Germans. The old fighters around Hitler had had greater opportunity to observe him up close than the military men and the bourgeois. Consequently, they had seen what was coming for some time already, even though not one of them dared to make a move against Hitler.

By 1944, the leading SS men would also have been happy to get rid of Hitler and his fateful policies somehow. In the beginning, the SS had attempted to emulate the ideals of the Prussian officer corps and form an elite. They had chosen the uniform which recalled that of the Death's Head Hussars around Mackensen and Crown Prince William. However, Hitler had used the SS for his own ends. And this had led slowly but surely to the SS being stamped a criminal organization in the eyes of the world and of the German Volk.

The Italians noticed already in 1942 that Himmler was beginning to distance himself from Hitler's politics.²¹⁹ Himmler's Finnish physician Kersten made similar observations.²²⁰ Other SS leaders were also becoming increasingly unhappy about Hitler's leadership. Of course,

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they had no plans to kill him, but they would not have been too unhappy about his death. This became clear in the course of the arrests of the SS leaders in Paris on July 20, after the supposed death of the Führer. The SS leaders did not put up any resistance. Both parties in the arrests were somewhat embarrassed when the order was canceled only hours later.

After the failure of the assassination attempt, it was clear that Himmler had to move without mercy against the resistance movement in order to please Hitler. And the men of the resistance deserved no mercy in his eyes because they had shown themselves incapable of taking successful action. In addition, the manner in which von Stauffenberg had proceeded in his assassination attempt, that is, killing or injuring high-ranking Wehrmacht members, was not suited to gaining new friends for the resistance movement within the Wehrmacht.²²¹

Hitler waited a few days before he issued orders on how to deal with the arrested individuals. He stayed in bed on July 21 but replied to the congratulations he received from the satellite states on his escape. The following sent him telegrams: Laval, Quisling, Tiso, Neditsch, Hácha, and the prime minister of Manchuria, Chang Teng-hai. The Japanese emperor inquired about Hitler's state of health at the German embassy.²²²

Hitler received Guderian around noon to appoint him chief of the general staff.²²³ On this occasion, he already called the present commander in chief, west, von Kluge, "an accessory in the assassination attempt," even though von Kluge had sent him a telegram of loyalty. The arrest of the SS men in Paris had led Hitler to this conclusion. In his eyes, von Kluge was no better than Fromm.

Hitler was determined to eliminate the reactionary spirit in the Wehrmacht. Symbolically, the military salute that was used within the Wehrmacht was to be replaced at this late date by the Fascist or so-called "German salute."²²⁴ Göring, Keitel, and Dönitz anticipated this wish. The following official announcement was published:²²⁵

The Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, as the senior officer in the German Wehrmacht, has reported to the Führer, in the name of Field Marshal Keitel and Grand Admiral Dönitz as well, that all branches of the Wehrmacht have requested on the occasion of his rescue to be allowed to introduce to the Wehrmacht the German salute as a sign of unswerving loyalty

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to the Führer and of the close solidarity between the Wehrmacht and the party. The Führer has granted the Wehrmacht this wish and has given his approval.

Effective immediately, the salute which consisted of raising the right hand to the headgear will be replaced by the German salute.

On July 23, Hitler composed this general note of thanks:²²⁶

On the occasion of the attack directed against me and my coworkers, I have received so many congratulations and demonstrations of loyalty from all parts of the German Volk, especially the party and the Wehrmacht, that I would like to express in this manner my heartfelt thanks, also on behalf of my comrades, to all those who thought of me in the course of these days.

Adolf Hitler

In the past ten days, the Russians had started the offensive in the northern sector as well, crossed the Daugava, and were now advancing in the direction of the Gulf of Riga. There was danger for the entire Army Group North of being cut off.

Hitler again solved this problem in his own fashion, that is, he named a new commander in chief: Colonel General Schörner. Nevertheless, Directive No. 59 of July 23, clearly showed that he was up to his neck in difficulties. It read as follows:²²⁷

I appoint Colonel General (Generaloberst) Schörner commander in chief of Army Group North, and I authorize him to command all the available fighting forces and equipment of the Wehrmacht units and SS forces, other units and groups, party and civil offices, with the aim of resisting the enemy's offensives and of maintaining the eastern territories.

All who bear arms, no matter to which unit or group they belong, must be uniformly engaged for this purpose.

At the same time, Hitler ordered measures to be taken in order to prepare for a potential reuse of the German West Wall.²²⁸

On July 24, Hitler sent a handwritten letter to the Reich minister for transportation, Julius Dorpmüller, on his seventy-fifth birthday. He awarded him the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross.²²⁹

On July 24 and 25, Goebbels was Hitler's guest at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²³⁰ The result of the talks, which were attended at times by Göring, was a renewed emphasis on deployment for a total war, even though a "total war" had already existed since 1942/1943, at the very latest since 1943. Hitler named Goebbels his "Reich plenipotentiary for total-war deployment." He signed the following decree:²³¹

July 25, 1944

Führer Headquarters, July 25, 1944

The military situation forces us to see to a full utilization of all forces for the Wehrmacht and armament industry. I therefore order:

I

1. The president of the ministerial council for the defense of the Reich, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, has to adapt public life to the necessities of waging a total war in every respect. For the implementation of this task, he will suggest to me a "Reich plenipotentiary for total-war deployment." He will make sure that all public events correspond to the objective of total war and do not deny forces to the Wehrmacht and armament industry. He will review the entire state apparatus, including Reichsbahn, Reich postal service, and all public institutions, organizations, and firms, with the goal of freeing a maximum of forces for the Wehrmacht and armament industry by a completely rational deployment of men and means, by suspension or restriction of tasks less important to the war, and by a simplification of organization and procedure. For these purposes, he will be entitled to request information from the high Reich offices and issue directives to them.

2. The legal regulations and administrative directives in principle, which will be decreed by the appropriate supreme Reich offices, will be issued in concurrence with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery, the head of the party chancellery, and the plenipotentiary for the administration of the Reich.

II

The head of the party chancellery will actively support the measures ordered by me in the deployment of the party based on the authority vested in him.

III

Objections to the directives of the Reich plenipotentiary for total-war deployment will be directed to him. Should an agreement not be obtained, then a decision by me will be sought through the offices of the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery.

IV

Insofar as earlier issued powers and missions contradict the spirit of this decree, they are rescinded.

V

This decree applies to the territory of the Greater German Reich and, correspondingly, the annexed and occupied territories.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

This bombastic decree basically meant only that all theaters, concert halls, and cabarets were to be closed, and the artists called up for military service or work in the armament industry.

Also on July 25, Hitler signed a "Decree on Self-Defense (*Selbstschutz*) and the Reich Air-Raid Protection League (*Reichsluft-*

July 31, 1944

schutzbund)²³² which was placed directly under Goebbels' control. He apparently hoped that this would augment its combat effectiveness. In reality, nothing changed.

On July 26, Hitler had a wreath placed at the funeral of Reichsleiter Wilhelm Grimm in Schliersee. Supposedly, he had died in an "accident" in the course of an official trip.²³³

On July 29, Hitler sent this congratulatory telegram to his friend Mussolini on his birthday:²³⁴

Duce!

On your birthday today, in old loyal comradeship, I send you my own and the German Volk's heartfelt congratulations. I tie to them my warmest best wishes for your personal welfare and the happy future of the Italian people, which after so many terrible reverses of fortune in the past is now ready, in this hour of historic decision, to fight side by side with the German soldiers for its own homeland.

Adolf Hitler

On July 31, a state ceremony at the Tannenberg Memorial took place in honor of the chief of the Luftwaffe general staff, Günter Korten. He had been seriously injured in the assassination attempt of July 20 and had died on July 23. Hitler promoted him to the rank of colonel general and had Göring place a wreath.²³⁵

On July 30, the Allies had taken the city of Avranches at the southern end of Normandy. This had opened up the rest of France for them. In response to this development, Hitler issued this order to Army Group B on July 31:²³⁶

The enemy must not, under any circumstances, have free access for operations. Army Group B prepares with all panzer units for a counterattack in order to push through to Avranches, cut off the enemy breakthrough, and destroy him. All available panzer units must therefore be freed from their present engagement without replacement. . . . The outcome of the campaign in France depends on this attack.

This order did not change the hard fact of the Allied superiority. Hitler was beginning to face the same situation as Napoleon at the end of his rule in 1814 and 1815, when his proclamations contrasted oddly with the reality of the distribution of military power.

Late on the evening of July 31, a long discussion of the situation took place at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²³⁷ The tenor of this meeting with Jodl and other military men was pretty dismal, but Hitler

July 31, 1944

tried to encourage himself and his entourage. There was still enough room “to make life possible,” he said. It was a question of winning time. The “traitors,” who had now become visible due to the assassination attempt, were responsible for all the setbacks. Apparently, they had been betraying everything to the enemy for years.

Hitler would try to use this new propaganda trick throughout the remaining months of his life. Not only had the generals made a mess of the ingenious campaign plans of the Führer, as Goebbels had put it,²³⁸ but had also made possible the enemy’s successes through their repeated treason!

In contrast to this obvious propaganda claim by Hitler, the history of war of all nations at all times conclusively proves that the betrayal of military secrets *does not determine* the outcome of a war. Treason may in individual instances temporarily influence the outcome of a particular operation. However, the outcome of a war is largely determined by the war potential, which depends on the number and quality of the available troops, and on the supplies of raw materials, armament, and foodstuffs.²³⁹ It was not the cowardice or treason of the generals that caused Hitler’s military failures. Instead, the reasons were his own policies. Despite all warnings by the western powers, he had decided to attack Poland, and this had led to England’s declaration of war on September 3, 1939. Everything that happened afterwards was the result of this declaration of war, which Hitler had provoked and for which he alone was responsible. Events ran their course, slow at first and then ever faster. At the end stood the inevitable destruction of Hitler and the Third Reich. The generals had willingly followed Hitler, as long as things went well. It was not until 1944, when it had become obvious that the war would end in chaos, that they tried to save what could be saved.

Among other things, Hitler declared the following on July 31:

Jodl, if I look at the great worries of today, there is first of all the problem of the stabilization of the eastern front—there is not time for more at the moment—and I ask myself, in view of the overall situation, whether it is truly so terrible that we are relatively tightly squeezed together. There are not only disadvantages here, there are advantages, too. If we hold the area we now possess, then this is an area that makes life possible for us at least, and we do not have these huge distances.²⁴⁰

What can you expect, after all, from the top leadership of an overall front, when the most important positions in the rear are occupied, as we see now, by absolute destroyers—not defeatists, but destroyers of, and traitors to, their own

August 1, 1944

country. Since it is like this: when the intelligence sector and the billeting offices are occupied by traitors²⁴¹—nobody knows for how long they have already been conspiring with the enemy or the people over there—then you cannot expect that from there the spirit will come up that is necessary to stop such a thing.

It is probably not Russian insight but constant treason that was continuously committed by this cursed small clique.

If, in the top positions . . . these idiots think that they can get a better situation because this revolution is led by generals and not by soldiers as in 1918, then that's it! It is obvious then that the army is slowly but surely being corrupted.²⁴²

There must be an end to this. This cannot happen. You have to get rid of and drive out these vilest creatures that ever wore the uniform, these scoundrels (*Gesindel*) who managed to survive. That is the supreme duty.

Hitler was also greatly worried about the Balkans, and the attitude of the Turks, Bulgarians, and Hungarians.

As far as the Hungarians are concerned, we should not be surprised: if even we have such twits (*Deppen*) or criminals over here who say, "Even if the Russians come, we will conclude peace; if we have the Russians on our side, nothing much will happen to us," then what right do we have to get upset when such a Hungarian blockhead or magnate says, "We will let ourselves be occupied by the English; surely it will be in their interest not to swallow us up, and everything will be all right."

No matter how much Hitler scolded, he did have to admit that the situation in the west would soon become untenable. He already considered what lines he would be able to hold in France and even at the West Wall, after having laid waste the abandoned areas.

Perhaps this is the most important thing: the destruction of all locomotives, along with all railway installations, all pumps, all things, which is more important than just destroying the tracks. This is perhaps even more important. These are the only things that will give us time ultimately. I cannot operate myself, but I can make it tremendously difficult for the enemy to operate in the vastness of the terrain. I lead him into a war of—let me say of scorched earth that is not German earth. This must, however, be executed in reality without mercy.

On August 1, Hitler promoted Sepp Dietrich and SS General Hausser to the ranks of SS Oberstgruppenführers and colonel generals of the Waffen SS.²⁴³

On the following day, this official announcement was made public:²⁴⁴

August 2, 1944

The Führer has promoted the commander of the Guards Battalion *Grossdeutschland* in Berlin, bearer of the Oak Leaves, Major Remer, to the rank of colonel, because of the determination that he demonstrated on July 20.

On August 2, the policy that Hitler had pursued over many years toward Turkey, and which von Papen had executed, collapsed. The Turkish national assembly resolved to break off relations with Germany, a first step in the direction of a declaration of war.²⁴⁵ Hitler and von Papen had been chasing a specter: the memory of the former German-Turkish brotherhood in arms during the First World War. In reality, the new Turkey under [Mustafa] Kemal [Atatürk] Pasha had always been pro-England.²⁴⁶

On August 2, Hitler had Lieutenant General Gerhard place a wreath at von Hindenburg's sarcophagus in Tannenberg.²⁴⁷

On the same day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to state president Ba Mah on Burma's independence day.²⁴⁸

In the meantime, Hitler had decided how he would deal with the participants in the military putsch of July 20. For years, he had considered how he could best put down attempted rebellions by the generals. Whoever rose against him would suffer an ignominious death. On March 4, 1943, he had already authorized courts-martial to execute death sentences by hanging.²⁴⁹ On June 21, 1943, he had decreed the establishment of a central special drumhead court martial for the Wehrmacht in order to deal with offenses against the leaders of the state and Wehrmacht.²⁵⁰

However, all these preparations now appeared to him to have been tactically unwise. It would be better not to leave the sentencing of the offenders up to a military court at all!

Hitler knew the caste mentality of the military well. He would certainly run into difficulties if he tried to get a field marshal sentenced to be hanged. He did not wish to repeat Groener's mistake. In 1930, Reichswehr Minister Groener had caused a virtual palace revolution by having three Reichswehr lieutenants, who were accused of subversive National Socialist activities, arrested by the police, in disregard of the military code of conduct.²⁵¹ Hitler wished to proceed as he had in the Röhm case. At the time, the Officers' League had expelled Captain Ernst Röhm from its ranks on his request and, thereby, had made it possible for Hitler to have the SA chief of staff killed three days later.²⁵²

Hitler planned to proceed in the same manner with the arrested generals of the German Wehrmacht: the Wehrmacht should simply

August 3, 1944

expel them from its ranks. For this reason, Hitler summoned an army court of honor, whose members (Keitel, Guderian, and other generals) surrendered their own comrades to the highly questionable Volksgerichtshof and to a disgraceful death by strangulation. The members of this court of honor would not have to trouble their consciences any more than the officers who had expelled Röhm from the Officers' League. By virtue of their resolutions, Röhm, Witzleben, and the others no longer belonged to the officer corps, and Hitler could do what he wanted with them!

After Hitler had summoned the court of honor for August 4, he visited the officers injured in the explosion.²⁵³ Hypocritically, he played the role of the devoted supreme commander who had considered all aspects of the assassination attempt and was concerned only for the welfare of the German Volk and the "terribly struggling eastern front." All this weighed naturally more heavily than his own life in his considerations! He told the injured General Bodenschatz the following:²⁵⁴

Well, you know, Bodenschatz, I am being asked a lot these days what I say to the assassination attempt, what I think about political murder. I do not reject it one hundred percent! I can also understand that it may be necessary to remove a statesman if the situation of the nation demands it and a people can have a better future after the elimination of a ruler.

I know that von Stauffenberg, Goerdeler, and Witzleben believed that they could save the German Volk through killing me. However, up to now, only one thing has been ascertained: these people had no concrete plan of what they wanted to do afterwards.²⁵⁵ They had no idea what army supported their putsch, what defense district command would help them. They had not even managed the obvious, to establish communications with the enemy.²⁵⁶ Yes, I even found out that the enemy had rejected offers of negotiation. Think about it, Bodenschatz. There are German soldiers in the midst of a bitter battle at the eastern front. Nearly nine million.²⁵⁷ And now imagine the effect! It would have become a war of everybody against everybody, a civil war in the German army. The Russians would have been the real winners and have taken terrible toll. You see, Bodenschatz, this and only this was the crime of the assassins in my eyes!

On August 3, Hitler received a delegation of leading National Socialist officers at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in the presence of Keitel and General Ritter von Hengel.²⁵⁸ This communiqué was published on the convening of the "Court of Honor of the German army":²⁵⁹

August 4, 1944

Führer Headquarters, August 4

The army has submitted a request to the Führer for the immediate restoration of its honor in the quickest manner through a merciless purge of the last of the criminals involved in the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944. It would like to surrender the guilty persons to civil justice.

The Führer has granted this request all the more since the speedy and energetic action of the army itself nipped the assassination attempt in the bud. The Führer has ordered the following: a court of honor by field marshals and generals will examine who was involved in whatever form in the assassination attempt and hence should be expelled from the army, and who must be regarded as suspicious and will be temporarily suspended.

The Führer has appointed to this court of honor the following: Field Marshal Keitel, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, Colonel General Guderian, Infantry General Schroth, Lieutenant General Specht. As substitutes: Infantry General Kriebel, Lieutenant General Kirchheim. The Führer has reserved for himself the right to decide about the petitions of the court of honor.

Soldiers expelled by the Führer no longer have anything in common with the millions of honorable soldiers of the Greater German Reich who wear the army uniform and with the hundreds of thousands who sealed their loyalty with death. They will not be placed before a Wehrmacht court but will be sentenced together with other offenders by the Volksgerichtshof. The same applies to all soldiers who are for the time being suspended from the Wehrmacht.

The army court of honor summoned by the Führer convened on August 4 and, based on the results of its investigations, submitted the following recommendations to the Führer:

The following are dismissed from the Wehrmacht:

1. Persons in custody: Field Marshal von Witzleben, General of the Signal Corps Fellgiebel, Lieutenant General von Hase, Major General Stieff, Major General von Tresckow, Colonel (G.S.) Hansen, Lieutenant Colonel (G.S.) Bernardis, Major (G.S.) Hayessen, Captain Klausung, Lieutenant Colonel (Res) Graf von der Schulenburg, Lieutenant Colonel (Res) von Hagen, Lieutenant (Res) Graf Zorck von Wartenburg.

Persons shot by sentence of a court-martial on July 20: Infantry General Olbricht, Colonel (G.S.) Graf von Stauffenberg, Colonel (G.S.) Quirnheim, First Lieutenant (Res) von Haefen.

2. The traitors who acknowledged their guilt by committing suicide: Colonel General (retired) Beck, Artillery General Wagner, Colonel (G.S.) Freytag-Loringhoven, Lieutenant Colonel Schrader.

3. The deserters: Artillery General Lindemann,²⁶⁰ Major (G.S.) Kuhn (defected to the Bolsheviks).

A recommendation for the expulsion of the former Colonel General Hoepfner is unnecessary since Hoepfner—already expelled from the Wehrmacht in the year 1942—no longer belongs to the army. The Führer has approved of these petitions. Those expelled will be surrendered to the Volksgerichtshof for

August 4, 1944

sentencing. The trial of the guilty parties will shortly be held before the Volksgerichtshof.

On this day of “triumph,” on which the army court of honor fulfilled all his requests, Hitler gathered his Reichsleiters and Gauleiters around him at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The Reichsleiters General von Epp and Major General Hierl paid homage to him on behalf of those assembled. He shook hands with everyone, using his left hand, since he still wanted to spare his right hand.²⁶¹

The following communiqué was published on Hitler’s speech before the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters:²⁶²

The Führer spoke to his top political leaders. He illuminated the background and context of July 20. In assessing this crime, it should not be forgotten that these traitors have in fact not only since 1941 but ever since the National Socialist seizure of power, continuously sabotaged the efforts and struggles of the nation.

The clique, the Führer declared, had been limited in numbers but had had significant influence. The Führer described in detail how permanent resistance by these circles was directed against all measures by the leadership. It culminated in open betrayal of the fighting troops and direct sabotage of supplies for the front. The overwhelming majority, hundreds of thousands of brave German officers, had nothing in common with this clique of criminals and turned away from it with outrage and disgust. The Führer himself felt that it was an act of Providence and a relief for him personally that this previously intangible internal resistance had finally been uncovered and the clique of criminals eliminated. Now it was a question of drawing one’s conclusions from these events. In the end, it would one day be realized that this presently very painful act may perhaps have been beneficial for the entire future of Germany.

“I do not shy away from the battle against these enemies,” the Führer declared, “we will in the end deal with them in spite of everything. I just need to know that absolute security, faithful confidence, and loyal assistance back me up. This is the prerequisite. We could not have undertaken the mobilization of all forces of our Volk, as is presently taking place, if the criminal activities of the now eliminated saboteurs had continued. By deploying the complete military and inner strength of the nation, we will overcome all difficulties.

I am grateful to Providence for sparing my life, only because I can now continue this battle. I believe that the nation needs me, that it needs a man who will under no circumstances capitulate, and who instead holds high the banner of faith and confidence, and because I believe that no other could do this better than I am doing it. Whatever blows of fortune may come, I will always stand straight as the bearer of this banner! Through the events of July 20 in particular, I have received a new confidence, the likes of which I have never before experienced in my life. We will, therefore, victoriously survive this war in the end!”

August 8, 1944

At Nuremberg, Speer expanded on this official excerpt from Hitler's speech.²⁶³ By calling on Schirach as another witness, he recalled the following passage:

Should the German Volk be overpowered in this struggle, then it will have been too weak, it will not have passed its test before history, and it will therefore be doomed.

On August 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Norwegian poet Knut Hamsun on his eighty-fifth birthday.²⁶⁴

On August 5, Hitler received Antonescu for the last time at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. No communiqué was published on this visit, a sure sign that things had not gone well. In addition to Antonescu, the Romanian deputy prime minister Mikhai Antonescu, von Ribbentrop, Keitel, Guderian, the German envoy von Killinger, and the interpreter, Envoy Schmidt, attended the talks.²⁶⁵

Hitler told Antonescu that he should not count on German help for the time being, since Army Group Center needed to be restored first. Antonescu pretended to be understanding and replied that he would therefore have to evacuate the Moldavia region and concentrate on the defense of the Carpathian range. This announcement angered Hitler, who felt this was a sign that Romania intended to withdraw from the war. He smelled treason in the air. However, had he not himself declared that the loss of the Crimea would lead to the fall of Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania?²⁶⁶ The Crimea had been lost in May. Why should a crisis in Romania come as a surprise to him in August?

Captain Baur brought Antonescu back to Bucharest. He saw how disappointed and discontented the Romanian generals looked who had come to the airport to welcome Antonescu back and heard his report on the talks at the Führer headquarters.

There was another crisis, in Finland, as well. State President Ryti had stepped down on August 2 in order to "make possible the concentration of the highest military and civilian powers in one hand in this fateful period." On August 4, the Finnish parliament elected Marshal Mannerheim as head of state. All Finns rallied to him, because they knew that he was ready to conclude peace, even though he would do so with a heavy heart. Hitler sent him a congratulatory telegram on his election,²⁶⁷ acting as though he did not realize what this meant.

On August 7 and 8, the Volksgerichtshof in Berlin put Field Marshal von Witzleben and other arrested generals on trial. Of course, they were

August 13, 1944

without exception sentenced to be hanged. Freisler presided over this “trial.” Since he knew that the trial would be recorded on film and radio, he acted like a madman, shouted the accused down, and put on a hysterical show of sympathy for Hitler.²⁶⁸

On August 10, Hitler presented Sepp Dietrich with the Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁶⁹

On August 12, Hitler founded the Oak Leaf in Gold for Loyal Service Badge, which would be awarded for fifty or forty years of public service, or service with the police or fire department, respectively.²⁷⁰

On August 13, Hitler received von Papen, who had returned from Ankara after relations had been broken off.²⁷¹ Von Papen had declined various offers to remain in Turkey as a private person, and had the courage to return to the Reich even after the events of July 20. On the other hand, he had a clean conscience with regard to Hitler. Even though some of his actions in Ankara had not been entirely in Hitler’s spirit, he had never left any doubt about his complete loyalty to the German head of state.

Hitler was well aware of this. In his eyes, von Papen was a representative of the senile German nationalist class of gentlemen who might resent National Socialism but would immediately subordinate themselves to him, if he appealed to their nationalist and anti-Bolshevik sentiments. Moreover, von Papen had been the only one to welcome his plans for war against Russia. As long as he had von Papen on his side, Hitler did not give up his hopes that the senile English, whom he considered to be cast in the same mold as von Papen and the German nationalists, would one day submit to him.

Hitler was exquisitely polite when von Papen came in. He calmly listened to his report on Ankara. He did not scold him. To von Papen’s great surprise, Hitler told him that he had counted on “Turkey’s desertion, ever since the loss of the Crimea.” He went to get a box, handed von Papen the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross, and said:

You have rendered many good services to your country, and it is certainly not your fault that your mission in Turkey has now ended. You also stood at the front there; the Russian attempt on your life proves this.²⁷²

However, when von Papen, who was pleasantly surprised, offered his good service to “put out feelers to the western Allies” by way of Spain, Hitler emphatically rejected this. He had always wanted to

August 17, 1944

compel his enemies into submission by means of force and terror, but not by making any concessions whatsoever. He declared the following:

This war must be fought to the end without compromise. When the new weapons are ready, we will show the Americans what they are in Europe for. There's no compromise possible with these people.

In reality, Hitler would have liked to make a compromise in order to save his life and parts of his power, but who on earth was still be willing to negotiate with him? Ever since 11:00 a.m. on September 3, 1939, the English were only prepared to accept his surrender. In the meantime, nearly all other nations in the world had realized that there was only one way of dealing with Hitler.

On August 15, the Allied troops under the command of General Jacob Devers landed on the southern coast of France, near St. Tropez. Following the earlier heavy naval-artillery and air bombardments, they did not encounter much German resistance. On the same day, Hitler received the chief of the Romanian general staff, Ilia Steflea, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁷³

Afterwards, he received Field Marshal Model. Following the great Russian offensive in the central sector, Model commanded Army Group Center, or what remained of it. Hitler awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds and ordered him to take over Army Group West immediately; it had previously been under Kluge's command. Hitler felt that it was better not to inform Kluge of this change in command. He feared that Kluge might seek a separate peace with the Allies.²⁷⁴ So he handed Model a handwritten letter addressed to Kluge, which contained his removal from command along with the explanation that, "following the strains of the preceding weeks," he was "healthwise no longer up to the demands of leadership."

On August 17, Kluge handed over the Army Group to Model at La Roche-Guyon. He wrote a letter to the Führer the next day.²⁷⁵ On August 18, Kluge took poison on his return drive between Metz and Verdun. That was the end of the marshal whom Hitler had once called the "*kluge Hans*."²⁷⁶

Hitler had again seen through a change in command along an agitated sector of the front and, thereby, made himself and others believe that things would go better now. However, the situation did not change. From the west and the south, Allied troops poured into France. Even though a few ports along the coast were still being held by

August 20, 1944

encircled German troops, this was hardly an obstacle to the Allies. In several radio messages, Hitler tried to rouse his commanders to further resistance.

On August 17, he wired this message to the commander of St. Malo, Colonel von Aulock:²⁷⁷

You and your occupation troops are fighting a heroic battle in St. Malo, a battle which inspires great admiration even in your enemies. I express my great appreciation to you and your brave soldiers. Every day that you manage to hold out longer is beneficial to the waging of the war.

Adolf Hitler

However, such appeals could no longer work wonders. At noon on August 18, von Aulock replied as follows:²⁷⁸

Mein Führer!

The battle for St. Malo will end today or tomorrow. Under heavy fire, one work after another collapses in ruins. If we lose, we will fight to the bitter end. May the Lord protect you! Long live the Führer!

Colonel von Aulock

Hitler sent this wire in response:

To the Commander of the St. Malo Fortress, Colonel von Aulock
I thank you and your heroic men in my own and the German Volk's name. Your name will be recorded in history for all time.

Adolf Hitler

On August 20, Hitler ordered the consolidation of the German positions in the west.²⁷⁹ Recently, he had issued a number of such orders for the construction of field fortifications. He had started with this in northern Italy,²⁸⁰ continued in East Prussia, and now it was the turn of the German territories in the west. Hitler's order began like this:

I order the development of the German west position by means of a *Volksaufgebot* (general enlistment) in the following sectors. . . .

Hitler listed the areas controlled by Gauleiters Grohé, Simon, Bürckel, and Robert Wagner, a total area reaching from the Albert-Canal via Aachen-Trier-Metz to Belfort.

The enlistment of civilian laborers and their deployment shall be the task of the Gauleiters.

On the same day, Hitler sent Horthy a congratulatory telegram on the Hungarian national holiday.²⁸¹

August 23, 1944

In addition, he tried one last time to keep Mannerheim in line. He sent Keitel to Helsinki by plane and had him present Mannerheim with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross. The communiqué read as follows:²⁸²

The Führer has awarded the commander in chief of the Finnish armed forces and marshal of Finland, Carl Gustav Baron von Mannerheim, the Oak Leaf to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. In the same manner, the Führer has awarded the chief of the general staff of the Finnish armed forces, Infantry General Acel Erich Heinrichs, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

These high distinctions were personally presented to the marshal of Finland and his chief of the general staff by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel, on his visit to the Finnish headquarters and on behalf of the Führer. The award of these medals also means a great honor for the Finnish armed forces which, under the command of their marshal, have recently parried a seven-week-long attack by the Soviets and victoriously held their own in difficult defensive combat.

Mannerheim was not impressed by Hitler's gesture. Two weeks later, he ordered the cessation of hostilities.

Recently, Hitler had had bad luck with marshals from the satellite states. On August 24, Antonescu was summoned by King Michael. Their talk was not very pleasant.²⁸³ The King demanded that Antonescu end the war by sending a telegram to the United Nations [League of Nations] and driving the Germans out of Romania. When Antonescu refused, the king had him arrested. Within a few hours, things changed completely to Hitler's disadvantage. Even though the Germans attempted to exert pressure on the Romanian troops by attacking the Bucharest airport and other undertakings, they did not succeed anywhere. The Romanian and advancing Russian troops soon took control of the situation. The German units had to surrender; sixteen German divisions no longer existed.

The battle was nearing its conclusion in France, too. It mattered little that, on August 23, Hitler had ordered the following:²⁸⁴

The defense of the Paris bridgehead is of decisive military and political significance. Its loss will tear open the entire coastal front north of the Seine and will rob us of a basis for the long-distance fight against England. In history up to now, the loss of Paris has always meant the fall of all of France.

The Führer therefore repeats his order that Paris must be defended in fortified lines in front of the city and refers in this context to the reinforcements promised to the commander in chief, west. Within the city, at the first signs of unrest, an intervention by the most extreme means must follow, for example, dynamiting blocks of houses, public execution of

August 28, 1944

ringleaders, evacuation of the involved quarter, since this is the best way of preventing its further spread.

The bridges across the Seine are to be prepared for dynamiting. Paris must not, or only as a field of ruins, fall into the hands of the enemy.

But Hitler's orders could not work wonders. On August 24, troops of the Second French Tank Division under General Leclerc entered Paris. The German military governor of Paris, General von Choltitz, surrendered and was taken prisoner on August 25.

In contrast to Rome and Florence,²⁸⁵ Hitler had not cared to declare Paris an open city and thus secure a type of honorary title for himself to go down into history. On the other hand, Hitler refrained from tormenting Paris with continued rocket fire.²⁸⁶ As usual, he preferred to harass smaller nations and fire missiles on Antwerp and all of Belgium.

On August 24, Hitler signed a decree on the "deployment of the building administration," which conferred the relevant powers on Speer.²⁸⁷

On August 25, Hitler named his personal physician, Professor Brandt, "Reichskommissar for the medical and public-health services."²⁸⁸ It was the third time that Hitler apparently felt that a special decree was necessary in order to underline the position of this man in the German public-health services.²⁸⁹ However, he decided to do without the services of this man himself and turned instead to Dr. Morell.

On August 27, Hitler received fourteen soldiers of the army and Waffen SS at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He personally handed each the Close Combat Bar in Gold.²⁹⁰ He spoke a long time about "this unique war medal, whose true significance will be appreciated only after the war."

On August 28, it was announced that Florence had been declared an open city by virtue of a Führer order and that even after the Allied occupation the German troops would continue to regard it as such.²⁹¹

On the same day, Hitler also ordered the construction of field fortifications for the north of Germany. His order for development of the Bay of Heligoland began with these words:²⁹²

1. I order for the reinforcement of the defense of the *Deutsche Bucht* (Bay of Heligoland) the following:

a) the development of the entire coast from the Danish to the Dutch border, as well as the previously undeveloped north and east Frisian islands (Program A); those islands presently under constant development will be brought up to full defense capability;

August 31, 1944

b) the exploration and preparation of measures for the short-term development of a second position, which will run from the Danish border at a distance of about ten kilometers from the coast.

A list of several “switch-line positions” which Hitler wanted to set up in Schleswig-Holstein followed. Gauleiter Kaufmann of Hamburg was supposed to be “responsible for their development.” The only problem that remained was where the necessary concrete, steel, guns, and laborers would come from.

On August 30, Hitler issued another order on the construction of fortified positions at the West Wall.²⁹³ It began with these words:

1. To bring about the preparation for defense at the West Wall, I order the following:

a) the reinforcement of the position (including the incorporated parts of the Maginot Line) through field development;

b) the field and perhaps constant development of the already explored prolongation of the West Wall to Lake Ijssel.

2. The entire development is to be undertaken by means of a Volk force, and the responsibility is to be conferred upon: [a listing followed of the involved Gauleiters, including Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart, who would be responsible insofar as the Netherlands was involved in this].

While Hitler was busy attending to defensive measures in the west, a new crisis began to emerge in Hungary. On August 30, Prime Minister Sztójay stepped down, and Colonel General Geisa Lakatos formed a new government.

On August 31, Hitler vented his anger on Marshals Kluge and Rommel and on the English at a discussion with three generals at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Among other things, he said the following:²⁹⁴

You know that Field Marshal Kluge committed suicide. There is reason for serious suspicion that, had he not committed suicide, he would have been arrested right away in any event.

Hitler then claimed that Kluge had attempted to begin negotiations with the English for surrender on August 15 and had tried

. . . to bring about a fateful turn of events by perhaps first surrendering to the English and then joining the English against Russia—a completely idiotic idea.²⁹⁵ Above all, this would have led to an almost criminal sacrifice of the German lands in the east. They assumed that you would have (to sacrifice) . . . up to the (Vistula) anyway, perhaps up to the Oder . . . up to the Elbe river.

August 31, 1944

August 15 was the worst day in my life. We owe it only to coincidence that this plan was not carried out.

That I am capable of achieving political successes is something which I believe I have sufficiently proved in my life. That I will not let such an opportunity pass me by, I need not tell anybody. But to hope at a moment of grave military defeats for a favorable political moment in order to do something is of course childish and naive.²⁹⁶ There will be such moments, if you are successful. That I (have done) everything in order to come to terms with the English, (I) have proved. Still in the year 1940, after the campaign in France, I offered my hand to the English and renounced everything.

I did not want anything from them. On September 1, 1939, (I) still made a proposal to the English, that is, I repeated a proposal that [von] Ribbentrop had already conveyed (to them in 1936): the proposal of (an) alliance by which Germany would (have been willing to recognize the British) Empire.²⁹⁷

However, there will be moments when the tensions between the Allies [the western and the eastern allies] are become so great that there will be a rupture in spite of everything. Now, you just have to wait for this moment, even if this is very difficult. It has been my task (especially since the year 1941) not to lose nerve under any circumstances.

Hitler continued in this manner for a while. That Hitler staked his hopes on the disunity of the Allies was understandable, but it could not and did not come true. Of course, the alliance between them was not the product of their love for each other, but a question of common interest. It was clearly in the common interest of west and east to destroy Hitler—and Germany.

After Hitler had stopped speaking about England for the time being, he again began to lament the disloyalty of his generals, especially Kluge:

I personally promoted him twice, I awarded him the highest distinctions, I gave him a big donative to make him settle down,²⁹⁸ I gave him a big bonus in addition to his salary as field marshal.²⁹⁹ For me, it is the most bitter and disappointing thing that ever happened.

Hitler felt exceedingly sorry for himself and was much like Napoleon in this respect, too. It was one of the “coincidental” parallels in the lives of the two conquerors that, at the end of his rule in 1815, Napoleon had borne a grudge of a similar nature against his generals whom he accused of treason.³⁰⁰ Later, reminiscing in exile on Saint Helena, he complained about them in the same way as Hitler would in 1944:

I was betrayed by Marmont whom I could have called my child, my pupil, to whom I had entrusted my destiny. I was betrayed by Murat, out of whom I had made a king when he was a mere soldier. I was betrayed by

September 1, 1944

Berthier, out of whom I had made an eagle when he was a mere goose. Berthier, Marmont—I showered them with my generosity—and what did they do?

At the end of the talk at the Wolfsschanze, Hitler again shouted the following rallying-cry:

We will fight, if necessary even at the Rhine. It makes absolutely no difference. We will wage this struggle under any circumstances until, as Frederick the Great said, one of our damned enemies gets tired of continuing to fight,³⁰¹ and until we get a peace that will secure the life of the German nation for the next fifty or (100) years.³⁰² Above all, this peace will not violate our honor a second time, as in the year 1918, because this time we could not remain (silent. At the time,) they remained silent. Fate could have followed a different course. Had (my life) been ended, then this would have meant—that (I may say)—a relief of all the worries, sleepless (nights, and a terrible) nervous disorder. It takes only (a fraction) of a second, and you are relieved of all that and you can have some quiet and eternal piece. I am grateful to Providence that I (stayed alive).

On September 1, the Customs Frontier Guard, an armed unit which had previously been subordinate to the Reich finance minister, was incorporated into Himmler's Reich central security office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA).³⁰³

The discussion of the situation on September 1,³⁰⁴ reflected the catastrophic situation everywhere: in Romania, the Balkans, France, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, at sea, and in the air, German troops were being defeated everywhere. Either they were in dire straits or in a flight-like retreat. Nevertheless, Hitler tried to convince his audience that all this actually meant that troops and artillery were being freed up. He even spoke about a new German offensive, a *Grossangriff* (large-scale attack).

The situation in Bulgaria had become untenable following the occupation of Bucharest by the Russians. The Bulgarians wanted to withdraw from the war as quickly as possible. Konstantin Muravyev formed a new government on September 2. The Bulgarians now believed that they would soon conclude peace with the western powers and be recognized as a neutral state. However, considering their earlier involvement, this was rather naive. On September 5, Russia put an end to these pipe dreams and declared war. Two days later, Bulgaria was forced to capitulate. On September 8, it declared war on Germany.

On September 2, Finland decided to accept the Russo-English terms of peace. It broke off its relations with Germany and demanded that the

September 4, 1944

German troops leave the country by September 15. Of course, Hitler refused to comply with this request. On September 15, Finland declared war on Germany. The Führer's opportunistic policy toward Finland had collapsed in spite of all his "friendliness" toward Mannerheim.

Hitler was angry and declared in a comment by the OKW on September 16 the following:³⁰⁵

When, during the night of September 2 to 3, Finland suddenly requested Germany to withdraw its troops from Finland by September 15, German divisions which had previously defended central Finland were at a distance of nearly four hundred kilometers from the ports of the Gulf of Bothnia and over six hundred kilometers from the northern Finnish-Norwegian border. The duration of the march alone, without enemy interference, would have taken twenty days to the Gulf of Bothnia and at least thirty to thirty-five days to the Norwegian border. The enemy who made this demand and the Finnish high command which accepted it knew that it could not be fulfilled. The fulfillment of this demand was further complicated by the enemy's constant attacks, which prevented the withdrawal of our units. The German army in Finland will therefore be guided in its movements and measures only by consideration for its own security against every attacker, also after September 15.

On September 2, Hitler was forced to issue a new directive for the "continuation of the war in the west." It read as follows:³⁰⁶

1. Severe exhaustion of our own forces and our inability to provide timely reinforcement in sufficient amounts make it impossible for us to define the line that must be maintained and can be maintained with certainty. We must therefore play for time as much as possible, in order to distribute and put into field new units and to build western positions and exterminate hostile forces by partial strikes.

2. I herewith order the following for conducting the struggle: [Technical details follow.]

At the same time, Hitler appointed von Rundstedt as commander in chief, west, and empowered him to "take every measure necessary" on September 7.³⁰⁷ He conferred on him "as of September 11, command over the German positions in the west, including the West Wall, with all armed forces therein."³⁰⁸

On September 4, Hitler received Oshima at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. This communiqué was published on the meeting:³⁰⁹

On Monday [September 4], the Führer received the Japanese ambassador, Oshima, for an extensive exchange of views on current questions of the two nations' common waging of the war. The discussions at the Führer's were

September 12, 1944

attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, who had already engaged in a long, warm exchange of views with the ambassador.

According to Speer's testimony after the war in Nuremberg,³¹⁰ Hitler alluded in a mysterious manner to this meeting when speaking with his entourage and acted as though important questions "that would decide the war" had been discussed there. Apparently, he wanted to improve the mood of his coworkers, who at the time indulged in the hope that the Japanese would mediate a German-Russian separate peace.

In the meantime, the population of East and West Prussia had been called up to dig tank ditches and, under the command of party leaders, had to dig entrenchments with pickax and spade.

On September 5, Colonel General Guderian sent a telegram to the Gauleiters in these areas. He informed them that the "Führer has noted with particular satisfaction the outstanding achievements of our Volksgenossen in the construction of fortified positions in the east."³¹¹

On September 9 and 10, wounded soldiers who had been exchanged with [those of] the western powers through Sweden landed at Sassnitz. The soldiers were read the following telegram, a word of greeting from Hitler:³¹²

My Comrades!

In the name of the German Volk, I warmly welcome you to the homeland. Our joy mingles with yours that you, as seriously injured German soldiers, have finally come home out of captivity. As your supreme commander, I thank you on this day for your brave deployment in the freedom fight of our Volk and for all the sacrifice which you brave men had to make.

The homeland is worthy of you. It also had to undergo terrible suffering in the fateful fight of life and death of our Volk. The attitude with which it bears this is worthy of that of the frontline soldier. It will do everything in order to alleviate your physical suffering, now that you are being uplifted emotionally. I likewise greet the returning members of the medical service and express to them my appreciation of their dutiful deployment in the care of our injured comrades.

Adolf Hitler

On September 12, Hitler ordered the construction of fortified positions for the southeast. He decreed the following:³¹³

1. I order the development of a border position in the Gaus Carinthia and Styria on German Reich territory along the following line: Tolmin (here connection with the blue line)—north of Lyublyana—along the course of the Sava to northwest of Gurkfeld—from there to the northeast until west of Varazdin.

September 12, 1944

2. The development will be carried out by a Volk force, and responsibility shall be conferred on: [a listing of the titles of Gauleiters Dr. Rainer (Graz) and Uiberreither (Klagenfurt) followed].

4

On September 16, the Allies took the harbor of Brest. The German occupying forces, under Lieutenant General of Paratroops Bernhard Ramcke, surrendered. Shortly before, Hitler had awarded the “heroic defender of Brest” the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds,³¹⁴ but such a medal was of no use against Allied bombs and shells.

On September 17, Bologne fell into the hands of the Allies. Other German “hedgehog positions,” like Lorient, St. Nazaire, La Rochelle, south Gironde, north Gironde, managed to hold out until the war was over, because the Allies felt that these towns were unimportant.

On September 17, the English carried through a large airborne operation at Arnhem in order to establish a bridgehead on the right bank of the Rhine. However, they did not manage to establish a connection quickly enough with the landing area from the south. The British operation failed at great cost of life.³¹⁵

Hitler was preoccupied with the unexpected British airborne operation during the discussion of the situation on September 17. He was so worried about it because he feared that the enemy would attempt something of the sort in East Prussia and crack down on him and his staff. He said the following:³¹⁶

We must absolutely face the possibility—we should not be careless anymore—that they will try a similar dirty trick (*Schweinerei*) here.

The thing is so dangerous that you have to realize: If some dirty trick happens—I sit here, my whole High Command sits here, the Reichsmarschall sits here, the army high command sits here, the Reichsführer SS sits here, the Reich foreign minister sits here! That is a catch that is the most worth trying for, that is clear. I would certainly risk two paratrooper divisions if, at one blow, I could get hold of the entire Russian leadership.³¹⁷



LX Hamburg on fire

Photo: Publisher's archives



LXI Starved corpses outside a bombed-out building

Photo: Publisher's archives



LXII The ravages of war

Photo: Publisher's archives

September 24, 1944

On September 18, Hitler received Pavelich at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. This communiqué was published:³¹⁸

On September 18, the Führer received the head of state of the independent state of Croatia, Dr. Ante Pavelich, at his headquarters.

The Führer had a long discussion with the Poglavnik on the common fight against the Bolsheviks and their Anglo-American helpers, and on questions regarding the security of the Croatian space. Loyal to the alliance of the Tripartite Pact, the German Wehrmacht will defend the freedom and independence of Croatia, fighting side by side with the Croatian soldiers and the Ustaša.

The discussion at the Führer's, which was attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Keitel and, on the Croatian side, by Foreign Minister Alaybegovich and General Gruich, was characterized by the spirit of the sincere and loyal friendship between the two nations.

On September 19 and 20, Hitler again concerned himself with the possibility of an "enemy advance into Reich territory" and slightly revised the decrees of July 13,³¹⁹ which dealt with the cooperation of party and Wehrmacht and the command in the theater of operations.³²⁰ It was mostly a question of the competence of the Gauleiter or rather Reich defense commissar in the theater of operations. However, no Reich defense commissar was ever appointed.³²¹

On September 20, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the regent of Thailand, Pridi Phanomyong, on the king's birthday.³²²

On the same day, Hitler extended Göring's powers as plenipotentiary for the four-year plan "until the end of the war."³²³

On September 20 and 24, Hitler signed the last laws of his life. He did not use the title "Reich Chancellor" to which he had once attached such great importance.

The law on the change of the regulations against high treason of September 20, contained this new provision:³²⁴

§ 92 b [Reich Penal Code]

Whoever violates with premeditation or by negligence a law or prohibition decreed by the Reich government will be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine.

This law and others that increased penalties should "also be applied to offenses committed before this can take effect."

On September 24, the "Law on the Modification and Supplementation of the Military Service Act" allowed soldiers the acquisition of membership in the NSDAP. The previous prohibition of political activity had already been largely undermined in 1937. At the

September 25, 1944

time, Hitler had awarded the Golden Party Badge to leading members of the Wehrmacht. This award had entailed automatic membership in the party.³²⁵

Hitler's law of September 24 read as follows:³²⁶

Article I

The Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 (RGBl. I, p. 609), will be modified and supplemented as follows:

Paragraph 26, including its heading will be amended as follows:

The Political Position of Members of the Wehrmacht

§ 26

1. Members of the Wehrmacht have the duty to be active in the spirit of the National Socialist ideology, both on duty and off duty, and support it at all times. It is one of the essential tasks of all officers, noncommissioned officers, and Wehrmacht officials to educate and lead their subordinates in the National Socialist spirit.

2. Membership in the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations will remain in force for the duration of active military service.

3. The assumption and exercise of an office in the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations requires permission by the superior. It must be granted, as long as the exercise of the office does not detrimentally affect the missions of the Wehrmacht.

4. Soldiers need the permission of their superior for the acquisition of membership in associations of all types, as well as for the formation of associations within and outside the Wehrmacht. The acquisition of membership in the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations does not require permission.

5. The right of the soldiers to vote and participate in elections will in the individual case be reserved for a separate arrangement by decree of the Führer.

Article II

1. This law will go into force as of October 1, 1944.

2. The implementing regulations will be issued by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht in concurrence with the head of the party chancellery.

On September 25, Hitler called for the "total deployment of all German human beings." He signed the decree on the formation of the German Volkssturm. Many years before, he had declared that he did not think much of a so-called "levée en masse," a general mobilization of the public.³²⁷ Apparently, now that it was a question of prolonging his rule for a few months, it was good enough for him.

In his decree, he maintained that the disastrous military situation had come about "as a result of the failure of all our European allies."

September 25, 1944

This was not a very nice thing to say about the Slovaks, for instance, who had been loyal to him ever since 1939, and Pavelich, who had only recently visited him. Up to this time, Hitler had spoken about the “failure” of only the Italians, Romanians, Finns, and Bulgarians. At this point, the Hungarians had not even withdrawn from the war.

However, if all of them had indeed failed, who had chosen them as his allies in the first place? Had he not been prepared for everything from the start?³²⁸ Moreover, according to his own words, a statesman could not simply declare in retrospect that he had not noticed something:³²⁹

There is no excuse in the eyes of history for an error; no excuse, for instance, for explaining afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously.

Hitler's decree of September 25, read as follows:³³⁰

Führer Headquarters, September 25, 1944

After a five-year-long and most difficult struggle, as a result of the failure of all our European allies, the enemy stands at a few fronts close to or at the German borders. He is exerting himself in order to smash our Reich to pieces and destroy the German Volk and its social order. His final goal is the extermination of the Germans.

As in the autumn of 1939, we alone face the front of our enemies. At the time, we succeeded within a few years in solving the major military problems by the first large-scale deployment of our German Volkskraft and in securing the existence of the Reich and Europe throughout several years. Whereas the adversary now believes he can get ready for the finishing blow, we are determined to execute the second large-scale deployment of our Volk. We must and will succeed, as in the years from 1939 to 1941, by relying solely on our own powers, not only in breaking the destructive will of our enemy, but also in forcing him back and keeping him from the Reich, until a peace is guaranteed that will secure the future of Germany, its allies, and Europe.

We oppose the total destructive will of our Jewish-international enemies with the total deployment of all German human beings (*totaler Einsatz aller deutschen Menschen*).

For the reinforcement of the active forces of our Wehrmacht and, in particular, for the waging of a merciless fight wherever the enemy seeks to step on German soil, I call for the deployment of all German men capable of bearing arms.

I order the following:

1. The German Volkssturm will be formed in the Gaus of the Greater German Reich from among all men capable of bearing arms between the ages of sixteen and sixty years. The German Volkssturm will defend the soil of the homeland with all weapons and means suitable.

September 27, 1944

2. The activation and leadership of the German Volkssturm shall be taken over by the Gauleiters in their Gaus. By so doing, they shall make use of the most capable organizers and leaders of the time-proven institutions of the party, SA, SS, NSKK, and Hitler Youth.

3. I appoint the SA Chief of Staff Schepmann as inspector for rifle training and the corps leader of the NSKK as inspector for motorized training of the Volkssturm.

4. Members of the German Volkssturm will be regarded as soldiers according to the Military Service Act for the duration of their deployment.

5. Membership in extraprofessional organizations will not be affected hereby. Service with the German Volkssturm shall have priority over service with any other organization.

6. The Reichsführer SS, as the commander of the replacement army, will be responsible for the military organization, training, armament, and equipment of the German Volkssturm.

7. The deployment in battle of the German Volkssturm will be ordered, in accordance with my directives, by the Reichsführer SS as commander of the replacement army.

8. The military regulations will be issued by the commander of the replacement army, Reichsführer SS Himmler, the political and organizational regulations by Reichsleiter Bormann, who acts on my behalf.

9. The National Socialist Party will, before the German Volk, fulfill its greatest duty of honor by deploying its organizations in the front lines, as the bearers of the major burden in this battle.

Adolf Hitler

On September 27, a last exchange of telegrams took place on the anniversary of the Tripartite Pact. Hitler's telegrams read as follows:³³¹

To Mussolini:

Duce!

On the fourth anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, I send you my heartfelt greetings. This historic day gives me a new occasion to reaffirm my unshakable confidence in the final victory over our enemies. Only our victory can and will stand at the end of this fateful struggle. It will give our nations a happy and free future.

Adolf Hitler

To the Japanese Emperor:

On the fourth anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, I ask Your Majesty to accept my own and the German Volk's heartfelt greetings and best wishes. In these fateful days, I know that Your Majesty will agree with me in the calm and unerring confidence that our nations, in spite of temporary setbacks, will in the end emerge honorable and victorious from this struggle against our enemies.

Adolf Hitler

September 29, 1944

To the Japanese prime minister Koiso:³³²

The fourth anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact sees our nations engaged in difficult defensive battle against the common enemies. In the firm conviction that the German and Japanese nations will continue this heroic struggle in indissoluble brotherhood in arms until its victorious end, I send Your Excellency my sincere greetings.

Adolf Hitler

On September 29, the public was informed that Gauleiter Josef Bürckel had died allegedly “from complications of pneumonia” in Neustadt (Weinstrasse). Therefore, the Führer had appointed the former departmental head of the party chancellery, Willi Stöhr, as deputy Gauleiter and placed him in charge of the conduct of affairs of the Gau Westmark.³³³

In the meantime, the Allies had occupied Belgium, reached the German border in the Eifel Mountains north of Trier, and shortly afterwards entered the old German imperial city of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). In the east, the Russians had forced their way up close to the East Prussian border and entered the Praga suburb of Warsaw on the eastern bank of the Vistula. The Poles in Warsaw had rebelled under the leadership of General Bor-Komorovski. The Polish guerillas tried to join up with the Russians. After weeks of fighting, they were forced to surrender to the German SS and police troops on October 2. The Russians carried out their campaign plans, unaffected by the events in Warsaw.

From October on, a lull in the fighting set in both in the east and the west. The Allies stopped short at the eastern and western borders of the Reich. In the eyes of the German generals, this was a terrible mistake.³³⁴ According to the opinions expressed in their memoirs, the Allies should have pushed through to Berlin before the winter and ended the war. However, the Allies were apparently not as taken with the idea of advances ad infinitum, which the German Wehrmacht had practiced in the years 1941 and 1942. For the time being, they were content to stop, bring up supplies, and reorganize their units.

For the rest, it was their prerogative to wage this war as they saw fit. In any event, Churchill felt that it was better to let the Germans “stew in their own juice for a bit,” as he had proposed in 1943 with regard to the Italians.³³⁵ By the spring of 1945, the Germans would be all the more weary and inflict less terrible losses on the Allies. Success proved him right!

October 8, 1944

On October 5, the English landed in Greece. They entered Athens on October 12.

On October 6, a state ceremony took place at the Reich Tannenberg Monument in honor of Hitler's chief adjutant Schmudt, who had died of the injuries sustained on July 20. Hitler promoted him to infantry general and had Field Marshal Busch lay a wreath on his coffin.³³⁶

On October 8, a so-called "day of premilitary training" for the Hitler Youth took place throughout the Reich. Axmann, the leader of the Reich Youth, reported in a telegram to Hitler that, supposedly, seventy percent of those born in 1928 had signed up as "war volunteers." Hitler expressed his thanks in the following telegram:³³⁷

My Hitler Youth!

With pride and joy I have noted your enlistment as war volunteers of the 1928 age-group. In this hour in which the Reich is threatened by our enemies who are filled with hatred, you set a shining example of fighting spirit and fanatical readiness for action and sacrifice.

The youth of our National Socialist movement fulfilled at the front and in the homeland what the nation expected of it. In an exemplary fashion, your war volunteers in the divisions named Hitler Youth and Grossdeutschland, in the Volk grenadier divisions, and as individual fighters in all branches of the Wehrmacht have by action demonstrated their loyalty, hardness, and unshakable will to win. Today, the realization of the necessity of our fight fills the entire German Volk, above all its youth. We know our enemies' merciless plans of annihilation. For this reason, we will all the more fanatically wage this war for a Reich in which you will one day be able to work and live in self-respect. However, as young National Socialist fighters, you have to outdo our entire Volk in steadfastness, dogged perseverance, and unbending hardness.

Through the victory, the reward for the sacrifice of our heroic young generation will be the proud and free future of our Volk and the National Socialist Reich.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, the new "West Wall operation" had got underway in the west.³³⁸ While in 1938 and 1939, regular construction workers had been deployed there as conscript laborers within the framework of the Todt organization, now the civilian population in this area was called on to dig the antitank ditches. Not only the inhabitants of the border areas were recruited for this purpose, but also citizens of the neighboring Gaus in Hesse, Rhineland, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria. From a military point of view, this operation—for which men and boys from fourteen to sixty years of age were conscripted—was completely

October 10, 1944

useless.³³⁹ It served primarily propaganda purposes and was supposed to demonstrate to the enemy the “determined will to resist” of the German people.

In order to make some type of contribution to the work on the West Wall himself, Hitler ordered the awarding of the German Bulwark Badge of Honor to be resumed.³⁴⁰ His decree read as follows:³⁴¹

Führer Headquarters, October 10, 1944

1. In recognition of the services in the construction of the frontier fortifications at the climax of the struggle for existence of the German Volk, I order the resumption of the award of the German Bulwark Badge of Honor.

2. The statutes of the German Bulwark Badge of Honor of August 2, 1939 (RGBl. I, p. 1366) Articles I, II, and V will be applied. Furthermore, the necessary regulations for the conferral of the award and rules of procedure will be issued by the state minister and chief of the presidential chancellery in agreement with the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On October 10, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Wang Ching-wei on the Chinese national holiday. On October 13, Tiso likewise received a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.³⁴²

In the meantime, Hitler had arrived at the conclusion that it was finally high time to get rid of Rommel. For years, he had restrained himself and put up with this man whom he disliked because of his popularity. At El Alamein in November 1942, Rommel had disregarded his order to win or die.³⁴³

In justifying his behavior, Rommel had dared to refer to the English superiority.³⁴⁴ He had been in favor of giving up Tunis in 1943. At Margival on June 17, 1944, he had again spoken about the superiority of the Allies and had dared to put his views in writing on July 15.³⁴⁵ And, to top it all off, it had become obvious that the resistance movement had planned to appoint Rommel, following Hitler's death, as commander in chief of the armed forces.

Now it was inevitable that Rommel would have to die. However, it would be preferable if this occurred in an inconspicuous manner so that neither the Wehrmacht nor the German public would think about it too much.

As with Röhm, Rommel would be granted an opportunity to commit suicide. For this purpose, Hitler sent his new chief adjutant General Burgdorf and Lieutenant General Ernst Maisel to Rommel's

October 15, 1944

home in Herrlingen near Ulm.³⁴⁶ As with nearly all his coups, Hitler chose a weekend for his move: Saturday, October 14.

For Burgdorf, who had succeeded Schmudt on October 12, this was the first mission in which he was supposed to win his spurs. Both generals showed up at Rommel's home at noon. Burgdorf informed him that Hitler regarded him as a member of the generals' conspiracy and his life as over. In view of his earlier meritorious services, the Führer offered him the opportunity to kill himself.

It was exactly as with Röhm, when the SS Führers Eicke and Lippert came into his cell and placed a pistol on the table.³⁴⁷ Röhm refused and had to be killed by Hitler's henchmen. However, he did not have a family to take care of. In Rommel's case, there was Hitler's promise of a state funeral and a nice pension for his family, if he behaved and took care of matters himself. Should he refuse, he would be brought before the Volksgerichtshof. Of course, this would entail highly unpleasant consequences for his family.

Rommel hesitated at first and said that he was not yet able to handle a pistol with accuracy, because of his recent accident. But Burgdorf had foreseen this and brought poison along. So Rommel decided to accept the Führer's proposal and not to force the two generals to kill him. After all, this was undoubtedly their mission, as it had been that of the SS men with Röhm. Hitler would never have risked a trial of the popular Desert Fox before the Volksgerichtshof, and Rommel's family would have received a pension in any event. Rommel was apparently incapable of seeing through Hitler's tactics. He said goodbye to his wife and son and drove away with the two generals. A quarter of an hour later, Rommel was pronounced dead on arrival at the Wagner-Schale Hospital in Ulm as the result of a "brain embolism." In reality, he had taken poison.

The public was informed of this as follows:³⁴⁸

Field Marshal Rommel has died as a result of the serious head injuries that he sustained in an automobile accident while in command of an army group in the west. The Führer has ordered a state funeral.

On October 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on his birthday.³⁴⁹

On the same day, he committed another act of violence. In Hungary, Horthy was considering putting an end to a hopeless situation, following the example of Romania and Bulgaria, and seeking

October 15, 1944

a truce with the Soviets. Speed was imperative, and so Hitler resorted to gangster methods.³⁵⁰ On Hitler's orders, Skorzeny, who had earlier liberated Mussolini, kidnapped Horthy's son Nikolaus shortly after 10:00 a.m. on October 15. He bundled him off into an airplane, with his hands and feet tied. At 2:00 p.m., Horthy announced on the air in Hungary that relations with Germany had been broken off and that armistice negotiations were beginning.³⁵¹ After the war, Horthy made this statement on the events in his testimony at Nuremberg:³⁵²

After his son had been lured into a trap, arrested, beaten, and brought by plane to Vienna, dripping with blood and with a sack over his head, and from there on to the concentration camp Mauthausen, he, Horthy, had gone to see the German envoy Veesenmeyer. The envoy had explained to him that his son had allegedly sought contact with the Allies and had to bear the consequences of this. Horthy had told Veesenmeyer that he would request an armistice from the Soviet Union. Veesenmeyer had then brought him to his headquarters and informed him that he would from there on be placed under "Hitler's protection." He and his family were brought to Weilheim in Upper Bavaria, where Veesenmeyer forced him to sign a letter of resignation by threatening him with the death of his son.

The following public announcement informed the German people about Hitler's latest coup:³⁵³

On Sunday [October 15], an official statement in the name of Regent von Horthy was disseminated on the air. It contained untruthful claims regarding the German-Hungarian relations and brotherhood in arms, defeatist appeals to the Hungarian army, and ingratiating of Hungary's enemies. The background to this is not entirely clear. Regent von Horthy declared this statement null and void. He further dismissed from office the previous Lakatos government and charged the leader of the *Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung* (Arrow Cross Movement) Szalasi with the formation of a new government.³⁵⁴ He could not help facing the grave fact that this event has revealed a creeping crisis in the previous regime. In the interest of a clarification of the situation and a concentration of all national forces in the total deployment of Hungary in this fateful struggle, Regent von Horthy decided to place the leadership of the state in younger and more determined hands.

Horthy's letter of resignation read as follows:³⁵⁵

To the Presidents of both Houses [of Hungary]!

I herewith declare that, in this critical hour in Hungarian history and in the interest of the preservation of the conditions for a successful conduct of the war, the inner unity, and solidarity of the nation, I have decided to resign from the office of regent and renounce all legal rights connected with it. I have charged Dr. Szalasi with the formation of a new government of national unity.

October 18, 1944

Nikolaus von Horthy

Only two-and-a-half months later, Hitler would have forgotten that these official statements made it appear as though Horthy had nothing to do with this “betrayal.” In his New Year’s proclamation for 1945, he openly spoke about the “disgraceful behavior of the former Hungarian regent.”³⁵⁶

On October 18, the day on which Rommel was buried, Hitler issued this order of the day:³⁵⁷

On October 14, 1944, Field Marshal Rommel died as a result of the serious injuries that he sustained as commander in chief of an army group in the west in an automobile accident during a drive along the front. One of our best army commanders has passed away. In the present fateful struggle of the German Volk, his name has become a synonym for outstanding bravery and fearless daredevilry. The two-year-long heroic fight of the German Africa Corps against a power many times superior, under his nimble-minded and imaginative leadership, received outward recognition in the award of the Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds in addition to the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross, as the first soldier in the army.

As commander of an army group, until his serious injury, he again rendered decisive services to the reinforcement of our defenses in the west. In proud mourning, the army lowers the Reich war flag before this great soldier. His name will go down in the history of the German Volk.

Adolf Hitler

These lies made it once more clear what Hitler’s statements were worth in reality. He had composed many such “inspiring” obituary notes and orations, many of which covered a murder. In Rommel’s case, the true circumstances became known over time, but in many other cases, the truth will probably never be known.

In Hitler’s stead, von Rundstedt attended the state ceremony for Rommel in Ulm.³⁵⁸ In his eulogy, the field marshal said that Rommel’s “heart belonged to the Führer.” Moreover, he declared: “My dear Rommel, our Führer and supreme commander conveys his gratitude and greetings to you through me.” Gratitude—what for? The execution of an ordered suicide?

On the evening of October 18, the anniversary of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig,³⁵⁹ Hitler had his decree of September 25 on the formation of the German Volkssturm read on the air. Afterwards, Himmler gave a speech in his capacity as commander of the replacement army and the Volkssturm.

October 27, 1944

On October 21, Szalasi sent a telegram of devotion to Hitler, whose reply read as follows:³⁶⁰

I sincerely thank Your Excellency for the telegram of October 21 in which you, as the responsible prime minister, informed me of the takeover of the Hungarian state leadership. At the same time, you expressed [your promise] that, in its unshakable belief in the ideals of a new and just Europe and in consideration of the traditional German-Romanian brotherhood in arms, the Hungarian nation will deploy all its forces on the side of the Greater German Reich against the common enemy.

Please note, Mr. Prime Minister, that the German Reich will also never abandon Hungary. I am convinced that we will in the end emerge victorious from this fateful struggle, despite all temporary setbacks, which are common to all historic struggles on this scale. I convey to you my warmest greetings on the takeover of this office of great responsibility and tie to this my best wishes for you and the Hungarian people.

Adolf Hitler

After Hitler had successfully set up the puppet government under Szalasi, he began to establish a similar one for France. However, it was a government without a country.

Before the Allies conquered the rest of France, Hitler had managed to have Marshal Pétain, Laval, and a number of other collaborators brought to Sigmaringen.³⁶¹ Jacques Doriot, an extreme right-wing politician and former Communist, was slated to become the new “prime minister” of Hitler’s “French government.”³⁶² How to fill the various ministerial posts was the topic of discussion at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a whole week.

When the Frenchmen had finally reached an agreement among themselves with much effort, Hitler received the new “French government” led by Doriot. The envoy Schmidt recalled that Hitler gave them “his patronizing blessings, after he had completely hoodwinked them on Calais and Dunkirk.”

In the meantime, the Russians under Marshal Malinowski had penetrated eastern Slovakia and established contact with the insurgent Slovaks and Czechs. Four German divisions launched a counterattack. On October 27, they reconquered Banská Bystrica. Hitler and Tiso exchanged telegrams on this occasion. Hitler’s telegram read as follows:³⁶³

I thank Your Excellency for your telegram of October 27, in which you expressed your joy at the successful combat of the German and Slovak troops against the Czech and Bolshevik gangs that have penetrated Slovak state

October 28, 1944

territory. The greater the danger appears to be, the more determined and merciless our resistance against the common enemies will be. Despite the temporary setbacks we have suffered, I do not doubt for one moment that the victory will go to the side of justice and, therefore, to our side.

Adolf Hitler

On October 28, Hitler exchanged telegrams with his friend Mussolini on the twenty-second anniversary of the march on Rome.³⁶⁴ In his telegram, he expressed “the unshakable belief that the National Socialist and the Fascist revolutions will overcome the common enemies in the fight against the plutocratic, Jewish, and Bolshevik systems, and will gain the final victory.”

On the same day, Hitler received Colonel General Blaskowitz, who had led the Nineteenth German Army in southern France and had been forced to retreat to Alsace. Hitler personally presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.³⁶⁵

On November 1, Hitler awarded Reich postal minister Ohnesorge the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords, “in recognition of his special services to the conduct of the war.” The president of the Research Institute of the German Reich Postal Service, Heinrich Gerwitz, received the same distinction.³⁶⁶

In the course of the discussion of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on November 6,³⁶⁷ Hitler also dealt with the situation in Finland. He was worried about the retreat to Norway of the German troops previously stationed there since the Germans were being pursued by the Finns. In this context, Hitler also spoke about the German battleship *Tirpitz*,³⁶⁸ as though help could be expected from it.

On the other hand, Hitler was thinking about whether or not he could win a few Finns over to help with the defense of the Reich. He said:

One would indeed have to assemble a Finnish freedom-fighter corps over here and have it issue an appeal; I am not saying that we do it, but that they do it themselves.

Hitler of all people had to say this. For years, he had used the Finns for his own egotistical ends. Now that he was in dire straits himself, he hoped that at least some of them would help him.

But Hitler had run out of luck with his con games. This bothered him quite a lot. He was most angry about the “impudence of Mr. Franco,”³⁶⁹ who told an agent of the United Press in an interview on

November 12, 1944

November 4, that Spain had never been allied to the Axis powers in any manner whatsoever.³⁷⁰ However, Hitler did not let this show and kept on wiring Franco diplomatic greetings.³⁷¹

It would soon be November 8, and normally high time for Hitler to prepare for his annual November vacation at the Berghof. As mentioned before, he had always used the commemoration of the Munich Putsch of 1923 as an excuse for taking this vacation. However, since the last anniversary celebration in 1943, the overall situation had deteriorated so rapidly that Hitler no longer dared to speak publicly.

This year, he decided to cancel the event in Munich. In its place, appeals for the Volkssturm were scheduled to take place throughout the Reich on November 15, the following Sunday, and Heinrich Himmler was supposed to read a “public announcement by the Führer” on the air. In order for the German Volk to enjoy the day of commemoration of November 8 and 9 and gather fresh hope, Hitler made public on this day the deployment of the V-2 rockets, which had actually begun in September. The OKW report of November 8, stated the following:

Now that since June 15 the Greater London area has been under fire from the V-1 with only brief interruptions and changing intensity, this bombardment has for a few weeks been reinforced by the deployment of a far more effective explosive device, the V-2.

Hitler did not mention for the time being that this “V-2 explosive device” had also been fired at Antwerp and all [the rest] of Belgium. Furthermore, he had shot his wad with the V-2 rocket. He did not have any other “wonder weapons,” even though the German public was supposed to think so until the end.

On November 11, Hitler sent telegrams of condolence on the death of the National Chinese state president Wang Ching-wei to his widow and to Vice President Chen Kiung-po.³⁷²

Hitler’s proclamation on November 9, or rather 12, was read by Himmler at a rally at the circus building at the Marsfeld in Munich. It contained little new. In the beginning, Hitler claimed that “work” prevented him from leaving his headquarters “even for a few days.” However, had he truly wished to do so, it would have been possible. The military situation in East Prussia even made leaving the Wolfsschanze headquarters seem particularly opportune at this time. In fact, Hitler transferred his headquarters to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin only a few days later.

November 12, 1944

Hitler's proclamation was full of clumsy attempts to justify himself and of accusations of the alleged "traitors" whom he blamed for everything. Since 1942, he had suffered "betrayal after betrayal." Hitler apparently did not realize that he was confessing either faults or incompetence by saying so. He, the omniscient Führer, who "had provided for every eventuality from the start,"³⁷³ was now hiding behind his allies and coworkers, and claimed to have become the victim of "betrayal after betrayal."³⁷⁴ The proclamation read as follows:³⁷⁵

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

The requirements for waging total war have compelled me to postpone the commemoration from November 9 to the next available Sunday. Likewise, work at the headquarters does not allow me to leave it even for a few days at this time. Besides, I regard it less as my task today to give speeches than to prepare and implement those measures that are necessary to force our way through this fight. After all, as in the time of crisis in the year 1923, I am today moved by only one dominating thought: now really to risk everything for the necessary success! And just as the dead comrades were rightly told ten years later that the victory was theirs in the end, so the victory must and will belong in the end to the fighting front and the no less heroically fighting homeland in the great struggle of to be or not to be.

In the past, I repeatedly pointed out that it is necessary for a nation to appreciate and honor its great men. Especially in grave times, a despairing nation can gather courage and strength for the present from its behavior in the past. How much more does this apply to a nation that behaves as boundlessly bravely as the German one! It will be able to learn the only correct lesson for the present from the struggle of its great men, namely, that Providence in the end helps only him who does not despair and takes up the struggle against the adversities of the time and, therefore, in the end decides his own destiny. Insofar as the Almighty opened our eyes in order to grant us insight into the laws of His rule, in accordance with the limited capabilities of us human beings, we recognize the incorruptible justice which gives life as a final reward only to those who are willing and ready to give a life for a life. Whether man agrees to or rejects this harsh law makes absolutely no difference. Man cannot change it; whoever tries to withdraw from this struggle for life does not erase the law but only the basis of his own existence.

As the National Socialist movement began its struggle to win over the German human beings, every insightful person realized the impending internal collapse of the Volk and nation. The inevitable consequence of this was an increasing threat to our national existence, a slow decline in our birthrates, together with a slow national death many times the number of the dead of the World War. After all, this corresponded to the objective of our enemies. By economic strangulation of the Reich, they intended to destroy the basis for the material existence of the German nation. Thereby, they hoped to realize Clemenceau's demand for the reduction of the German Volk by twenty million

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people.³⁷⁶ The struggle of the years 1914 through 1918 cost two million people their lives, but there were twenty million that had to be taken out of our Volk according to the wishes of the democratic benefactors of mankind. Today, this demand has gone up to forty million. However, since it is not up to people themselves to stop backward movements in the life of a nation whenever there is a need for it, nobody could say when this process of shrinking the substance of our Volk would come to an end. In the same matter, another natural realization forces itself on us: the world does not know any empty spaces! Nations which are numerically or biologically too weak and no longer able satisfactorily to fill their Lebensraum will in the most favorable scenario be put on a reservation that corresponds to their value and size. Other life will flow into the now empty spaces. In accordance with Providence's law, other nations—and, regrettably, often primitive races—will then take up the fight for existence in an area that an aging nation has lost due to cowardice and weakness, that is, unfitness for life. So, in the year 1919, we faced the realization that only a reform of our Volk from head to foot would in the long run enable it to resume successfully this struggle for existence. Only a complete turning away from the phraseology of the democratic corruption of nations and the Bolshevik destruction of nations could return to our Volk its natural vitality and thus secure the conditions for a successful defense of life in the future.

According to this realization, the National Socialist movement entered the fight. Confronted with these great objectives, the proletarian as well as the bourgeois state of classes had to pale in insignificance. What still appears as the ideal to the existing classes had, in the eyes of the young movement, already proven to be insanity, a deadly poison for our Volk. The intention to erect, for the first time in our history, a Volksstaat encompassing all Germans could be realized only by the mobilization of the entire strength of the nation. By so doing, the synthesis between nationalist and socialist ideas was best able to produce that strength necessary as a prerequisite for such a fight. The proclamation of the young nationalist and socialist Volksstaat immediately elicited the hatred of all those opponents at home and abroad who had represented the earlier system of Germany's fragmentation and impotence: the parties, small parties, groups, ranks, professions, organizations, classes, and finally creeds as the main beneficiaries of the inner-German divisions, and abroad, the democratic-Marxist world hostile to us as the main party interested in Germany's impotence. The hatred of this conspiracy of our enemies at home and abroad has since then loyally followed the movement throughout the years of fighting, before and after the seizure of power. It has persecuted us with the refinement and brutality of which that system was capable at the time. Since the march on the Feldherrnhalle, thousands of murdered National Socialists³⁷⁷ and tens of thousands of wounded have become the victims of this only true aggression.

Since the day of the seizure of power, the old enemies all the more refused to change. Instead, their hatred increased. At the most, they adapted their methods to the new situation. As the ultimate inspiring and driving force, Jewry has not allowed any opportunity to pass since the year 1933, as at the

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time of the struggle for power, in order to express its satanic will to persecute and destroy this new concept of a state as such and its young state. It regarded them as the first dawn of a general realization of its destructive work against the nations and as an eminent danger. Perhaps times have changed, but the essence of the fight forced on us has remained the same. What has remained is, first, our own objective: the preservation of our Volk and the securing of its future by all means; and, second, the objective of our enemies: the annihilation of our Volk, its extermination, and the ending of its existence.

That this was not nor is it now a slogan of National Socialist propaganda was proved by the fact of Germany's decline at home and, today, is proved by the proclamations of our enemies. No National Socialist propaganda minister could put the objectives of our enemies more plainly than the Jewish press has done for decades and does so in particular today. Beyond this, the enemy statesmen above all do this publicly through their ministers. The objective of our enemies has likewise remained the same. Promoted by the democracies, Bolshevism at one time tried to destroy our movement by terror at home. Supported by the democracies, the Soviet Union strives to destroy the Reich and exterminate our Volk. That the bourgeois world, which at the time consciously or unconsciously acted as the accomplice of Bolshevism at home, was struck with blindness by God and headed for its own downfall does not change its behavior. The fact that today's democracies would be dead with the victory of Bolshevism, which would smash the democratic states with all their ideas against a wall, does not change the reality of their present procedure. You can explain the incomprehensible absurdity of their actions at the moment you realize that the Jew is always behind the stupidity and weakness of man, his lack of character on the one hand, and his deficiencies on the other. The Jew is the wire-puller in the democracies, as well as the creator and driving force of the Bolshevik international beast of the world (*Weltbestie*).

Even before National Socialism, many at home already had an idea of this danger. However, an effective fight against it only began after this anemic insight became a confession of flesh and blood, which found an organization of combat strength in the National Socialist Party. An understanding of the necessity of rescuing Europe from the Bolshevik monster today also exists on the part of numerous foreign statesmen, parliamentarians, party politicians, and economists. This understanding will only lead to a practical result if a strong European power manages [to succeed], beyond these theoretical hopes, in successfully organizing and fighting through this common struggle of life and death of all. Only the National Socialist German Reich can and will do this. Almost always, Europe consisted of a multitude of competing nations and states. In spite of this, Europe most of the time meant just one state or a community of related nations. There was certainly a great advantage in the eternal conflict among the European nations. Like any competition, it challenged the fitness and striking power of the individual nations. However, in times of fateful struggle of life and death for all, there was the great danger of a dissipation of the forces of this continent confronted with the impending attack of the Central Asian east, this eternally latent danger to Europe. In long

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periods of European history, the thesis of the European balance of power was all too often regarded by the obtuse west as a licence for allying itself with the impending danger, contrary to the commandment of European solidarity, in order more easily to strangle one unpleasant competitor or another. For centuries, the old Reich was forced to wage its fight against Mongols and Turks alone, or with a few allies, in order to spare Europe a fate whose consequences would have been as unthinkable as realizing a Bolshevization would be today.

Even though this struggle in the past centuries was accompanied by many setbacks and demanded the greatest sacrifices of our Volk, it led to success in the end. It alone made possible the development and existence, as well as the prosperity, of the European family of nations. Besides, in confrontations of world-historical impact, it is not likely that the outcome of the fight should be decided in months or years, but rather over long periods, with perseverance. In these periods, divine Providence has men line up to try them for what they are worth. It thereby decides whether they deserve life or death. That our National Socialist state will today pass this historic trial is already guaranteed by the stand of our movement up to now. Which bourgeois party would have been able to survive the collapse of November 9, 1923? Which party would have been capable, following such a complete collapse, of reaching a total victory by an unprecedentedly hard fight? Even though this fight may today appear to the superficial observer to have been minimal compared with the present events, this only reveals his failure to understand decisive values. After all, the struggle for the movement at the time was just as much a fight for Germany as the fight of the present Reich is today. It was a fight for our Volk and its future, which had first to be decided at home before it could face our foreign enemies' will to exterminate us. How hopeless the fight of the party appeared to our adversaries was revealed by their statements that, following November 9, 1923, National Socialism could be regarded as dead and, herewith, the danger for the enemies of our Volk as eliminated. In spite of this, only a few years later, this party, which was thought to have been eliminated at the time, stood in the midst of the decisive struggle for power. For nearly a decade, it waged this fight by the reckless deployment of numerous men and women, suffered only passing setbacks, and brought it to a victorious conclusion in the end. During this time, the movement developed its mental attitude. It has proved that it is today capable of leading the nation and having the Reich lead Europe. And just as we witnessed at the time that the whole world of the bourgeois democratic party, corrupted by its compromises and cowardly renunciations, slowly began to fall apart on its own, and then finally to die, we today observe the same drama on a large scale.

Nations and, above all, their statesmen, generals, and soldiers always find it easy to tolerate days of happiness and visible successes. What is remarkable about the great men of world history, as well as nations destined for great things, is their steadfastness in days of trouble, their confidence at times when their situation appears hopeless, their defiance and courage when they suffer setbacks. As National Socialists, we were always happy about the short or long periods of prosecution in our fight, because they rid the party of all that light

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ballast: fellow travelers who surely would have boasted the loudest on the day of victory. Likewise, in this mightiest struggle of nations of all time, we see those elements desert us that are cowardly and unfit for life. That monarchs lose their courage, in complete ignorance of their position, which today can only be regarded as prehistoric, and that they thereby become traitors is the result of their mental and moral incapacity produced by centuries of inbreeding. At such times, nations need leaders different from these dynasties that have become ill and morbid. That even so-called statesmen and generals are deluded by the view that such a confrontation of life and death, and its impact on world history, can be decided in their favor by cowardly capitulation likewise only proves the experience of the ages that not too many great men live at the same time. Wherever such a capitulation took place, or was considered, or may be considered today, the result will not be a cheap slipping away from this crisis with its impact on world history, but the inevitable and certain extermination of the nations in question and the annihilation of its leading men.

After all, a first consequence of this will be Bolshevik chaos and civil war in the interior of these states. Second, there will be an extradition of the so-called war criminals, in other words, first the most valuable men, then endless columns of men who will set out for the Siberian tundra to fade away, all a result of the weakness of the leaders of their states. Even though from the beginning the consequences of these betrayals have, from a military point of view, been very grave for Germany as the bearer of the main burden in this war, they have not succeeded, neither in unbending the structure of the Reich nor in eliminating its spirit of resistance. On the contrary, the nation hardened in its willingness to fight and became all the more fanatical.

We are happy that in a number of the nations which have shown signs of decay a number of elements of resistance could be found: in Italy, they gather around the creator of the new state, the Duce Benito Mussolini; in Hungary, around Szalasi; in Slovakia, around the leadership of state president Tiso; in Croatia, around the Poglavnik Ante Pavelich. All these men are the leaders of young nations.

We know that committees and governments were likewise formed by other nations that have decided not to recognize the capitulation and not to accept the extermination of nations simply because a few spineless weaklings failed their honor and sense of duty, or because some blockheads allowed themselves to be deluded by opportunities in which they themselves no longer believe today. From the first day, our greatest ally, Japan, recognized this fight for what it is: a decisive confrontation of life and death. From this day on, it waged it with the bravery of a true nation of heroes.

My party comrades! Volksgenossen! Since the breakthrough of the Russians at the Romanian Don front in November 1942, since the ensuing complete disintegration of the Italian and Hungarian units with all its terrible consequences for our waging of the war, betrayal after betrayal hit our Volk hard. In spite of this, the hopes of our enemies were not realized. Again and again, we managed to cushion our fronts and halt the enemies. Only one hope

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remained for them: the stab in the back. As always when they are otherwise unable to succeed against Germany, they try to bring about a decision by stabbing us in the back from the inside. Spineless creatures, a mixture of feudal arrogance, bourgeois deficiency, and former parliamentary corruption came together—in the hope that they would immediately receive a reward for this act of perjury (*Meineidstat*)—in order to cut the German resistance off at its root. They were right in one respect: as long as I live, Germany will not submit to the fate of the European states swept away by Bolshevism; as long as I have not breathed my last breath, my body and soul will serve only one goal: to make my Volk strong in the defense, for the attack on the deadly danger threatening it.

While wars used to be fought out of dynastic or economic interests, the war we are fighting today is a fight for the preservation of our Volk itself. Therefore, all the sacrifices in this war will lead, as a logical consequence, to the strengthening of the German Volksstaat. If some outdated individuals are offended by this, I cannot help them. The Volksstaat will pass over them and resume its agenda. If individual subjects of outdated parties, classes, or other splinters in our Volk think that the time has come for their resurrection, they will face their total extermination at exactly this moment. The day after the seizure of power, National Socialism, which was the victim of bloody persecution before, treated its political opponents not only in a conciliatory manner, but generously. Countless men who once persecuted me received pensions from me in this state, or were appointed to new and higher offices: the justice minister of a land where I spent thirteen months locked up in a fortress was nonetheless appointed German Reich minister of justice by me.³⁷⁸ Prussian ministers and Reich ministers who earlier were our cruelest persecutors received from me high pensions of charity although I was not obliged to do so. I felt that it was beneath me to subject Social Democrats to hardship, just because they had opposed me as ministers. Judges who had sentenced us were not hindered in their careers because of this and often were even promoted. Only those who threw down the gauntlet to the new state in word and deed were treated by it according to the law. Through the manner in which I took over power, I have moreover made it easy for every German, especially every state official and officer, to do his duty without throwing them into an inner conflict. For over a year and a half, the departed Reich president was my superior and was accordingly treated by me with admiration and great respect. Whoever now believes that he can throw others into inner conflicts, without ever having been forced into one by me, should know that this means his end is dead certain. As long as these people only persecuted me, I was able to magnanimously ignore and forget about this persecution.³⁷⁹ Today, however, whoever raises the sword or bomb against Germany will be ruthlessly and mercilessly annihilated. A few hours sufficed in order to suffocate the attempted putsch of July 20. It took only a few months to round up and completely eliminate this coterie of dishonorable Catilinian³⁸⁰ characters.

Just as I took the occasion to cleanse the movement in the year 1934, after the revolt of a small group within,³⁸¹ this new revolt likewise started a thorough

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overhaul of the entire state apparatus. The time for compromises and reservations is over for good. These days the Reich war flag becomes the regimental flag of the German Wehrmacht, as a symbol of the National Socialist idea of revolution and state. The German salute is now in use in the Wehrmacht. The Volk grenadier division and the German youth will help the National Socialist world of thought achieve a completely victorious breakthrough. What most profoundly moved and rejoiced me after the events of July 20 was the realization that the army, the navy, and the Luftwaffe as a whole—the Waffen SS need not be considered here—had already adopted the National Socialist spirit, even though this was regrettably not outwardly visible before, so that hardly anything remained to be done other than to expel the unworthy from party, state, and Wehrmacht in order to bring about a complete agreement of opinions and will in party, Volk, state, and Wehrmacht.

In spite of this, the consequences of this day were bitter. In a fit of hope, our enemies gathered their entire strength, filled with the belief that shortly they would be able to overrun Germany. That they have not succeeded in this, I owe to the brave behavior of the Wehrmacht and, above all, the brave behavior of the German homeland, which is most worthy of praise. The response to the appeal for the expansion of the Reich's defense and the Volkssturm was only a symbol of the increasingly evidenced German Volksgemeinschaft in this fateful struggle for the future of the nation. Thus, next to the old grenadiers of the army, the soldiers of the navy and Luftwaffe, the soldiers of the homeland step up in complete equality of rank; not only its men, old men, and boys, but also its women and girls. As I consider the total sum of all the unspeakable sacrifices that our Volk makes today, all the suffering that the millions in our cities must bear, the sweat of our men and women laborers, and our people in the countryside, I would like to ask the criminals of July 20 only one question: with what right can you demand these sacrifices if you do not have the sacred resolve, before your conscience, to strengthen the Volksstaat at the end of this fight, develop it ever the more, so that this greatest epoch of our Volk culminates in the birth of a Reich that not only encompasses all Germans at the outside but also makes them happy at home? By fighting for the National Socialist German Volksstaat, I give the only possible moral and ethical meaning to this greatest struggle in our history. Whoever thinks of the interests only of his class at such an hour, acts not only as a criminal but also as an insane egotist. He must be insane because it takes incredible narrow-mindedness to imagine that you can rally a nation for a fight of life and death for over half a decade on behalf of a medieval feudal state.

My party comrades! As the year 1923 ended I wrote *Mein Kampf* in prison. I incessantly had in mind the realization of the National Socialist Volksstaat. For years after the seizure of power, we fought for this idea and worked for it. Rage and envy filled our enemies in view of the accomplishments in all areas of our economic and social life, the increasing culture and satisfaction of our classes. If so-called social plans for the future are today published in other countries, then this is only a pale imitation of what National Socialist Germany has already achieved. So today I can only again pledge the continuation of this

November 20, 1944

work. As an old National Socialist, I will not waver in this fight for one second in the fulfillment of the duties incumbent upon me. I did not choose this duty. Providence imposes it on every German: to do everything and not to neglect anything that can secure the future of our Volk and make its existence possible. We will respond to the most severe blows of fortune with a defiant fury, incessantly filled with the conviction that Providence often loves only those whom it chastises; and that it tries human beings and must try them in order to arrive at a just appraisal of their value. I have the unshakable will to set posterity a no less praiseworthy example in this fight than the great Germans did ages ago.

My own life does not play a role in this, which means that I will not spare my health or my life in any manner in the fulfillment of this duty conferred to me as the first German. If, at this time, I speak little and not very often to you, my party comrades and the German Volk, then I do this because I work; I work to fulfill the tasks with which time has burdened me and which must be fulfilled in order to bring about a turn of events. After all, since I have this will and see the loyal following of the German Volk, I do not doubt for a minute that, in the end, we will successfully survive this time of trial and that the hour will come when the Almighty again grants us His blessings as before. At the time, we gained the greatest victories in world history but did not become arrogant. At a time of setbacks, we will never bend and will thereby reaffirm in a positive sense the portrayal of the character of the present German Volk for posterity. I therefore believe with imperturbable confidence that, through our work and sacrifice, the moment will one day come when our efforts will finally be crowned by success. The goal of our struggle is no different from what we fought for in the year 1923, and for which the first sixteen martyrs of our movement died: our Volk's rescue from misery and danger, the securing of life for our children, grandchildren, and distant generations!

In the shadow of our nation, a Europe marches which feels that not only Germany's fate is being decided today but also the future of all nations that count themselves part of Europe and are consciously disgusted by Bolshevik barbarism. So I greet you from afar, my old party comrades, through the person who will speak this confession of my faith, in dogged determination, with my old unbending fighting morale and my unshakable confidence. On this occasion, I again thank the fighters of twenty-five years ago, who also have set us an example for the future of our Volk and the Greater German Reich!

On November 15, Hitler had a wreath placed by Colonel General Dessloch at the funeral ceremony for the fallen Air Force Major Walter Novotny at the Hofburg in Vienna.³⁸²

On November 20, Hitler left the Wolfsschanze headquarters for good. He had spent nearly three-and-a-half years there, with interruptions, and returned to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. He again underwent surgery on his vocal cords in the city.³⁸³

November 30, 1944

On November 24, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Portuguese state president Carmona on his seventy-fifth birthday.³⁸⁴

On November 25, Hitler issued a special order that dealt with the command of units which were cut off or had to “fend for” themselves. He ordered that the command could be conferred on a common soldier in the event of a surrender by the commander. There is no indication that this order was ever followed in practice. Hitler’s order read as follows:³⁸⁵

The war decides life and death of the German Volk. It demands the ruthless deployment of every individual. Death-defying bravery of the troops, steadfast endurance of all ranks, and unbending, superior leadership have carried us even through situations that appeared hopeless.

A leader of German soldiers can be only the man who daily deploys all his strength of spirit, soul, and body and is a living example to his men of the demands he must make on them. Energy, initiative, firmness of character, strength of faith, and hard, absolute readiness for deployment are imperatives for this fight. He who does not possess them cannot be a leader and must step down. I therefore order the following:

Whenever a leader of troops who has to fend for himself believes that he has to give up the fight, he must first ask his officers, then his noncommissioned officers, and then his men, whether or not one of them is ready to carry out the mission and continue the fight. If this is the case, then he shall confer command on this man, irrespective of his rank, and enlist himself. The new leader then takes over the command with all its rights and duties.³⁸⁶

Adolf Hitler

On November 26, the anniversary of the foundation of the *Kraft durch Freude* organization, Hitler exchanged greetings with Ley and sent him this telegram:³⁸⁷

I accept with joyful satisfaction the pledge of fidelity of the German worker conveyed to me on the anniversary of the National Socialist association *Kraft durch Freude*. I know what accomplishments in the armament industry and production, under the harshest conditions, have been made possible by the brave attitude of the German male and female workers. The cultural and social rise of Germany, which has elicited the envy and ill will of the enemies, was abruptly interrupted by the war. After the victorious conclusion of this fateful struggle, we will resolutely complete the socialist building of the Reich. After all, only the goal of a truly socialist future justifies the fight and the sacrifices of this struggle, to which we dedicate all our efforts.

Adolf Hitler

On November 30, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Hácha on the sixth anniversary of his election as Czech state president.³⁸⁸

December 4, 1944

On December 3, a decree by Hitler on the new military tasks of the Reich labor service was published. It read as follows:³⁸⁹

In recognition of its political and militant worthiness in all situations, the Führer ordered the Reich labor service to take over a part of the military training, previously carried out by the replacement army. He charged the Reich leader of labor with the responsibility for the immediate implementation in concurrence with the Reichsführer SS and commander of the Heimahteer /Ersatzheer [home army/replacement army].

On December 4, Hitler staged a reception for diplomats at the Reich Chancellery. In the presence of von Ribbentrop, he first received the newly appointed Slovak envoy Bodhan Galvanek and the new Hungarian envoy Vitez Andras Mecser, who presented their credentials to him.³⁹⁰ The main attraction, however, was the reception of the new Hungarian “state leader” Szalasi, who appeared dressed in the fantastic “Arrow Cross” uniform, which his movement had made up, along with a striped armband. The communiqué mentioned a “Magyar movement”:³⁹¹

On December 4, the Führer received the Hungarian state leader Franz Szalasi, who is presently visiting Germany.

The Führer and the state leader Franz Szalasi had a long discussion on all questions concerning the political, military, and economic cooperation between Germany and the Hungarian nation, unified by the revolutionary Magyar movement. The firm determination of the German and Hungarian people to continue this defensive fight with all means at their disposal and create the conditions for it was the main topic of the talks, which were characterized by the spirit of the old traditional and time-tested brotherhood in arms and friendship of the two nations.

The talks at the Führer’s were attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and Colonel General Guderian on the German side, and Foreign Minister Baron Kemeny and Honved minister, Colonel General Beregffy, on the Hungarian side.

On December 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on his fifty-second birthday.³⁹²

Two days later, Hitler paid tribute to Field Marshal von Mackensen in several ways on his ninety-fifth birthday. The following communiqué was published:³⁹³

The Führer has conveyed the best wishes of the German Volk and its Wehrmacht, as well as his own sincere and heartfelt best wishes, to Field Marshal von Mackensen upon completion of his ninety-fifth year.

December 10, 1944

In a personal handwritten letter, the Führer recognized the aged Field Marshal as a man who had rendered inestimable services to his fatherland as soldier and general in two wars, and who today, at an age which only few live to see, uniquely represents German manly pride and old Prussian soldiery.

As a special tribute to Field Marshal von Mackensen, the Führer has at the same time awarded the stripe "Field Marshal von Mackensen" to the Cavalry Regiment No. 5, led by the Field Marshal.

On behalf of the Führer, the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, has today personally presented the handwritten letter to Field Marshal von Mackensen, along with the official documents concerning the award of the stripe.

The decree of the Führer on the award of the stripe reads as follows:

"In grateful appreciation of the feats of arms accomplished under the leadership of Field Marshal von Mackensen, whose glory will live on in Volk and Wehrmacht for all time, I award the Cavalry Regiment No. 5 the stripe 'Field Marshal von Mackensen' on his ninety-fifth birthday. I thereby honor the great field marshal of the First World War. May this serve as an inspiration to the Cavalry Regiment at all time to prove itself worthy of its chief."

This "generous" honor also constituted Hitler's thanks for an appeal von Mackensen had addressed to the German youth which should, "by the deployment of all instruments of war and all weapons in battle, force success and victoriously hold its own."³⁹⁴

On December 7, the "day of the German railroad worker 1944," Hitler exchanged telegrams with the Reich Minister for Transportation Dorpmüller and State Secretary Ganzenmüller. Hitler's telegram read as follows:³⁹⁵

I thank all German railroad workers for their pledge of fidelity. Your accomplishments up to now give me the certainty that you will in the future continue to fulfill the unique tasks which have been assigned to you, in spite of all difficulties.

Adolf Hitler

On December 10, Hitler founded a "Warsaw Shield" for the participants in the quelling of the Polish revolt in Warsaw, which had lasted from August 1 until October 2, 1944.³⁹⁶

On the same day, the creation of a stripe "Hitler Youth" for the First Assault Boat Flotilla was made public. Hitler's decree read as follows:³⁹⁷

In recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of the young single combat fighters of the navy, I award the name "Hitler Youth" with the rights to wear a corresponding stripe to the First Assault Boat Flotilla of the

December 10, 1944

commando of the small fighting units, which has distinguished itself through particular dash and youthful daredevilry.

In the same manner, this recognition goes out to the Hitler Youth, whose voluntary enlistments for military service prove that it is ready for action and military-minded. The combat deployment of the youth is a guarantee for the final victory and for Germany's happy future.

Christmas was nearing. Hitler felt that a new offensive was called for in order to improve the general atmosphere in Germany. Like the Zhitomir offensive of the previous year,³⁹⁸ the offensive in the Ardennes was meant to reinforce confidence in victory for the holidays—even if there was a hangover later, as with Zhitomir Hitler would be content if only the morale of the German public could be improved during the holidays.

He had already spoken about a new offensive in the west in September.³⁹⁹ In the following months, he had concentrated all available troops and panzers in order to land a surprise strike against the First American Army in the Ardennes in mid-December.

There was hardly any fuel for the German attack divisions, but Hitler did not care: after all, they could get fuel from the Allies. There were also hardly any planes available for this offensive, but Hitler hoped that bad weather would complicate enemy operations. How times had changed! "Hitler weather" once used to mean "good weather,"⁴⁰⁰ now it meant "bad weather."

Hitler again wanted to command this new offensive in the west personally. This time, he did not set up quarters at the "Felsenest" near Münstereifel, even though it was still habitable. Instead, he moved into the Ziegenberg headquarters⁴⁰¹

The German generals were not thrilled with Hitler's plans for an offensive. They knew that there was no chance of repeating the 1940 campaign and breaking through to the Channel coast in one daring surprise attack. Von Runstedt later said that he was horrified because "the available forces were far too little for such a long-range plan."⁴⁰²

Chief of staff Guderian wanted to point out the trouble in which the eastern front already found itself, but Hitler snapped at him:⁴⁰³

There is no need for you to lecture me! I have been leading the German army in the field for five years now and I have gathered more practical experiences than the gentlemen of the general staff ever will. I studied Clausewitz and Moltke and read all of Schlieffen's operational plans. I am much better informed than you are!

December 12, 1944

On December 11 and 12, Hitler summoned the generals in groups of twenty to thirty to the Ziegenberg headquarters in order to discuss the plans for the new operation with them. Most of the shorthand record of Hitler's speech on December 12 has been preserved.⁴⁰⁴ His rhetorical techniques and tactics had not changed since the time of his seizure of power. Even on this occasion and despite the desperate situation of the Reich, he went far back in endless "party narratives"⁴⁰⁵ and tried to tire his listeners by pseudo-historical and pseudo-philosophical explanations. He finally addressed the current situation and again claimed that Germany had as many men as its opponents.

You should not forget that the total number of men deployed on our side is, after all, as great as that on the side of our enemies.

Hitler added to this statement that it was time to start the offensive again. Being on the defensive for too long used up too many resources.

In spite of this, you must realize that overly long periods of a merely defensive steadfastness eat you up in the long run. In any event, they must alternate with successful strikes. It was, therefore, my intention from the start to wage this war, if possible, offensively, to wage it strategically, not to let us be maneuvered into a situation as in the World War. Since that still happened, then there was a simple connection with the desertion of our allies, which of course had strategic consequences. . . .

Wars are decided in the end by the realization by one side or the other that the war as such cannot any longer be won. To get this realization across to the enemy is therefore the most important task. This realization is made clear to him in the speediest manner by destroying his vital energy, by occupying his territory. If you are forced to defend yourself, to go on the defensive, then it is all the more your task to make it clear to the enemy from time to time by ruthless blows that he has not won anything in spite of this, and that the war will incessantly continue to be waged. It is likewise important to reinforce these psychological moments by never letting an opportunity pass to make it clear to the enemy that, no matter what he does, he can never count on a capitulation—never, never.⁴⁰⁶

Then Hitler described the situation in the Seven Years' War and the "miracle" Frederick the Great had supposedly experienced.

The steadfastness of the man had made it possible that this war was fought out and, in spite of everything, a miraculuous turn of events came about in the end.

Germany would now also witness such a "miracle." It was only a question of "biding one's time" until the enemy coalition fell apart on its own.

December 13, 1944

The enemies we have today are the greatest extremes conceivable on earth: ultra-capitalist states on the one hand, and ultra-Marxist states on the other; on the one hand, a dying empire, Great Britain, on the other hand, a colony out for the inheritance, the United States of America. These are states whose objectives today clash more and more by the day. And whoever follows this development—let me say, like a spider sitting in his web—can see how these conflicts develop by the hour. Should a few bad blows ensue here, then it can happen at any minute that this artificially sustained joint front suddenly collapses in a gigantic thunderbolt.⁴⁰⁷

Hitler wanted to land a “few bad blows” on the Allies in the west. He recalled the campaign in France in 1940 and claimed that the chances were as good now as they had been then.

Now, you could object to me that (in one respect) there is a big difference between 1940 and the present: at the time, we faced an enemy army which had not yet been tried in battle; and today, it is an army we know well, which has been in the war for some time. That is correct, gentlemen. But in terms of strength, little has changed, if we leave the Luftwaffe side.

We have many battle-weary troops, and the enemy also has battle-weary troops and has suffered heavy losses in blood. We now have the first official information from the Americans that, within a period of barely three weeks, they lost about two hundred forty thousand men.⁴⁰⁸ These are figures that are simply gigantic, that are far above what we ourselves believed that they might have lost. So they are battle-weary, too. Technically speaking, both sides are about the same. Regarding the tank weapon, the enemy might have more tanks at his disposal, but we have the better tanks with our latest models.

With such a smoke screen, Hitler believed he could make the new offensive more palatable to the generals. It is still an open question whether they left the headquarters in better spirits. In any event, Hitler need not have troubled himself. In principle, the generals were always ready to comply with the orders of their supreme commander, if this was technically possible.

Even though he was busy preparing the offensive, Hitler did not forget to write diplomatic greetings. On December 11, he exchanged telegrams with Mussolini, the Japanese emperor, and the Japanese prime minister Koiso on the third anniversary of the military alliance between Germany, Japan, and Italy.⁴⁰⁹ The texts of his telegrams were not published.

On December 13, Hitler sent this telegram to the Union of National Journalists' Associations, which was meeting for a congress in Vienna:⁴¹⁰

December 15, 1944

Führer Headquarters, December 13, 1944

I thank the national journalists assembled for their annual congress for their greetings. At a time of the greatest military deployment in the fateful struggle of Europe, it is with great interest that I follow your publishing work, which supports this struggle of impact on world history by enlightening the people. I therefore wish complete success to your work in the interests of your nations and the future of Europe.

Adolf Hitler

On December 15, Hitler appointed the deputy Gauleiter of Kassel, Karl Oerland, as Gauleiter of Kurhessen.⁴¹¹

On the morning of December 16, the German offensive in the direction of Bastogne and the Meuse River began. The weather was bad, just as Hitler had wanted it. The four divisions of the First American Army stationed in the Ardennes were at first confused by the surprise attack of the Germans, but the Allied headquarters quickly came up with countermeasures. Montgomery, who had been promoted to the rank of field marshal on September 1, was the most experienced and successful general on the Allied side. He personally took over the command of the endangered American front sector. The German offensive got bogged down after only a few days. The Germans did not even manage to take Bastogne, which they cut off for some time, not to mention advancing to the Meuse or the Channel. The adventurous Greif operation, with which Hitler again entrusted Otto Skorzeny, also proved a failure. Dressed in American uniforms and riding in Jeeps which had earlier been taken as booty, Skorzeny's men were captured or forced to return without having reached the bridges across the Meuse.⁴¹² By giving incorrect information and removing road signs, their mission succeeded only in confusing American troop movements temporarily.

During the discussion of the situation on December 24, Hitler listened to a presentation by Guderian on the situation on the eastern front. When Guderian gave an overview on the assembly of Russian armies in the east, Hitler exclaimed:⁴¹³

This is the greatest bluff since Genghis Khan! Who came up with this nonsense?

He claimed that the Russian rifle divisions were at most "seven thousand men" strong and Russian tank divisions had "no tanks." He continued as follows:

December 28, 1944

You know, my dear Colonel General, I do not believe that the Russians will attack at all. All that is just a gigantic bluff. The figures from your department "Foreign Armies East" are terribly exaggerated. You worry too much. I am convinced that nothing will happen in the east.

Well, for the next two weeks, nothing happened in the east. In the west, however, the Americans moved up for a counteroffensive on December 24, just as the Russians had done at Zhitomir the year before.⁴¹⁴ Hitler's Christmas offensive in the west (also called the "Ardennes Offensive" or "Rundstedt Offensive") collapsed. By early January, the situation on the western front was decidedly worse than it had been before the offensive began, just as with Zhitomir. However, Hitler had managed to liven up the public for a few days.

Hitler had not yet had enough, in spite of the failed Christmas offensive in the Ardennes. He had plans for a New Year's offensive in the Vosges! For this reason, he assembled his generals at the Ziegenberg headquarters on the evening of December 28. He again gave a long speech, which began with these words:⁴¹⁵

Gentlemen! I have asked you here prior to a campaign on whose success further strikes in the west depend. First I would like to shed light briefly on the true significance of this individual campaign. I would like to place it in the context of the overall situation in which we find ourselves.

What followed were pseudo-historic reflections on the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries and the Battle of Cannae, Hannibal's victory over the Romans in 216 B.C. Then Hitler claimed that Frederick the Great had "fought with three-and-a-half million Prussians against fifty-two million Europeans."⁴¹⁶ He did not forget about the English either. He said that they were not

. . . in a position anywhere to put up effective resistance to Bolshevism.
[—]

In these hours, in which Mr. Churchill is pulling off a pitiful fiasco in Athens⁴¹⁷ and is not in a position to oppose Bolshevism even within a limited framework, at this moment, the man wants to make it appear as though he would be capable of stopping Bolshevism's advance into Europe at any point.

This is a ridiculous fantasy. America cannot do it, England cannot do it. The only state, for the sake of whose fate this war is being waged, is Germany, which will either save itself or be ruined, should it lose this war.

The old trick of the Red scare! Hitler still hoped that the English would ask his help against the Bolsheviks. In the further course of his

December 28, 1944

speech, Hitler tried to convince his generals that the disastrous Ardennes Offensive had led to success in certain respects. He declared:

Even the present first act in the offensive in the west [Ardennes] had led to the Americans having to bring up everything from other fronts, all in all, about fifty percent.

I would like to stress right away: the objective of all these offensives, which will happen quite fast—I am already preparing a third blow right now⁴¹⁸—is for the time being to eliminate the American units at the southern point of penetration [in the Ardennes] completely, destroy them piece by piece, exterminate division after division.

This second attack also has a clear objective: annihilation of the enemy forces. It is not a question of prestige here. It is not a question of winning terrain for us. It is exclusively a question of annihilating and erasing the enemy forces wherever we encounter them.

Hitler continued to speak for some time about what “question” this was all really about, before he finally continued as follows:

There is something, gentlemen, that I still must emphasize. I have been in this business for eleven years now, and, in these eleven years, I have never heard anybody report to me: “We are completely ready.”—You are never completely ready.

I must therefore say this: we do not have time forever, life goes on. If I do not act quickly here, then, in the meantime, a situation might arise there in which I am forced to pull out.

Things had to go quickly! For this reason, Hitler tried hard to allay the doubts of his generals. Ammunition? Fuel?

We will get all these things done. There is no doubt about this.

The only thing that is not to our advantage this time is the situation in the air. It forces us to take advantage of the bad weather, the winter.

What was most important to Hitler was to improve the morale of the German public. He declared the following:

The German Volk breathed a sigh of relief during these days. We must avoid that lethargy—lethargy is the wrong word, let us say sadness—again follow this sigh of relief. It has breathed a sigh of relief. The idea that we are again on the offensive has already had a positive effect on the German Volk.

And if this offensive is continued, then the first great successes will ensue—and they will ensue.

Wait until the German Volk sees this development—you can be confident that it will make all the sacrifices that are humanly possible.

The German Volk caused quite some trouble for Hitler! He was constantly trying to liven things up for it. However, given the mood the

December 31, 1944

German public was in at the time, it was not receptive of Hitler's powers of persuasion. People did not want new propaganda slogans or delusions, they wanted to put an end to the war, to the war and Hitler.

Even the most horrifying descriptions of impending Bolshevik atrocities, of the American Morgenthau Plan,⁴¹⁹ and similar projects, no longer impressed the public. At a moment when the German industry became the target of enemy bomb attacks and sank into ruins, when the German people were close to starvation, the Morgenthau Plan could at best elicit this response: "Well, at least we will have potatoes to eat!"

Hitler spent the Christmas holidays at his headquarters. In addition to preparing new offensives, he indulged himself, just as in the previous year, by designing new medals and their statutes. In 1943, he dealt with the German Eagle medal,⁴²⁰ now he turned his attention to the Iron Cross. He issued an ordinance of several pages, which specified its classes, the manner in which it was to be worn, and so on. He had it bound in a special edition.⁴²¹ Moreover, on December 29, Hitler signed a decree on the creation of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with the Golden Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds. It read as follows:⁴²²

Führer Headquarters, December 29, 1944

As the highest award for bravery, I create the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with the Golden Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds. This award will be issued only twelve times in order to honor in a special way before the German Volk battle-tested individual fighters who have already received all categories of the Knight's Cross. My decree of September 1, 1939, on the renewal of the Iron Cross will be correspondingly supplemented.

Adolf Hitler

On the night from December 29 to 30, Hitler again discussed the upcoming New Year's offensive at great length with General Thomale, a specialist in the panzer forces.⁴²³ Thomale was almost as good as Hitler in juggling figures. And so they conjured up a nice little pipe dream of German offensive strength.

On December 31, Guderian appeared at the Ziegenberg headquarters and requested troops for the eastern front.⁴²⁴ He received a total of four divisions. However, these divisions ended up in Hungary, because Hitler had ordered an offensive in order to relieve Budapest for New Year's Day.

Before the year 1944 was over, another declaration of war landed on Hitler's table. On December 30, the Hungarian opposition government,

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which had been formed by General Miklos in Debrecen in the Russian-occupied part of Hungary, declared war on Germany.

After Liberia (January 16), Romania (August 25), Bulgaria (September 8), and Finland (September 15), Hungary was the fifth country to take up arms against Germany in 1944. A total of forty-eight states were now at war with Hitler. In the course of the next months, the following states would follow suit: Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Argentina. Under Hitler, Germany was at war with fifty-eight states. Fourteen other states confiscated German possessions without declaration of war.

In the First World War, Germany had faced a total of thirty-three enemy powers.⁴²⁵ So Hitler, who had always mocked the politics of Imperial Germany as unwise and undiplomatic, called far more enemies into action than William II's Germany. Even in this superlative, Hitler had finally surpassed the Kaiser.

The Year 1945

Major Events in Summary

At the beginning of 1945, the world and Germany felt that this year would put an end to Hitler, in one way or another.

He had four months left; four months, in which the Allies smashed his Reich piece by piece. A flood of enemy armies swept across Germany. At the end of April, only three islands remained above water: Schleswig-Holstein, Berlin, and the Alps.

In the midst of the wrecked capital, Hitler dwelled in the bunker beneath his Reich Chancellery, wanting to remain “steadfast in face of the impossible.”¹ For nearly these four months, he managed to delude himself that everything was still as in former times and that he was still the head of state, chief of the government, and chief military commander of a functioning powerful state.

It was true that one heard his voice only twice on the radio: once, when he read his New Year’s Proclamation to the German Volk and, second, when he delivered, on January 30, before the microphone a commemorative address on the anniversary of the seizure of power. Yet Hitler composed more proclamations in 1945 than he had in the same period of the previous year.

As though the situation were completely normal, as though no Russian troops stood at the Oder, and as though no Anglo-American soldiers stood at the Rhine, Hitler issued two proclamations, besides the New Year’s Proclamations to the Volk and to the Wehrmacht, and he did so even on two dates which he had canceled in 1944: the commemoration of the party’s foundation on February 24 and Heroes’ Memorial Day.

Even when in March and April the enemy troops in the west and the east engaged the Germans in a last battle, he issued another proclamation to the soldiers on April 15. He announced: “Berlin will remain German, Vienna will again become German.”² Incessantly, he

sent telegrams and diplomatic greetings to the few statesmen in the satellite states who were still in office; the last one he sent to Mussolini on April 21.

It was not until enemy shells literally exploded on the doorstep of the Reich Chancellery that he realized that the end had irrevocably come. On April 29, he wrote his last proclamation: his political testament.

Even in this last statement, he refused to acknowledge authorship of the unheard-of catastrophe into which he had plunged Germany and the entire world. On the contrary, he continued to claim, as always, the Jews were guilty of everything, together with the German officers and, yes, even Reichsmarschall Göring and Reichsführer SS Himmler.

The reader searches in vain for an official admission by Hitler of the collapse of his foreign policy and military conceptions. All his theories and ideas with which he had operated since 1919 had been wrong without exception: the idea of the Lebensraum in the east, which he intended to conquer for the German Volk; the idea of waging war against Russia while preserving the friendship of England and Italy; his thesis concerning the identity of domestic and foreign policy; the conception of the English as senile German Nationalists against whom it was not worth fighting, since they would collapse by themselves; the idea of the primitive Bolshevik Russians with whom you could deal as with the German Communists, namely by using brute force; his thesis concerning the secret Jewish world government which ruled London, Washington, and Moscow, and which could be intimidated by terrorizing and exterminating the Jews; his theory of unity, according to which the German Volk was invincible as long as it was united, and finally his thesis of perseverance, according to which Providence would give the victory to the man who would never capitulate.

With these ideas Hitler had for decades thrown dust into the eyes of his followers. Not one of these ideas had turned out to be correct in the end. With each of them he had suffered catastrophic shipwreck.

He now faced an unprecedented expanse of ruins, but still he was not about to admit responsibility, no matter how often he had earlier declared that he wished to “bear the entire responsibility,”³ that he would “vouch with [his] life”⁴ for his actions, that he would “calmly stand firm” should the Volk one day be dissatisfied with him and wish to execute him.⁵

But when had Hitler ever kept a promise he had made?

Annihilation

Coward that he had always been, he now dodged responsibility again. On April 30, 1945, he reached for his pistol to end his life.

It takes only a fraction of a second, and you are relieved of all that, and you can have some quiet and eternal peace.⁶

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Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's last New Year's Proclamation to the German Volk was nothing out of the ordinary. Remarkable, however, was its heading: "German Volk! National Socialists! My Volksgenossen!" In earlier years, it had always read: "National Socialists! Party Comrades!" That Hitler preferred not to address his party comrades in 1945 was no coincidence but symptomatic. The party had already begun to dissolve into thin air at this point. Its leading men, from the Gauleiters down, had eagerly seized the opportunity of putting on Volksturm uniforms in order to be no longer recognizable as important party figures.⁷

At the last session of the Reichstag in 1942, Hitler had already revealed that the party ranked for him as the very last. All he needed were soldiers and policemen.⁸

His New Year's Proclamation in 1945 left nothing to be desired in terms of arrogance and impudence. According to him, the governments of "Italy, Finland, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria" were responsible for the disastrous situation Germany faced, along with the "small coterie of [German] drawing-room politicians and drawing-room generals."

Hitler's claim that the bombardment of German cities hit him the hardest was the most impertinent of all: "Not only did I become infinitely close to all the German cities that are now being wrecked in terms of their history but I also did so in terms of my personal life. For decades I was tied to them not only by the love of their history and culture and by human feelings, but I was also most strongly involved in the fate of their future development. It is exactly this which makes this suffering somewhat easier for me to bear."

In this context, Hitler announced: "Within a few years, the National Socialist state with its energy and initiative will rebuild all that is being destroyed today."

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Naturally, he did not forget to say “thanks to the Lord,” especially for sparing his life, but only because he could therefore “continue dedicating” it “to the service of the Volk.”

Hitler’s last New Year’s Proclamation in its entirety read as follows:⁹

German Volk! National Socialists! My Volksgenossen!

Only the turn of the year causes me to speak to you today, my German Volksgenossen. The times had demanded more than speeches from me. The events of the past twelve months, in particular the incident on July 20, forced me to devote my attention and my capacity for work to a single task, for which I had lived for many years: the fateful struggle of my Volk. Although our enemies had proclaimed our collapse every New Year, they placed particular hopes on the year 1944. Never before did victory seem so close to them, as in those days of August of last year when one catastrophe had followed another. Now that we have managed, as so many times before, to bring about a turn of events, credit is due not only to the struggle and work of all my Volksgenossen in the homeland and at the front, but also to my own work and my own commitment. By so doing, I have only acted in the spirit of a statement that I made at the memorable Reichstag session of September 1, 1939, declaring that Germany would never be defeated by the force of arms or time, and that a day like November 9 would never repeat itself in the German Reich.

Whoever knew Germany only from this time of decline could perhaps hope that this state would not be granted a resurrection nor the strength to hold its own against a world of enemies.

That is how the Jewish-international conspiracy has lived on hopes from the first day. Every time when the nations began to become suspicious, these hopes were transformed into prophecies. With a certain rabble-rousing audacity, they were portrayed to the masses as certainties, as matters of course. This propaganda used two methods, even though it has short wings as all lies do. On the one hand, it set dates by which the German collapse was certainly to be expected, in order to calm the impatient masses. On the other hand, it dealt with questions whose solution would become necessary for the Allies following this collapse. Before the war ever started, the first English statement was already published, declaring that the joint Anglo-French declaration of war would lead within seven to eight days, at the latest, to an internal revolution and thereby to the collapse of the German Reich. With nearly astronomical regularity, this was followed by ever new assurances every winter, spring, autumn, and sometimes even between the seasons [*sic*], that the unconditional German collapse and surrender—both would mean the same thing—was imminent. Already in the autumn of 1939, one such assurance followed hot on the heels of the other. One minute it was “General Mud,” the next “General Hunger,” and then again “General Winter” who were supposed to defeat us. Particularly the beginning of 1940 witnessed such Allied declarations galore. After the campaign in France, new prophecies were made, namely that if

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Germany was not be able to end the war in two months, by September at the latest, then the German collapse would inevitably come in the spring of 1941. Spring had barely passed when new goals were set for the summer, and new deadlines for our certain destruction were finally set for the winter of 1941. Since this time, the game has repeated itself every year. At one time it was said that the war would be over before the leaves fall; another time that Germany would be ready to capitulate before the next winter. With the assuredness of a sleepwalker, they called August 1944 the deadline for the unconditional surrender and, shortly afterwards, they planned to arrange a joint meeting of the leading [Allied] statesmen in Berlin just before Christmas. Not long ago, it was rescheduled for January and then March 1945. Right now, they are cautiously declaring that, in view of the rapidly approaching two months, it would be August. In July, they will surely talk about the winter of 1946, provided that the war does not actually end in the meantime, not with a German capitulation, which will never come, but with a German victory!

Parallel to these prophecies—in order to stress the correctness of these assumptions psychologically—followed the theoretical appointment of ever new commissions for the treatment of European questions after the war, the foundation of societies for the regulation of food supplies after the German collapse, in other words the resurrection of those profiteer institutions (*Schieberinstitutionen*) that we know from the World War, the proclamation of economic agreements, the setting up of traffic networks and air bases, as well as the drafting and promulgation of sometimes truly idiotic laws on the treatment of the German Volk. They always acted as though they had already won the war, as though they could now already consider at their leisure all the measures necessary for ruling Europe for those who have themselves set a sorry example of how not to rule people. Of course, you can practice this propagandistic maneuver with the unenlightened masses in the democratic states for a surprisingly long time, but even there it will one day become obvious that this is nothing other than the usual swindle in these countries. Should one or the other of the leading men in these western democratic states nevertheless truly believe all that is told the people, then there are only three possible explanations for this:

1. They do not know the German Volk at all. Above all, they do not realize that the past three hundred years of German history did not give an accurate picture of the essence of the German Volk, but reflected only the consequences of its inner conflicts at home. Since this German Volk made its appearance in history, it has not only been one of the decisive factors in European and world history but even the most decisive one. It remains so today and will continue to be so even more in the future.

2. They are ignorant about the National Socialist state. They do not have an inkling of the essence of this *Volksidee*. The accomplishments that the National Socialist regime secured under the most difficult conditions have remained concealed from most of the people in the countries surrounding us. Perhaps they had to be concealed from them because public life and opinion there is informed by the Jews, that is, everything is distorted and reported

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wrongly. They are apparently not yet aware that neither Bolshevism nor the democratic-plutocratic world of ideas—insofar as you can speak of one—can replace the National Socialist state, since both have proved themselves to be unfit for Germany in terms of their achievements, and the results of their activities in their own countries serve only as the most deterrent example.

3. In these countries they have known something that the majority of the masses of the healthy German Volk are not aware of, namely a small coterie of drawing-room politicians and drawing-room generals who, in complete ignorance of their own mental, political, and military insignificance, have tried to convince the world that they will one day seize power in a coup and will then be in a position to offer capitulation without further notice, much as in Italy, Finland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The less our enemies were familiar with the German Volk, the less they were aware of the essence of the National Socialist state, the more readily they placed their hopes in the assurances of these spineless characters, believed their fantastic chains of reasoning and outpourings to be true, and rewarded them not only with a strong faith but also with ready cash.

In opposition to that, at the turn of a year which has given us ample opportunity to prove that this Volk, this state, and its leading men are unshakable in their will and staunch in their fanatical determination to fight this war out under any circumstances, even putting up with setbacks imposed on us by the fickleness of fate, I would like to state again what arises for us from the past and present, and what is necessary for the world to know in the future.

1. We know the objectives of our enemies from the past and the present. We are aware of what the Anglo-American statesmen plan to do with the German Reich, what measures the Bolshevik rulers and the international Jews, who in the end are behind them, plan to take against the German Volk. Their successful implementation would not only lead to the German Reich's being torn to pieces, the transport of fifteen to twenty million Germans to foreign countries, the enslavement of the remnants of our Volk, the corruption of our German youth, but it would also and above all bring with it the starvation of our masses of millions. Aside from this, you either live in freedom or die in slavery.

In opposition to that, we are determined to do anything necessary. The world should realize that this state will therefore never capitulate. The present German Reich, like all great states of the past, may meet with setbacks on its path, but it will never stray from this path. The world should realize that the present leadership of the state shares the worries and sufferings of its people, but it will never capitulate under these worries and sufferings. On the contrary, it is determined to make the utmost effort to face every crisis, make up for what was lost through carelessness with reinforced eagerness to work, so that it will be able not only to express its great appreciation to every individual German who does his duty, but also to assure him that his contribution to the existence of our Volk will one day be rewarded. On the other hand, it will destroy anybody who tries to escape making his contribution or lowers himself to becoming a tool of foreign powers. Since we know the objectives of our

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enemies—because they themselves offer the necessary enlightenment thanks to their propagandistic garrulousness from the mouths of their statesmen and journalists—the entire German Volk knows what its fate would be if it lost this war. It will therefore not lose this war. It must and will win it. After all, what our enemies are fighting for, they do not know themselves, aside from their Jews. Yet what we are fighting for is clear to all of us. It is the preservation of the German human being, it is our homeland, it is our two-thousand-year-old culture, it is the children and grandchildren of our Volk. It is, in short, everything that makes life worth living for us. For this reason, the Volk has developed the spirit and attitude that justify its belief in its own future and its request for a merciful appreciation of its struggle by Providence.

That this struggle is so endlessly difficult is the result of the essence of the abovementioned objectives of our enemies. After all, since they intend to exterminate our Volk, they are already applying this method in the war by means that civilized mankind has not known hitherto. By wrecking our cities, they hope not only to kill German women and children but also and above all to eliminate the documents of our thousand-year-old culture, to which they have nothing to compare of equal quality. That was also the idea behind the war of annihilation against the cultural sites in Italy, the actual intention behind the continuation of the present fight in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Alas, like a phoenix from the ashes, so the strong German will all the more rise up anew from the ruins of our cities. It has taken hold not only of millions of our soldiers, but also of millions of male and female workers, of women, even of children. The suffering inflicted on them individually is immeasurable, but equally immeasurable is the greatness of their attitude. Once this time of suffering is over, every German will be incredibly proud of being allowed to be a member of such a Volk. Likewise, the day will come when our enemies will regard the defilement of culture, which they are presently undertaking and which will continue to burn in our memories, as shameful.

I know, my dear Volksgenossen, the demands this war makes on you. There may be no man in any large country of the world who knows his people and their homeland better than I know Germany. Not only did I become infinitely close to all the German cities that are now being wrecked in whatever concerns their life and their history but also in whatever concerns my personal life. For decades I was tied to them not only by the love of their history and culture and of their human feelings, but I was also the most strongly involved in the fate of their future development. This alone makes this suffering somewhat easier for me to bear, because I know better than anybody else that, with its will, the German Volk as such not only always rose up from the most profound misery, but also that this time will end with the German cities again rising up from the debris as new sites attesting to the magnificence of our German cities.

Within a few years, the National Socialist state with its energy and initiative will rebuild all that is being destroyed today. The outward appearance of our cities will be mightier and more beautiful than ever before. Healthier homes for the German human beings will take the place of the destroyed

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tenement barracks. Our social and cultural demands will then receive greater consideration than was possible before.

However, we will neither possess many of the unfading documents of art and culture nor be able to restore them. More importantly, we cannot replace the sacrifice of countless precious human beings and the loss of their collected souvenirs which became dear to them in the course of a long life. All these great treasures and small remembrances will in the end be compensated for—even if they cannot be replaced—by our Volk's shared memory of a time of the hardest fateful struggle that a nation ever had to bear and one that it bore with so much heroism.

The year 1944 was the year of the greatest burdens in this mighty struggle. It was a year that again proved conclusively that the bourgeois social order is no longer capable of braving the storms of the present or of the coming age. State after state that does not find its way to a truly social reorganization will go down the path to chaos. The liberal age is a thing of the past. The belief that you can counter this invasion of the people (*Völkersturm*) by parliamentary-democratic half-measures is childish and just as naive as Metternich's¹⁰ methods when the national drives for unification were making their way through the nineteenth century. The lack of a truly social, new form of life results in the lack of the mental will to resist not only in the nations but also in the lack of the moral power of resistance of their leaders. In all countries we see that the attempted renaissance of a democracy has proved fruitless. The confused tangle of political dilettantes and military politicians of a bygone bourgeois world who order each other around is, with deadly certainty, preparing for a plunge into chaos and, insofar as Europe is concerned, into an economic and ethnic catastrophe. And, after all, one thing has already been proved: this most densely populated continent in the world will either have to live with an order that gives the greatest consideration to individual abilities, guarantees the greatest accomplishments, and, by taming all egotistical drives, prevents their excesses, or states such as we have in central and western Europe will prove unfit for life, which means that their nations are thereby doomed to perish!

In this manner—following the example of royal Italy—Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary collapsed during this year. This collapse is primarily the result of the cowardice and lack of resolve of their leaders. They and their actions can be understood only in light of the corrupt and socially amoral atmosphere of the bourgeois world. The hatred which many statesmen, especially in these countries, express for the present German Reich is nothing other than the voice of a guilty conscience, an expression of an inferiority complex in view of our organization of a human community that is suspicious to them because we successfully pursue goals that again do not correspond to their own narrow economic egotism and their resulting political shortsightedness.

For us, my German Volksgenossen, this, however, represents a new obligation to recognize ever more clearly that the existence or nonexistence of a German future depends on the uncompromising organization of our Volksstaat, that all the sacrifices which our Volk must make are conceivable

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only under the condition of a social order which clears away all privileges and thereby makes the entire Volk not only bear the same duties but also possess the same vital rights. Above all, it must mercilessly destroy the social phantoms of a bygone era. In their stead, it must place the most valuable reality there is, namely the Volk, the masses which, tied together by the same blood, essence, and experiences of a long history, owe their origin as an individual existence not to an earthly arbitrariness but to the inscrutable will of the Almighty. The insight into the moral value of our conviction and the resulting objectives of our struggle for life give us and, above all, give me the strength to continue to wage this fight in the most difficult hours with the strongest faith and with an unshakable confidence. In such hours, this conviction also ties the Volk to its leadership. It assured the unanimous approval of the appeal that I was forced to direct to the German Volk in a particularly urgent way this year.

Millions of Germans of all professions and ranks, men and women, boys and girls, even children, took up the spade and the shovel. Thousands of Volksturm battalions were created or are in the process of being created. Divisions were newly formed; Volk artillery corps, mortar brigades, self-propelled assault-gun brigades, as well as fighter groups were conjured up out of nothing and provided with new equipment. Above all, our German factories showed singular achievements with the help of both male and female German workers. They, I may say so today, are being joined by more and more thoughtful people from other nations who, as workers in Germany, understand the essence of our social community. And so what our enemies shattered was rebuilt with superhuman diligence and unequalled heroism. This rebuilding will continue until what our enemies began will end one day. The German spirit and the German will shall bring this about by force!

This, my Volksgenossen, will one day go down in history as the miracle of the twentieth century! A Volk that accomplishes, suffers, and endures so many incredible things at the front and in the homeland can therefore never perish. On the contrary: it will emerge from this furnace of trials stronger and firmer than ever before in its history. However, the power to which we owe all this—the Jewish-international enemy of the world—will not only fail in this attempt to destroy Europe and exterminate its nations but will also end by annihilating itself.

At the end of this year, as the spokesman of the nation and, at this moment, also as the Führer of its fate, I would like to thank the countless millions of my Volksgenossen with an overflowing heart for all they have suffered, endured, done, and accomplished, men and women, down to the level of our children in the Hitler Youth, in the cities and small market towns, in the villages and in the countryside. I would like to ask them not to let up in the future either, to trust the leadership of the movement, and to fight this most difficult struggle for the future of our Volk with the greatest fanaticism. What I can do to promote this success, I will do in the future as I did in the past. I am speaking less these days, not because I do not wish to or cannot speak, but because my work leaves me little time for speaking, and because I believe that I am now obliged every hour to think about and seek to increase the power of resistance of our armies,

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introduce better weapons, form new units, and assemble whatever forces can be mobilized from among my Volk. My enemies are perhaps now seeing the light already and are realizing that I have not been asleep all this time!

For the rest, I wish to assure you, my Volksgenossen, again today, as in the many years of the struggle for power, that my faith in the future of our Volk is unshakable. Whomever Providence subjects to so many trials, it has destined for the greatest things! It is therefore my only concern to do my utmost to lead the German Volk through this time of misery and open the gate for it to that future in which we all believe, for which we fight and work.

I cannot close this appeal without thanking the Lord for the help that He always allowed the leadership and the Volk to find, as well as for the power He gave us to be stronger than misery and danger. If I also thank Him for my rescue, then I do so only because through it I am happy to be able to continue dedicating my life to the service of the Volk. In this hour, as the spokesman of Greater Germany, I therefore wish to make the solemn avowal before the Almighty that we will loyally and unshakably fulfill our duty also in the new year, in the firm belief that the hour will come when the victory will favor for good the one who is most worthy of it, the Greater German Reich!

Hitler's New Year's Proclamation to the German Wehrmacht was again extraordinarily long, a sign that things were not going well. Naturally, he again blamed in this proclamation the "European allies" for the "setbacks". Hitler's order of the day read as follows:¹¹

Führer Headquarters, January 1, 1945

Soldiers!

The decisive significance for the world of the war that we are fighting today is clear to the German Volk: a merciless struggle for existence or nonexistence, that is, a struggle for life or death! Because the goal of the Jewish-international world conspiracy opposing us is the extermination of our Volk.

As I pronounced this realization in the year 1939, some among you may have thought it was an exaggeration. Because of its constant repetition in the course of the following years, it may have appeared to be "noisy propaganda." Today, nobody can doubt the intention of our enemies. It is not only proved by the activities of subordinate organs, the public media, but also confirmed by the enemy statesmen opposing us. It is further evidenced by the way the war has been waged, as well as by the political preparations which our enemies are making for the postwar period. The Jewish-eastern Bolshevism reflects in its exterminationist tendencies the goals of Jewish-western capitalism. In any event, the plan is to enslave all free nations. Mr. Churchill declares that all of eastern Germany shall be ceded at least to Poland—in truth, that means to the Soviet Union—namely, not only East Prussia and Danzig but even Pomerania and Silesia. He dismisses the potential population problems by expressing the hope that he will be able to kill another six or more million Germans, that is, women and children, through bomb warfare. His protégé de Gaulle again demands that western Germany be placed under French control and the

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remainder of Germany dissolved. This exactly corresponds to the program and statements of the Stalinist house Jew (*Hausjude*) Ehrenburg,¹² who goes further and announces that the German Volk must be smashed and exterminated. And this again is the same goal that is being pursued in the plans for the future by the American cabinet member and Jew Morgenthau.¹³

These thoughts do not come as a surprise for me. They always existed with our enemies. Only in order to prevent their implementation did I strive to make the German Volk strong and resistant. Internally and externally, it should have the strength that is necessary to defend its life. We have been fighting this struggle of life and death for over five years now. Perhaps it will even be harsher in its demands in the sixth year of war. It has, however, passed its zenith.

Up to the present day, the German Volk and its Wehrmacht have successfully resisted our enemies' attempts to strangle us, despite numerous crises and many setbacks. In the coming year also, we will succeed in parrying the enemy's offensive operations and in finally breaking them through counterblows. If we have not been spared great setbacks in this mighty struggle, which is not only being fought for Germany but also for the future of all of Europe, then the reason for that does not lie with the German Volk and its Wehrmacht but on the side of our European allies. Starting with the collapse of the Romanian-Italian-Hungarian front at the Don River and their later complete dissolution, to the sabotage of the joint conduct of the war by the Italian royal house and the putsch against the Duce's Fascist Italy, which was on our side, there is a straight line of treason. It has found its prolongation in the pitiful capitulation of the Finnish state leadership, the breach of faith of the Romanian king and his entourage, the giving up of Bulgaria, as well as in the disgraceful behavior of the former Hungarian regent.¹⁴ The consequences for the political and military conduct of the war were grave.

In addition, there was the perfidious attack at home in the last year, committed by dishonorable criminals who were however defeated within a few hours and, since that time, have been relentlessly dealt with. Although July 20 had especially depressing military consequences at the fronts and, regrettably, helped to shake the faith in the German power of resistance with friend and enemy, it must be seen as a turning point of the German fate. After all, this attempt to destroy the social German Volksstaat at the time of its most bitter fight through a plot at home and to surrender Germany to the international conspiracy has failed once and for all. I can assure you that this was the last attempt of its kind. Thereby, however, my declaration of September 1, 1939, is reconfirmed, namely, that the German Volk cannot be defeated by force of arms or time in this war, and that, above all, a November 1918 will never be repeated.

This resolve, my soldiers, means heavy sacrifices for the entire German Volk and, in the first place, for you. It alone will save the nation in the future! A nation would surely be doomed by the misery that Germany has to endure today, if it gives itself up for lost, because this giving up means at the same time a renunciation of any claim to life in the future.

January 1, 1945

My soldiers!

I know your sufferings and your sacrifices. I know what I had to ask of you and what is being asked of you. Fate has set me—who at one time wanted to build up Germany as a first-rate social and cultural state—the most difficult task conceivable for a human being. I bear my fate and realize that I owe gratitude to Providence, which has found me worthy enough to take on such hard work in the history of our Volk, a work which will decide its future. All the more after July 20, I lived only for the preparations which would sooner or later allow us to go from the purely defensive to the offensive. We are aware that the fortress of Europe cannot be defended by German forces alone to the extent that this was possible earlier. We were therefore forced, as the victims of the treason of our allies, to pull in entire fronts and shorten others. However, I did not take any step backward without putting up the fiercest resistance. Our enemies must know that every kilometer in the direction of Germany will demand more blood of them and that they cannot ever count on a relaxation or giving up of this resistance. What you, my soldiers, accomplished on so many fronts, on the ground, above or below water, and in the air, is superhuman. The sacrifices made by the German homeland, especially its women, old men, and children, are no less so. Finally, what we owe to the German male and female worker, to the German male peasant and especially to the German female peasant, is for all of us all the more a sacred obligation to do as soldiers everything possible, so that these joint sacrifices are not in vain. In this spirit, I have gone through endless worries for years, worked, tortured myself with decisions, and am today more than ever convinced that at the end of this struggle will stand a glorious success, unique in our history.

Whoever gained such victories as you, my soldiers, who was not broken by such terrible setbacks, who so heroically endured and suffered as our homeland did, who worked so diligently as our entire Volk, cannot be preordained to perish, but is destined to live! Therefore, my confidence is today stronger than ever before. In the end, we survived with success this worst year of setbacks in which we were virtually abandoned by all our allies in Europe. World powers have been trying for years now to bring about the collapse of the German Reich. In the formerly allied, yet today betrayed countries, people are beginning to realize that this struggle is a conflict of life and death and that no nation can avoid a clear decision. Everywhere the hollowness and meaninglessness of the assurances of our enemies reveal themselves. As soon as they occupy a territory, order collapses and chaos ensues. Democracy is unfit to solve even the smallest task on this continent. Its political anarchy is followed by economic chaos, and with these two comes misery. The “liberated” areas of Europe at most lose their German order and gain instead international unemployment with the usual hunger and need. After all, this most densely populated continent in the world can live only through a planned utilization of all its individual energies, and at the same time through a strict taming of its egotistical drives. Only two leaderships in Europe have honestly tried to deal with this problem: the National Socialist one in Germany and the Fascist one in Italy. To what extent the solution of these questions succeeded in particular

January 1, 1945

in Germany is best proved by the discipline that we still have even in spite of the heaviest burdens in the sixth year of the war. I will try to see to it, my soldiers, that, at home, the leadership and initiative of the party supports your fight, that the nation is provided with life's necessities, and that all destructive forces, no matter who they are and what posts they occupy, will be destroyed.

However, I also expect of you, more than ever before, that you will do your duty especially in this sixth year of the fight of life and death; that the officers and men of the entire Wehrmacht, army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS realize that the existence or nonexistence of our Volk depends on their deployment; that all the other organizations—at their head the newly-born Volkssturm—the Reich labor service, and all the other formations of our movement in the Wehrmacht's service, as well as the women and girls at the fighting or defending front, will follow your example. The year 1945 will demand of us the utmost in courage and initiative. At the same time, it will be the year of the historic turn of events. The soldiers of the allied European governments and nations¹⁵ who march on our side represent the cells for a rebuilding of this continent, which is our shared homeland, in which our ancestors lived, in which they struggled with fate throughout the millennia, and which today they defend unto death.

The Almighty, who has led our Volk in its previous fight for life and weighed, rewarded, and judged it in accordance with its merits, will this time encounter a generation worthy of His blessings. You were the unfading witnesses for this in the past years, my German soldiers, and you will be that all the more in the coming year!

On New Year's Day, Hitler received Göring, Keitel, Jodl, Guderian, and other prominent persons at the Ziegenberg headquarters and accepted their best wishes for the new year.¹⁶

On the same day, a special celebration was the presentation of the Golden Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds to Lieutenant Colonel Rudel at the Führer headquarters. Hitler promoted him to the rank of Colonel "in appreciation of his incessantly proved great heroism, his singular flying and fighting successes."¹⁷ It was the first and last time Hitler could award his newest medal, which was limited to twelve recipients.

There was hardly any mention of Hitler's New Year's offensive in Alsace in the OKW reports. Even though the Rhine was crossed north and south of Strasbourg, the military did not achieve any noteworthy successes. Guderian spoke about "playing with battalions in the Vosges."¹⁸

The New Year's offensive in the direction of Budapest, led by Generals Wöhler and Balck, together with SS Gruppenführer and Lieutenant General of the Waffen SS Gille, met with initial successes.

January 10, 1945

However, as the Russians launched a counteroffensive, it quickly deteriorated into a terrible disaster.

On January 9, Guderian returned to the Ziegenberg headquarters to report on the impending major Russian attack. He requested additional forces, which Hitler denied him:¹⁹

The east [eastern front] must help itself and make do with what it has.

Hitler called Guderian's documentation of Russian troop strengths "completely idiotic." In spite of all the big talk by Hitler, the discussions of the situation on January 9 and 10 with Göring, Keitel, Jodel, Guderian and others²⁰ revealed the catastrophic situation on all German fronts. For hours, Hitler and his generals debated what should have been done and what could have been done to augment the strength of the German Luftwaffe, reinforce anti-aircraft artillery, improve the equipment of the panzers, and so on.

However, all these reflections were a waste of time. Even if Hitler and his generals had waged the war differently, the outcome would still have been the same. The German war potential was simply not up to the task. All efforts and strategies were in vain.

During the catastrophic winter of 1941–1942 (the defeat of the German army in front of Moscow), Hitler had supported the collection of winter clothes by opportunistic decrees.²¹ However, the clothes had reached the front much too late or not at all. The winter of 1944–1945 proved to be another catastrophe, and Hitler again ordered a clothing collection for the Wehrmacht and the German Volkssturm. Therefore on January 10 he signed the following decree on the "protection of the collection of clothes and pieces of equipment for the Wehrmacht and the German Volkssturm":²²

Führer Headquarters, January 10, 1945

The collection of clothes and pieces of equipment represents a renewed sacrifice by the German Volk for its soldiers. I therefore order the following:

Whoever enriches himself by collected items or those designated for collection by authorized personnel, or withdraws such items from their use, will be punished by death.

This decree will come into force with its announcement on the air. It will apply to the Greater German Reich, the General Government, and the areas occupied by German troops.

Adolf Hitler

January 16, 1945

On January 12, Hitler created a new medal: a “Badge for the Destruction of Low-Flying Aircraft.” It was his last medal and a rather sad one, too: it was to be awarded for shooting down airplanes with “hand weapons or small-calibre automatic weapons.” Hitler’s decree read as follows:²³

Führer Headquarters, January 12, 1945

The downing of enemy low-flying aircraft by all available means is especially important. I therefore order the introduction of a Badge for the Destruction of Low-Flying Aircraft for the downing of airplanes by hand weapons or small-calibre automatic weapons. The implementing regulations will be decreed by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command.

Adolf Hitler²⁴

On this day Hitler also personally congratulated Göring on his fifty-second birthday.²⁵

On the same day the major Russian offensive under Marshal Konev began on the central sector of the eastern front. Within two weeks the Russians reached Upper Silesia and the Oder River. On the first day they had already broken through the German lines at Baranov. Two days later, the Russian armies were threatening Kielce.

At the Ziegenberg headquarters, Hitler was beginning to liven up. On January 15, he ordered the immediate transfer of the Panzer Corps *Grossdeutschland* to the vicinity of Kielce in East Prussia. A look at the map revealed the technical impossibility of carrying out this order, not to mention the surprising speed of the Russian advances. Guderian recalled that he refused to pass this order on.²⁶ Hitler was furious and, on the same day, he decided to leave the Ziegenberg headquarters and return to Berlin. His plans for an offensive in the west had once and for all come to an end.

On January 16, Hitler showed up in Berlin. In the somewhat wrecked but still habitable Reich Chancellery, Guderian informed him in a presentation of how precarious the situation was.²⁷ As always, Hitler knew what to do: he simply had to attack Hungary in order to confuse the Russians! He ordered the Sixth Panzer Army to Hungary. Supposedly the maintenance of the Hungarian oil fields was important.

Guderian was not convinced of the necessity and possible success of this operation. He tried to persuade Hitler at least to order an evacuation of Kurland, where the German Army Group North was cut off on land. This proved just as useless as his earlier attempt to get Hitler

January 21, 1945

to give him troops from the west. Hitler now named Schörner as the commander in chief of Army Group Center.

From this time on, Guderian would make daily presentations to Hitler at the Reich Chancellery. Guderian's headquarters were located only thirty kilometers away at Zossen.

On January 17, Hitler received news that Warsaw could not be defended by the weak [German] forces there. He was beside himself with anger and ordered that Warsaw must be held at all costs. Nevertheless, a day later, Warsaw fell. Hitler then ordered Guderian to prepare the responsible officers of the general staff for an interrogation. When Guderian tried to protect his subordinates, Hitler said the following:²⁸

No, I do not want to hit you but the general staff. I cannot tolerate it that a group of intellectuals presumes to talk their superiors into buying their views. However, that is the system of the general staff, and I want to put an end to this system.

The following night, Hitler ordered Lieutenant General Maisel, who had already helped him eliminate Rommel, to arrest the general staff officers von Bonin, von dem Knesebeck, and von Christen at the point of a submachine gun.²⁹

On January 19, Kaltenbrunner and Gestapo chief Müller interrogated Guderian for hours on the Warsaw affair. Events at the eastern front, however, followed in such rapid succession that the whole Warsaw matter stepped into the background.

On January 21, Hitler sent a telex to all military commanders, down to divisional commanders, and again prohibited them from taking any action on their own and from retreating. It read as follows:³⁰

January 21, 1945

High Command of the Armed Forces (Operations Staff)

I order as follows:

1. The commanders in chief, commanding generals, and divisional commanders are personally responsible to me for reporting in good time:

- (a) every decision to carry out an operational movement;
- (b) every attack planned at divisional level and upwards which does not conform with the general directives laid down by the high command;
- (c) every offensive action in quiet sectors of the front, over and above normal shock-troop activities, which is calculated to draw the enemy's attention to the sector;
- (d) every plan for disengaging or withdrawing forces;
- (e) every plan for surrendering a position, a local strongpoint, or a fortress;

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They must ensure that I have time to intervene in this decision if I think fit, and that my counterorders can reach the frontline troops in time.

2. Commanders in chief, commanding generals, and divisional commanders, the chiefs of the general staffs, and each individual officer of the general staff, or officers employed on the general staffs, are responsible to me that every report made to me either directly or through the normal channels should contain nothing but the unvarnished truth. In the future, I shall impose draconian punishment on any attempt at concealment, whether deliberate or arising from carelessness or oversight.

3. I must point out that the maintenance of signals communications, particularly in heavy fighting and critical situations, is a prerequisite for the conduct of battle. Each officer commanding troops is responsible to me for ensuring that these communications, both to higher headquarters and to subordinate commanders, are not broken, and for seeing that, by exhausting every means and engaging himself personally, permanent communication in every case is ensured with the commanders above and below.

Adolf Hitler

How little effect such morale-boosting orders had at this time was evidenced by the capitulation without a fight of the Fortress Lötzen in East Prussia on January 23. The superiority of the Russians on the one hand, and the battle-weariness of the German troops on the other hand, were more compelling than Hitler's orders. Of course, he would never admit this. Instead, he wanted to court-martial the responsible officers, Colonel General Reinhardt and Lieutenant General von Hossbach, because they were allegedly "hand in glove with Seydlitz."³¹

On January 23, the following official statement was published:³²

According to the OKW report, the enemy penetrated Allenstein yesterday after heavy fighting. So as not to allow the national memorial at Tannenberg to fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks, it was dynamited by German troops. The coffins of Field Marshal von Hindenburg and his wife, as well as the flags of the glorious East and West Prussian regiments, had earlier been brought to safety.³³ The enemy found only ruins at the monument's site. As soon as this area is again liberated by German troops, the Tannenberg memorial will be rebuilt at the same location.

On January 24, Hitler addressed a telegram to five thousand exchanged, wounded soldiers in Upper Bavaria. It was read to them in two Upper Bavarian district towns by Gauleiter Giesler:³⁴

My Comrades!

In the name of the German Volk, I most cordially welcome you to the homeland. Our joy is tied to yours that, as seriously wounded German soldiers, you were finally able to return home from war captivity.

January 24, 1945

As your supreme commander, I thank you on this day for your brave deployment in the freedom fight of our Volk and for all the sacrifices that you had to make for it.

The homeland is worthy of you. It has endured great suffering in our Volk's fateful struggle of life and death. It bears this with an attitude that is worthy of a frontline soldier. It will do everything to help you, who are now spiritually restored, lessen the physical suffering caused by your wounds.

I also greet the returning members of the medical services and express to them my appreciation of their dutiful frontline deployment for the care of their wounded comrades.

Adolf Hitler

On January 25, a reshuffling of the following high SA posts was announced:³⁵

Upon the suggestion of the SA chief of staff, the Führer has newly appointed the following SA leaders as leaders of SA groups: as leader of the SA Group Südmark, SA Obergruppenführer Brennecke, previously leader of the SA Group Pomerania; as leader of the SA Group Pomerania, SA Obergruppenführer Nibbe, previously leader of the SA Group Südmark; as leader of the SA Group Saxony, SA Gruppenführer Ivers, previously leader of the SA Group Vistula; as leader of the SA Group Vistula, SA Obergruppenführer Orth, previously bureau chief of the SA high command.

The previous acting leader of the Group Saxony, Brigadeführer Rabe, has taken over the post of the Gau chief of staff in the German Volkssturm.

The reorganization of the SA groups surrounding the Reich capital proved anew how suspicious Hitler was of the SA. It was characteristic that he could not bring himself to appoint a new leader of the SA Group Berlin-Brandenburg. This position had been vacant since the hanging of SA Obergruppenführer Graf Helldorff.

On January 24, Guderian called on von Ribbentrop in order to discuss the initiation of peace negotiations with him, in view of the catastrophic military situation. Von Ribbentrop was appalled and refused to discuss it. When Guderian arrived at the Reich Chancellery for the evening discussion of the situation, Hitler greeted him with these words:³⁶

When the chief of staff of the general staff goes to see the Reich foreign minister and informs him of the situation in the east with the objective of achieving an armistice with the western powers, then he is committing high treason.

Hitler said this only to frighten Guderian. He never took any concrete steps against him.

January 27, 1945

Hitler, Guderian, Göring, and Jodl, among others, met again for a discussion of the situation on January 27, which took place at the Reich Chancellery at 4:00 p.m.³⁷ They engaged in endless talk about what could be done to improve the situation. Hitler, with his head in the clouds, claimed the following:

The Americans lost eighty-five thousand men this month. That amounts to fifty percent of their total losses in the [First] World War.³⁸

At the same time, he announced a “great armament program.” More than nine hundred thousand Sturmpistolen (machine pistols) would be produced every month, he claimed, not to mention the new Volksgewehr.³⁹

When a suggestion was made to move six thousand SS men from the Lichtenfelde barracks to the eastern front, Hitler quickly returned to reality and refused this transfer categorically. While he did not state his reasons for doing so, it was sufficiently clear that he needed those men for his own personal security in the event of a revolt in Berlin.

In the course of the conversation, Hitler, Göring, and Jodl discussed Generals Student, Hausser, Blankowitz, and others. Oddly enough, they hoped that an offer to accept a surrender would come from the English. After all, they had to be frightened out of their wits in view of the Russian advances, the men at Hitler’s headquarters believed.

Hitler: I don’t really know. Do you think that the English are still following all Russian developments with the same inner enthusiasm?

Jodl: No, certainly not. The plans were entirely different. Perhaps the full extent of this will become visible only later.

Göring: That we hold on over there and let the Russians conquer all of Germany in the meantime is certainly not what they want. If things go on like this, we will get a telegram in a few days [i.e., saying that “the English want to join the Germans”]. There is nothing to the view that we do not let them in at all and that, according to the present view of the enemy, we are holding out like crazy in the west while the Russians keep moving into Germany and occupying practically all of Germany.

Hitler: In that respect, the national committee, this organization of traitors, could be of a certain significance. If the Russians really proclaim a national government, then fear will take hold of England.

Jodl: Yes, the English have always regarded the Russians with suspicion.

Hitler: I have arranged for something to fall into their hands, namely, the report that the Russians are deploying two hundred thousand of our men under the command of German officers completely infected by

January 28, 1945

Communism, and that they want to let them go on the march. I asked that this report be dropped into English hands. I gave it to the foreign minister [von Ribbentrop]. That is something that will have an effect on them, as if you stick them with a needle.

Göring: They entered the war so that we wouldn't get to the east but not so that the east would get all the way to the Atlantic.

Hitler: That is perfectly clear. It would be unnatural. English papers are already asking with bitterness: Does the war make any sense?

This was Hitler's old favorite theory that he would gain England's friendship by preventing a Russian expansion to the Atlantic. In reality, the English had always, at least in the twentieth century, considered German expansionism much more dangerous than Russian expansionism.

On January 28, Hitler received Quisling at the Reich Chancellery. It was his last reception of a diplomat. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁰

At his headquarters, the Führer received the Norwegian prime minister Vidkun Quisling for a trusting and heartfelt exchange of views. . . . The Führer again confirmed his resolve, as already conveyed by Reichskommissar Terboven to the Norwegian public in September 1943, that, following the victorious conclusion of the European fateful struggle, Norway would be restored to complete freedom and independence,⁴¹ upon assumption of those obligations that result from the joint assurance of the security of the European community of nations.

The talks at the Führer's were attended by the Reich foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery Dr. Lammers, the head of the party chancellery, Martin Bormann, and Reichskommissar Terboven. Prime Minister Quisling was accompanied by his Norwegian ambassador Stören and his adjutant Captain Sundberg.

On January 28, Hitler sent out the following telex regarding the Volkssturm:⁴²

Subject: Employment of the Volkssturm

Experience in the east has shown that Volkssturm, emergency (Alarm),⁴³ and reserve units have little fighting value when left to themselves, and can be quickly destroyed. The fighting value of these units, which are for the most part strong in numbers but weak in the equipment required for modern battle, is immeasurably higher when they go into action with troops of the regular army in the field.

I therefore order: where Volkssturm, emergency, and reserve units are available, together with regular units, in any battle sector, mixed battle groups

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(brigades) will be formed under unified command, so as to stiffen and support the Volksturm, emergency, and reserve units.

Adolf Hitler

In late January, Hitler made an excursion to Goebbels's apartment in Schwanenwerder near Berlin and had tea with the Goebbels family. Yet, fearing an assassination attempt, he had his servant Linge bring along his own thermos of tea and also a packet of cookies. They talked about the old days. The Goebbels family was much impressed by the honor of Hitler's visit, the only one of its kind in five years.⁴⁴

That Goebbels was ready to do everything Hitler wanted in the fight to the bitter end was evidenced by his order on the securing of frontline deployments, an order which he issued on January 26 in his capacity as "Reich plenipotentiary for total war deployment." It began with the following words:⁴⁵

The Führer has ordered a review of the Wehrmacht, Waffen SS, and police in the war zones in the homeland with the objective of freeing a maximum number of soldiers for transfer to the front. It is the duty of the officers of the Wehrmacht, Waffen SS, and police to furnish all required information and documents to the commissioner carrying out this review. By virtue of special legal authorization, the following is ordered: [a list of punishments in case of violation of this law followed, including prison sentences and the death penalty].

On January 30, Hitler spoke to the public from the Reich Chancellery in commemoration of his seizure of power for the last time.

After the "party narrative," Hitler again proclaimed his "unchanging will not to shrink from anything in this struggle in order to rescue our Volk from this most gruesome fate of all time." He once more tried to frighten the English with the specter of Bolshevism and prophesied: "Not only will England not be in a position to tame Bolshevism, but its own development will increasingly follow the inevitable course of this degenerative disease."

Hitler again claimed that he ruled by divine right. That his life had been spared on July 20, he regarded as a "confirmation" of his mission.

Hitler's radio address read as follows:⁴⁶

German Volksgenossen! National Socialists!

When, twelve years ago, the now deceased Reich president von Hindenburg entrusted me, as the leader of the strongest party, with the chancellorship, Germany faced the same situation at home as it does today abroad with regard to international politics. Initiated and carried out according

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to plan through the Treaty of Versailles, the process of the economic destruction and annihilation of the democratic republic led to a situation that was slowly being regarded as permanent: nearly seven million unemployed, seven million part-time workers, ruined peasants, destroyed trade, and a corresponding breakdown of commerce. The German ports were only ship cemeteries. The financial situation of the Reich threatened at any moment to lead to the collapse not only of the nation, but also of the Länder [provinces] and the [local] communities. However, what was decisive was the following: behind this systematic economic destruction of Germany was the specter of Asian Bolshevism, just as today. And just as on a large scale today, the bourgeois world on a much smaller scale was completely incapable, in the years before our seizure of power, of effectively opposing this development.

Even after the collapse of the year 1918, it was still not recognized that an old world was passing away and a new world was being born. It was not a question of supporting by all means what had become decayed or rotten and artificially preserving it, but a question of the necessity of replacing it with something visibly healthy. A bygone social order had broken down, and any attempt to maintain it was bound to fail. Thus, it was no different from what is happening now on a large scale, when likewise the bourgeois states are doomed and only Volksgemeinschaften which possess a clear orientation and are ideologically fortified have a chance of surviving this gravest European crisis in many centuries.

We were granted only six years of peace after January 30, 1933. In these six years, we secured so many tremendous accomplishments and planned even greater ones; so many and such great things that we all the more elicited the envy of our democratic, good-for-nothing surrounding world.

What was decisive, however, was that we succeeded with superhuman efforts in these six years in reorganizing the defense of the German Volkskörper, which meant not so much giving it the material military strength as the spiritual power of resistance necessary for self-assertion.

The gruesome fate which is today overwhelming the east and which exterminates tens and hundreds of thousands of human beings in villages and market towns, in the countryside and in the cities, will, with the utmost effort, be parried and overcome by us, despite all setbacks and severe trials. If this is at all possible, then it is because, since the year 1933, an inner change has taken place in the German Volk. If a Germany of the Treaty of Versailles still existed today, Europe would long have been swept away by the Central Asian floods. There is no need to discuss this with blockheads who will never die out and who are of the opinion that a defenseless Germany would not have become the victim of this Jewish-international world conspiracy because of its impotence.

That is nothing other than turning the laws of nature upside down! Since when does the fox not kill the defenseless goose just because the goose is not aggressive by nature, and since when does a wolf become a pacifist because sheep do not wear armor? That—as I said earlier—there are bourgeois sheep who believe that nonsense in all earnestness just proves how necessary it was to eliminate an era whose educational system was capable of breeding such

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personalities, sustaining them, and granting them political influence. Long before National Socialism came to power, a merciless fight against this Jewish-Asiatic Bolshevism was already raging. If it did not invade Europe as early as the years 1919–1920, it failed only because it was too weak at the time and too poorly armed. Its attempt to eliminate Poland was not abandoned because of compassion for the Polish, but because of the lost battle of Warsaw.⁴⁷ Its intention to destroy Hungary was never realized, not because it reconsidered but because the Bolshevik force could not be sustained militarily. Likewise the attempt to shatter Germany was not abandoned because its success was no longer desired, but because it was not possible to eliminate the rest of our Volk's natural will to resist. Jewry then immediately started the systematic breakdown of our Volk. By so doing, it found the best allies in those stubborn citizens who did not wish to admit that the age of the bourgeois world was over and would never return, that the epoch of unrestrained economic liberalism belonged to the past and could only lead to collapse, that the great tasks of the present can only be managed by the authoritarian, concentrated strength of the nation based on the law of equal rights for all and resulting equal duties, which, in turn, means that the fulfillment of these equal duties will inevitably lead to equal rights.

Thus, National Socialism, in the midst of a gigantic economic, social, and cultural reconstruction, gave the German Volk an armament, particularly in terms of education, that alone was suited to be transformed into military values. The power of resistance of our nation has grown so tremendously since January 30, 1933, that it can no longer be compared with the earlier epoch. To maintain this inner power of resistance is therefore the surest guarantor of the final victory!

If today Europe is the victim of a serious illness, then the affected states will either have to overcome it by summoning their entire and utmost power of resistance, or they will be doomed. But the convalescent, that is the survivor, overcomes the climaxes of such an illness only in a crisis that greatly weakens him. It is therefore all the more our unchanging will not to shrink from anything in this struggle to rescue our Volk from this most gruesome fate of all time, and to obey steadfastly and loyally the commandment of the preservation of our nation. The Almighty has created our Volk. By defending its existence, we defend His creation. That this defense is connected with nameless misfortune, suffering, and pain without equal, lets us become all the more attached to this Volk. However, it also lets us gain that hardness which is necessary for doing our duty even at the worst crisis points. This means not only our duty toward the decent, eternal Germany, but also our duty toward those few men without honor who divorce themselves from their Volk. Therefore, there is only one commandment for us in this fateful struggle: Who fights honorably can save his own life and that of his loved ones; who attacks the nation from behind, as a spineless coward, will under any circumstances die a shameful death. That National Socialism has awakened and reinforced this spirit in our German Volk is its greatest accomplishment. Once the bells of peace ringing out after this mighty international drama has subsided, then

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people will realize what the German Volk owes to this spiritual rebirth: it is no less than its existence in this world.

A few months and weeks ago, the Allied statesmen still spoke openly about Germany's fate. Then a few papers admonished them that it would be wiser if they would rather make promises, even though there was no intention of keeping these promises. As a relentless National Socialist and fighter for my Volk, I would like to assure these other statesmen once and for all at this hour that any attempt to impress National Socialist Germany with phrases of Wilson's type assumes a naiveté that the present Germany does not know. However, it is not at all important that in the democracies political activities and lies go hand in hand. What is important is that any promise these statesmen give a nation is completely insignificant today, because they are no longer in a position to follow through on any such assurance. That is no different from one sheep's assuring another that it will protect it against the tiger. In opposition to that I repeat my prophesy: Not only will England not be in a position to tame Bolshevism, but its own development will follow the inevitable course of this degenerative disease. The democracies can no longer get rid of the spirits they themselves have summoned up from the steppes of Asia.

All the small European nations which capitulated trusting in the Allied assurances are heading for their complete extermination. Whether they meet this fate earlier or later is—in view of its inevitability—completely without significance. The Kremlin Jews are moved exclusively by tactical considerations in their decisions to proceed with brute force in one case and temporary restraint in the other. The end will always be the same.

Germany will never suffer this fate! The victory gained twelve years ago in the interior of our country guarantees this. Whatever our enemies may come up with, whatever suffering they may cause the German cities, the German landscapes, and above all our people, pales in comparison with the incorrigible misery and misfortune that would hit all of us, should the plutocratic-Bolshevik conspiracy win. It is, therefore, all the more necessary on the twelfth anniversary of the seizure of power to make one's heart stronger than ever before, and to harden oneself in the sacred resolve to take up arms, no matter where, no matter under what circumstances, until victory finally crowns our efforts. On this day, I would like to leave no doubt about one other thing: in spite of a hostile environment, at one time in the past I chose my way in the depth of my being, and I followed this path as an unknown, nameless man, up to the final victory. Often proclaimed dead and always wished dead, at long last I was the victor! My present life is likewise being exclusively determined by the duties incumbent on me.

Together, they amount to only one duty, namely, to work for my Volk and to fight for it. Only He can absolve me from this duty who has called on me to take it on.⁴⁸ It was in Providence's hands to eliminate me through the bomb that went off only one-and-a-half meters away from me on July 20 and, thereby, to end my life's work. That the Almighty protected me on that day is something I regard as a confirmation of the mission I was assigned. I will therefore continue in the coming years to follow the path of the

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uncompromising representation of the interests of my Volk, ignoring all need and danger, and filled with the sacred conviction that the Almighty will in the end not abandon him who wanted nothing other all his life than to spare his Volk a fate it never deserved in terms of its numbers and significance.

I therefore appeal in this hour to the entire German Volk, but especially to my old comrades in arms and all soldiers who are at its head, to arm themselves with an even greater, hardened spirit of resistance, until, as once before, we can lay on the grave of the dead of this mighty struggle a wreath with a bow inscribed: But you have triumphed in the end!⁴⁹

I expect every German therefore to fulfill his duty to the utmost, and to take on every sacrifice that will be and must be demanded of him. I expect of every healthy man that he risk life and limb in this battle. I expect every ill, infirm, or otherwise indispensable [*sic*] man to work with the utmost effort. I expect the inhabitants of the cities to forge the weapons for this fight, and I expect every farmer to give bread to the soldiers and workers of this fight by limiting his own consumption as much as possible. I expect all women and girls to support this fight with the utmost zeal, as they have done up to now. I turn to the German youth with particular confidence. By forming such a committed community, we have the right to step before the Almighty and ask Him for His mercy and blessings. After all, a nation cannot do more than this: those who can fight, fight; those who can work, work; and all come together to sacrifice with only one thought in mind: to secure freedom, national honor, and a future for life.

No matter how grave the crisis may be at this moment, we will overcome it in the end, in spite of everything, thanks to our unchangeable will, our readiness to sacrifice, and our abilities. We will survive this misery. In this fight, too, it is not Central Asia that will win but Europe! And at its head will be the one nation which, for one-and-a-half millennia, has represented Europe as its hegemonic power against the east and will represent it in the future: our Greater German Reich, the German nation!

On January 30, Hitler awarded Oak Leaf Knight's Crosses to the following SS commanders in the Budapest area:⁵⁰ SS Obergruppenführer and General of the Waffen SS Pfeffer-Wildenbruch (Ninth SS Army Corps); SS Brigadeführer and Major General of the Waffen SS Rumohr (Eighth SS Cavalry Division "Florian Geyer"); and SS Brigadeführer and Major General of the Waffen SS Zehender (Twenty-Second SS Volunteer Cavalry Division). SS Oberführer and Colonel General of the Waffen SS Dörner received the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds.

No special festivities in commemoration of January 30 took place. On the other hand, money was collected in cutoff "fortresses," significantly not for the Winterhilfswerk, but for the Red Cross. As mentioned before, the party and its organizations had lost their

February 4, 1945

significance. The commander of the Fortress Schneidemühl (West Prussia), Lieutenant Colonel Remlinger, received the following telegram from Himmler:⁵¹

Accept my appreciation of, and gratitude to, you and your courageous soldiers at the fortress Schneidemühl for your attitude in the battle and your willingness to sacrifice, as evident in your donation of a thousand Reichsmarks to the German Red Cross on January 30. Continue to hold the Schneidemühl!

Heil Hitler!

Yours,

H. Himmler, Reichsführer SS

On January 31, Hitler issued several orders which were sent out in the form of telexes. One, for example, dealt with the expansion of field fortifications, another with the housing and deployment of V weapons.⁵²

On February 4, Hitler signed this order on the transfer of refugees from the east to Denmark:⁵³

In order to relieve the transport situation in the Reich immediately, I order as follows:

Our compatriots temporarily moved back from the eastern part of the Reich will be accommodated in Denmark as well as in the Reich. In particular, those civilians will be evacuated to Denmark who

(1) can be moved by the navy, without impinging upon the day-to-day movement of troops and supplies by sea, or who

(2) have been landed in western Baltic ports, including Stettin and Swinemünde, and must be moved from there by rail.

The Reich plenipotentiary will cooperate with the local Danish authorities in arranging suitable accommodation for evacuated civilians. The armed forces will afford all possible assistance in this respect.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's discussions of the situation in February 1945 were done in style. His huge office in the Reich Chancellery was still intact and formed a splendid frame for the meetings, especially in contrast to the conference bunkers and barracks at his headquarters in East Prussia, the Ukraine, or the Ziegenberg. The number of participants in these conferences had also greatly increased. Sometimes repeatedly during the day and in the middle of the night, he summoned his great military experts, Göring, Dönitz, Keitel, Jodl, and Guderian, to his office. It did not concern Hitler that it took many of these men a long time to reach and leave the Reich Chancellery, and that it was quite dangerous for them because of the air raids.

February 12, 1945

These discussions of the situation hardly seemed to differ from the grandiose meetings at the beginning of the war. Almost all the same men still attended them. One thing, however, had greatly changed: the number of soldiers fighting at the front was rapidly decreasing.

A young cavalry captain with the headquarters of the general staff, Gerhard Boldt, vividly described two of these discussions of the situation in February.⁵⁴

The topic discussed at the first discussion was the evacuation of Kurland, something Guderian had already demanded repeatedly.⁵⁵ On this occasion, it was Dönitz who brought up the subject. Hitler was almost screaming when he replied as follows:

I have already said once before that a retreat by the Kurland troops is out of the question. I cannot do without this material. Besides, I must take Sweden into consideration.⁵⁶ We can withdraw one division. Guderian, draw up a corresponding proposal for me by tomorrow.

That same night, Guderian and Boldt were forced to make their way back again to the Reich Chancellery from Zossen. The second discussion began at 1:00 a.m., thirty-seven steps below the earth in the Führerbunker because of the danger of air raids.

Guderian gave a presentation on the situation at the eastern front and gave details of the strength of the Russian units. This time Hitler did not call these figures “completely idiotic”.⁵⁷ He made no reply at all, probably because he did not know what to reply. Nevertheless, he still wanted to make a scene for the benefit of the participants in the conference, who looked expectantly at him. For some time, he quietly sat in his chair and did not move. Then, he slowly got up, took a few shuffling steps, and stared ahead. Suddenly, he stopped and dismissed the officers “very quickly and very coolly.”

On February 12, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin issued a joint declaration at the end of their conference in Yalta, which had lasted from February 4 to 11. At the Soviet holiday resort in the Crimea, the Allied leaders expressed their determination to destroy Hitler’s Reich for good and to divide up Germany into zones of occupation. A further result of the Yalta Conference was the plan for the foundation of the United Nations.

Oddly, it was precisely at this time that the German foreign ministry put out peace-feelers through its representatives in Stockholm. This move even had Hitler’s approval!⁵⁸

February 13, 1945

Of course, Hitler would have liked to conclude peace in view of the disastrous situation. However, he was not ready to make any compromises. He permitted the peace-feelers but continued to display his haughty disdain for this move to his entourage:

Nothing will come out of it, but if you really insist, go ahead and try.

Nevertheless, he secretly hoped that something might “come out of it” after all. He was very disappointed when he heard that the enemies insisted on an unconditional surrender and his departure from office. Even though this demand was self-evident after all that had happened, its effect on the power-hungry German Führer was like that of the red cape on the bull. The idea that anybody besides him would have a say in Germany drove him wild!

When the state secretary with the foreign ministry, von Steengracht, and Bormann’s brother explained to him, “The English will reject all agreements until you are deposed,” he acted like a madman. Even his servant Linge, who was present on this occasion, did not recall ever having witnessed such a fit of rage.⁵⁹ Hitler jumped up, hit the table, and screamed the following:

No negotiations must take place! If there are to be negotiations, then it is I who will lead them!

In those weeks of February, Hitler was very much predisposed to making scenes. Guderian, who had never personally witnessed any of Hitler’s outbursts, was to get a first taste of Hitler’s acting talents on February 13.⁶⁰

At the discussion of the situation on this day, the topic discussed was a limited German offensive along the Oder. The objective was to establish a land connection with West Prussia. The attack was supposed to start on February 15. Guderian demanded that Hitler have army general Wenck assist “superior commander” Himmler. Hitler would not hear of it. A two-hour argument between Guderian and Hitler followed. Then Hitler decided to make a big scene. He raised his fists, his cheeks colored, he was beside himself with rage—at least Guderian thought he was. After his outburst, Hitler walked up and down the edge of the carpet, then stopped right in front of Guderian and hurled the next accusation at him. He shouted and shouted, his eyes bulged from their sockets, and the veins at his temples swelled. Guderian remained unshaken, even though it cost him great effort. As always when faced

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with such behavior, Hitler finally gave in. All of a sudden, he stopped right in front of Himmler and said:

Well, Himmler, General Wenck joins your staff this very night and leads the attack.

Then, he turned to Guderian with his most engaging smile and said the following:

Please continue your presentation. Tonight, the general staff has won a battle.

Well, the battles Hitler allowed the general staff to win were truly unusual!⁶¹

On the night of February 13 to 14, the metropolis of Dresden experienced heavy bombardment by the Royal Air Force. This air raid enraged the National Socialist rulers, who, strangely enough, had assumed that Dresden, as an old center of culture, would be spared.

The Royal Air Force's strategic air-raid squadrons paid little attention to the cultural or historic importance of the cities on which they dropped their bombs. The British government had elected the targets of the various missions in accordance with population statistics. All sites with a population over one hundred thousand inhabitants on September 1, 1939, became targets for the air raids. The government in London and the BBC repeatedly announced this intention. The broadcasts specifically mentioned cities such as Würzburg and Dresden. The German government knew this or at the very least should have known. It was sheer madness and utterly irresponsible of the German civilian administration to direct thousands of refugees from the eastern and western outreaches of the Reich to these areas. Even dislocated Berlin bureaucrats and their office staffs headed for these two cities as late as 1945. Arguments that these sites would be spared because of humanitarian or cultural considerations were completely unfounded. Had not German propaganda claimed that the Royal Air Force particularly bombed targets where German hospitals or cultural monuments were located?

The only argument to be made in defense of the administrative officers for their false assessment was that, up to this point, the two cities had been spared for no apparent reason. However, the two population centers had escaped bombardment for now because of a technical shortcoming of the British radar equipment. From across the

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Channel British radar was unable to chart the planes' approach to Dresden and Würzburg. Once hastily constructed radar installations were operational on the continent, the day for a fatal air strike against the cities had come. Bombers set out from the newly constructed radar base in the Vosges Mountains for the attack on Dresden on the night of February 13, and nearly half of Dresden was destroyed.⁶²

After the air raid, many National Socialists called for retribution in the form of lynching or executing Allied flyers who had been downed or made emergency landings, and by withdrawing from the Geneva Convention. Goebbels in particular was adamant in that kind of demand.⁶³ Hitler himself was aware that the Allies' air raids did not constitute a violation of international law. Because of its novelty, regulations on the conduct of aerial warfare were not in force before the war, in contrast to war on land and at sea, which were subject to numerous international conventions. Hitler had had such air raids flown on a number of English population centers in the years 1940 and 1941 and declared: "We will erase their cities." Accordingly, in 1943, he had refused to adopt the methods of the Japanese, who had executed American pilots following an air raid on Tokyo.⁶⁴

Now, in February 1945, a withdrawal from the Geneva Convention would have been what Hitler wanted, not so much because of the Allies' air attacks, but because of the behavior of German soldiers in the west. They appeared to him to be far too willing to surrender, since they counted on decent treatment in captivity. In the east, the German troops fought more doggedly because they feared that the Russians would treat them as Hitler had treated the Russian prisoners of war, whom he had denied all rights based on the untruthful claim that the Soviet Union was not a signatory of the Geneva Convention.⁶⁵

In Hitler's view, an abrogation of the Geneva Convention would lead the German soldiers in the west to put up a greater resistance and fight as doggedly as those in the east. Hitler explained:⁶⁶

That [surrender without a fight] is the product of our humanitarian convention, the Geneva Convention, which we uphold at all costs, because it offers us "colossal advantages." All that is over. This is what is decisive. If I explain to somebody that I will not show consideration to prisoners, but that I will instead treat the enemy prisoners mercilessly regardless of reprisals, then one or the other will think twice about desertion.

Hitler told Guderian the following:⁶⁷

February 24, 1945

Our men fight much better at the eastern front. That they capitulate so quickly in the west is the result of this stupid Geneva Convention, which assures them of mild treatment following their capture . . . We must abrogate this stupid convention.

However, nothing ever came of these theoretical discussions.⁶⁸ Hitler hoped that the English would soon ask his help against the Russians and he did not wish to provoke them needlessly by abrogating the Geneva Convention.

On February 19, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram “with heartfelt content” to Sven Hedin on his eightieth birthday.⁶⁹ On the same day, Hitler awarded von Rundstedt the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords.⁷⁰

On February 24, Hitler made a proclamation on the anniversary of the party’s foundation. It was read publicly by Hermann Esser in Munich.⁷¹ In his message, Hitler neglected to mention that he was back at the Reich Chancellery and acted as though he was writing from his military headquarters in the east or west. Of course, he could have gone to Munich himself, but he feared that his old party comrades would boo him or look at him with silent reproach in their eyes.

In his appeal, he repeated the old phrases, which had long ago been disproved by reality. In addition, he indulged in sentimental reflections on his life: “My own life is only given value by what it means for the nation.” He almost regretted that his Berghof had not been destroyed yet, because he wished “to bear everything, down to the last detail . . . that others must bear.” He continued: “The only thing that I would not be able to bear right now would be a sign of weakness from my Volk.”

Hitler’s proclamation read as follows:⁷²

Führer Headquarters, February 24, 1945

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

A sense of duty and my work prohibit my leaving headquarters at this time, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day on which the principal program of our movement was proclaimed and accepted in Munich. The evening of February 24 was marked by the anticipation of a development whose terrible significance is perhaps clear to many people in its full extent only today.

At the time, the same coalition of irreconcilable enemies as today had already joined forces in the fight against the German Volk. The unnatural alliance of exploiting capitalism and misanthropic Bolshevism that today attempts to suffocate the world was the enemy to whom we sounded the battle cry on February 24, 1920, for the preservation of the nation. Just as today, the

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apparent contradiction of terms in the cooperation of extremist forces was only an expression of the unified will of a joint agitator and beneficiary. For a long time already, international Jewry has made use of both forms in the destruction of the freedom and social happiness of the nations.

When we met for the first time in Munich on February 24, 1920, we already had a clear idea of the tendencies and consequences of the strategy of both attackers. Capitalism and Bolshevism once divided our Volk internally and disarmed it, in order to exploit and destroy it in the end. In contrast to the lesson which history teaches us today, that was only a preliminary exercise. This vilest conspiracy and bloodiest tyranny of all times against the freedom of all people tries to rise up to strike down the thousands of years of development of civilization in Europe.

There is a tremendous difference between the Germany of 1920 and that of 1945. Back then, it was a nation completely paralyzed—today, it is a military Volk fighting with the utmost fanaticism. Back then, it had an antiquated, disintegrating social order—today, it has an unshakable Volksgemeinschaft which is in the process of building things up. Had the old Germany had only a fraction of the power of resistance of the present one, then it would never have collapsed. Had the Germany of today had only a fraction of the weaknesses of back then, it would have died long ago! It is because of this that February 24, 1920, will one day go down in history as one of the great turning points in the evolution of mankind. Nameless and unknown men—with myself at their head—turned to a nation in the process of disintegration, and proclaimed a program whose theses were not understood by countless others and whose tendencies were rejected by the overwhelming majority. Today, we know the following: without this program, a new socialist German Volk and state would never have happened. Without this creation of the National Socialist German state, neither a German Reich nor a German Volk would exist today! After all, the substance of states, that is, the people themselves, are not eternal; they are born, they grow, and they pass away, according to what they are worth.

Providence does not show mercy to the weak. Instead, it only recognizes the right to live for the healthy and strong! That the National Socialist movement, which came out of nothing, was, after a long struggle, able to seize power in the year 1933 by legal means was the result of a dogged and fanatical struggle which at times almost appeared hopeless. Whoever admires the miracle of today's resistance or fails to understand it, should consider what it meant for me at the time to begin as an unknown and nameless man to wage the struggle for an idea and, thereby, the struggle for power, facing a united world of enemies. Who among our later critics would have been able, under similar conditions and starting out from nothing, to begin and complete such a work? What an incredible amount of work, will to fight, and strength of faith characterized those years of the struggle for power! What hurdles and setbacks had to be overcome! Only our doggedness and our unshakable will gained the victory in the end. Even though the framework of the struggle at the time may appear limited to us today, the objective in this fight and its course were the same as they are today. The stake was and is the existence of our German Volk!

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And that is why this fight was as sacred for us at the time as it is today. After all, on its success depended and still depends our race's existence or nonexistence in the future. Who can still doubt today that, without the National Socialist revolution and its reorganization of the German Volkskörper—seen only in domestic terms—Germany would never have been in a position to face the present crisis? Who can deny that, without the material armament of the German Volk achieved by the National Socialist revolution, even the strongest will would not have sufficed to defy the devilish coalition which threatens us today!

Only a bourgeois blockhead can delude himself into thinking that the flood from the east would not have come, had Germany opposed it with international laws on paper instead of with cannons, panzers, and airplanes! This century and our own age will weigh us in accordance with whether we were steadfast enough to oppose this invasion by Central Asia, the like of which the world has repeatedly witnessed since the turn of the era. As the invasion of the Huns was not repelled with pious wishes and admonitions, as the century-long invasions of our Reich from the southeast were not thwarted by diplomatic artistry, as the Mongol invasion did not stop at the borders of ancient cultures, so this danger cannot be eliminated by right alone, but by the strength which stands behind this right. Right means the duty to defend the life given to us by the Creator. It is the sacred right of self-preservation. The success of this self-preservation depends exclusively on the greatness of our risk and the willingness to take on every sacrifice in order to preserve this life for the future. By so doing, we are not doing anything different from what the Germanic and Latin races had to do in the age of the migration of the people; it is no different from what our ancestors had to do in the long years of the Turkish Wars and what eventually kept the Mongol invasion from transforming our continent into a desert. No League of Nations' assembly but the Battle on the Catalaunian Fields broke Attila the Hun's power. No chatter at Geneva or any type of convention will drive back Asian Bolshevism but only the will to win of our resistance and the force of our arms.

We all know how difficult the fight is. Whatever we may lose in it stands in no relation to what we will lose if it is not now nearing its victorious end. Individual areas in the east of our Reich are now experiencing what Bolshevism is in reality. What this Jewish plague does to our women, children, and men in these areas represents the cruelest fate that a human brain is capable of concocting. There is only one way of opposing these Jewish-Bolshevik annihilators of mankind and their west European and American pimps: the deployment with utmost zeal and dogged steadfastness of all the strength a merciful God allows man to find in the most difficult times in the defense of his life. Whatever becomes weak in this will fall, must and will fade away. Just as the cowardly bourgeois parties of compromise first were cornered by the Bolshevik wave and then swept away, so today those bourgeois states disappear whose narrow-minded representatives believed they could enter into an alliance with the devil in the hope of being more cunning than he is satanic. A horrifying repetition of the domestic events is taking place today in the mighty

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international political sphere of the present events. But just as in the end we struck the Bolshevik enemy to the ground by defeating the narrow-minded small-party particularism and founded the National Socialist Volksstaat, so we will today achieve victory by defeating the jumble of bourgeois-democratic views of the state, and we will crown it with the annihilation of Bolshevism. When Rome faced its most difficult hour after the Battle of Cannae, it won not through the attempt of a cowardly compromise but through the uncompromising decision to continue the struggle for its existence by summoning the remaining strength of its people. Even though the Second Punic War failed to arrest the African advances once and for all, the Third [Punic War] put an end to them!

When the greatest king in our history, Frederick II, seemed likely to succumb to an overwhelming world coalition in his Seven Years War, it was likewise only because of his heroic soul that the germ cell and the core of a coming Reich remained victorious in the end.

What we have so often preached at home about the essence of the enemy coalition has now been confirmed: it is a devilish pact between democratic capitalism and Jewish Bolshevism. All nations whose statesmen have signed this pact will sooner or later become the victims of the demonic spirits they have summoned. Let there be no doubt that National Socialist Germany will wage this fight for as long as it takes for this historic turn of events to come about here, too, and this will happen still this year.

No power on earth will make us weak at heart. They have destroyed so many of our beautiful, magnificent, and sacred things that there remains only one mission in our lives: to create a state that will rebuild what they have destroyed. Therefore, it is our duty to preserve the freedom of the German nation for the future and not allow German manpower to be abducted to Siberia, but to deploy it for the rebuilding and dedicate it to the service of our own Volk. They have taught us so many horrible things that there is no more horror for us. What the homeland must endure is dreadful, what the front must accomplish is superhuman. Yet when, in the face of such pain, a whole nation proves itself as reliable as the German Volk, then Providence cannot and will not deny its right to live in the end. As always in history, it will reward its steadfastness with the prize of earthly existence. Since so many of our possessions have been destroyed, this can only reinforce us in our fanatical determination to see our enemies a thousand times over as what they truly are: destroyers of an eternal civilization and annihilators of mankind! And out of this hatred will grow a sacred will: to oppose these annihilators of our existence with all the strength God has given us and defeat them in the end.

Our Volk has survived so many terrible times in its two-thousand-year-old history that we have no right to doubt that we shall also overcome the present times of need! If the homeland continues to do its duty as it does now, even increases its will to do its utmost, if the frontline soldier follows the example of the brave homeland and risks his life for his homeland, then the whole world will be shattered when it runs up against us! If front and homeland continue in their joint determination to destroy him who dares to fail when he confronts

February 24, 1945

the commandment of preservation, who reveals himself to be cowardly, or who sabotages the fight, then they will jointly prevent the destruction of the nation.

Then the German victory will stand at the end of this confrontation! And here we feel pride and joy: when the World War was nearing its end what we feared most was the corruption of our youth. When this war is over, we will place the victory in the hands of a young generation that has been steeled by thousandfold suffering and fire and is the best Germany has ever called its own. It will set an example in the cities and in the countryside for countless coming generations. This, too, is an accomplishment of the National Socialist education and a result of the challenge to fight which came out of Munich twenty-five years ago.

My own life is given value only by what it means for the nation. I therefore work incessantly for the resurrection and strengthening of our fronts for the defensive and the offensive, the production of old and new weapons, their deployment, the reinforcement of the spirit of our resistance, and if necessary—as in former times—for the elimination of the vermin that does not wish to join the preservation of our Volk but wish to oppose it.

My dear party comrades! These days I read in British papers that there is a plan to destroy my Berghof. I almost regret that this has not yet happened. After all, whatever I call my own is not worth more than what belongs to my Volksgenossen. I would be happy to bear everything, down to the last detail and as far as humanly possible, that others must bear. The only thing that I would not be able to bear right now would be a sign of weakness from my Volk. What therefore makes me the happiest and the proudest man is the belief that the German Volk demonstrates its strong character precisely in the hour of greatest despair. May every German in the coming weeks and months remember that he is obliged to place everything into the service of our joint preservation for the coming millennia. Whoever is in a bad situation should and must know that many Germans have lost far more than he has. The life which remains for us can be dedicated to only one commandment, namely, to make up for what the international Jewish criminals and their helpers have done to our Volk.

Just as twenty-five years ago we set out, as a community, to obtain compensation for the injustice done to our Volk, so today we again fight as a community to obtain compensation for the suffering which they once more inflicted upon us, the oppression which they brought to us, the damage which they caused here. Therefore, it must be our unshakable will to think of Germany even when we draw our last breath. We must do so at a time when men and women in the cities and in the countryside, down to our youth, live in compliance with the commandment to risk everything in order to free our Volk from this misery, to restore after the war its culture in the cities and in the countryside, and its National Socialist communal life. Above all, they must never again abandon the path to the establishment of a true Volksstaat, one far away from every ideology and [all] classes; a state which rises above the conceit of the individual social strata, which is inspired by the conviction that the eternal values of a people find expression in its best sons and daughters, who

February 24, 1945

must be searched for, educated, and deployed as a merciful God gave them to us, regardless of their birth or origin.

My party comrades! Twenty-five years ago I announced the victory of the movement. Today, I prophesy—as always inspired by my faith in our Volk—the final victory of the German Reich!

Adolf Hitler

While Hitler was afraid of speaking before his ordinary old party comrades in Munich, he had no reservations about speaking before the servile Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the Reich Chancellery on the same day. About this meeting, the following communiqué was published:⁷³

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth return of the anniversary of the announcement of the party program on February 24, the Führer received the Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, and unit leaders of the NSDAP at his headquarters, in order to give them guidelines for the successful continuation of the fight, the extensive organization of all powers of resistance, and the unreserved deployment of the party in the fateful struggle of the German Volk.

Another official statement read as follows:⁷⁴

In the circle of the assembled party leadership, the Führer awarded Reich leader of labor Hierl the Golden Cross of the German Order with Oak Leaf and Swords on his seventieth birthday, making him the first living German to receive this highest German distinction.

The encirclement of Breslau by the Russians was at the center of the discussion of the situation on the evening of February 24.⁷⁵ Breslau had been cut off since February 16. Hitler was very pleased by the ruthless procedure of Gauleiter Hanke, who had already made a name for himself in January by issuing propagandistic death sentences.⁷⁶ He personally read out the Gauleiter's telex and was full of praise for him, as well as for the operational commander at Breslau, Major General von Ahlfen.⁷⁷

The combat commander further believes that a second powerful battalion is necessary. I take the view: we must do this. We must bring up something, that is clear. Hanke is a devil of a fellow. He is a Silesian.

Hitler's enthusiasm for Hanke had already been evident in a telegram that he had sent him earlier on the same day. In Königsberg (Kaliningrad), Gauleiter Koch, who had likewise been cut off by the Russians, had received the same telegram. It read as follows:⁷⁸

Together with the party leadership, which has gathered around me at the headquarters on the anniversary of the party's foundation, I think of you in

February 28, 1945

insoluble solidarity. May our confidence in victory lend strength to you and your men so that you may endure in your difficult post until the final victory.

Adolf Hitler

On February 26, Hitler expressed his condolences in a telegram on the death of the Norwegian finance minister.⁷⁹ In addition, he awarded Kesselring the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross and sent him this letter:⁸⁰

In grateful appreciation of your untiring brave deployment in the fight for the future of our Volk, I award you, Field Marshal, the Oak Leaf to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, as the seventy-eighth soldier of the German Wehrmacht. I join to this award my best wishes for you personally and for your troops.

Your Adolf Hitler

On February 28, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on the anniversary of his state's foundation.⁸¹

In the course of February, Hitler had repeatedly discussed his views on the causes of Germany's unfavorable military situation. Bormann felt obliged to have these reflections written down,⁸² even though they contained nothing new. Of course, Hitler was not to blame for the catastrophic turn of events in the war. His allies were at fault. The Kaiser had once said exactly the same thing by explaining his own failure after the First World War:⁸³ "The collapse of Hungary and Austria brought about this crisis for us."

Hitler had already officially stated this view on September 25, 1944:⁸⁴

After a five-year-long and most difficult struggle, the enemy stands on a few fronts close to or at the German borders as the result of the failure of all our European allies.

The essence of Hitler's reflections in February 1945 was summarized in the grotesque claim that the campaign in Russia had failed because Mussolini had attacked Greece without asking his permission. This had forced him to conduct first of all the Balkans campaign in the spring of 1941 and to postpone the attack on Russia until June 22, instead of going ahead in mid-May. Hitler blamed this delay or all military setbacks. In February 1945, he declared the following:

The alliance with Italy has quite obviously helped our enemies more than it benefited us. While I was on my way to Montoire, Mussolini took advantage of my absence to start his ill-starred Greek campaign. Against our will, we were forced to take up arms and intervene in the events in the Balkans,

February 28, 1945

which inevitably resulted in the fateful delay of the deployment against Russia. Had we started the attack on Russia from May 15 on, things would have developed differently.

The constant repetition of such claims by Hitler did not make them any more true. Mussolini had moved into Greece on October 28 1940. Hitler had not decided to attack Russia until after Molotov's visit in Berlin from November 12 to 14. He had issued the principal directives for the campaign on December 18, 1940, and supplemented them in the following months. Mussolini's Greek adventure had had no effect on the timetable for Operation Barbarossa (Russian campaign). The only unexpected factor had been the putsch in Belgrade on March 27, 1941, which had forced Hitler to expand to Yugoslavia the campaign in the Balkans in order to lend support to Mussolini in Greece. However, the campaign, which had started on April 6, had ended so quickly that both Greece and Yugoslavia had been conquered by late April, and Hitler had been able to deliver a triumphant speech in the Reichstag on May 4, 1941.⁸⁵ Therefore had he wished to attack Russia in the middle or at the end of May, it would have been possible.

In truth, the deferment of the beginning of the attack on Russia to June 22 had its cause in Russia's ground conditions, which permit large-scale military operations during the summer half-year only at this time. Napoleon was also forced to wait until June 22 to launch his campaign in 1812. The German offensive of 1942 began on June 28, that of the year 1943 on July 5. The major Russian summer offensive was launched at the central sector on June 22, 1944. Hard facts disproved Hitler's attempts at rationalizing and explaining his behavior in February 1945!

Besides, it ill became Hitler to speak badly about Mussolini's failed campaign in Greece. After all, he had at one time expressed his gratitude to him for this step and publicly declared the following on November 8, 1941:⁸⁶

After all we know today, I can only say that we owe gratitude to Mussolini for sticking the needle into this festering sore [Greece] in the year 1940.

The discussions of the situation on March 1 and 2⁸⁷ showed that the German troops were barely able to hold on in the west, and many were being forced to surrender. Hitler was very angry about this because he felt that the capitulation was in many instances caused only by the prospect of good treatment in captivity, assured by the humane Geneva Convention. However, Hitler had to admit that the hurriedly assembled

March 2, 1945

German troops were not really fit for combat. For this reason, he was in search of a military leader who could “do something with this dung heap (*Misthaufen*),” as he put it. Hitler felt that Skorzeny was his best man, but he was off fighting at the Oder front. The Generals Feuchtinger and Hanneken also seemed suited to this task, but they had been arrested for personal enrichment. Hitler refused to consider generals who had formerly belonged to the Free Corps. He had still not got over his distrust for members of militia units.

As usual, Hitler likewise stuck to his contempt and disregard for money as a matter of principle. When it came to money, he was never stingy, no matter whether he spent it on bribing generals or rewarding inventions. When, during the discussion of the situation on March 2, he heard of an improvement of the Panzerfaust (antitank rocket launcher), he declared the following:

You have to reward people who do something like that. You should not approach this from a small, bureaucratic point of view. You have to give any such man two hundred thousand or three hundred thousand marks. There must be an incentive. You should not be petty in this. If you get explosives for one million field howitzer grenades, then you cannot pay the man nearly enough. The new Panzerfaust flies an additional hundred kilometers and has greater penetration power. For that, I get one million field howitzer grenades.

By early March, the Allies had broken through the “impenetrable” West Wall⁸⁸. They had conquered the whole extent of the West Wall from Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) to the Palatinate. On March 6, they took Cologne and afterwards secured the left bank of the Rhine. The next day, they even managed to cross the Rhine at Remagen. Their rapid advance came as such a surprise to the German troops that no time was left to blow up the local railroad bridge. Hitler had the allegedly responsible five officers sentenced and shot by a “flying drumhead court-martial.”⁸⁹

This “reprisal” did not change the facts. Even without the bridge at Remagen, the Allies would have crossed the Rhine. The failure to blow up the bridge merely allowed them to gain a foothold on the right bank of the Rhine a few days earlier than it would have happened otherwise.

Nevertheless, Hitler’s main objective in pronouncing these death sentences was to deter other officers. He was successful. In the following weeks, the German troops on the retreat blew up all bridges they were forced to abandon, even if they had little or no military significance.

March 10, 1945

Hitler felt it was time again for a change in command in the west so as to inspire hope in the troops, according to his maxim of 1943 “new names, new slogans.”⁹⁰

On March 9, he dismissed von Rundstedt for the third time and named Kesselring as the new commander in chief west.⁹¹ The name Kesselring was still tied to the bloody and senseless German resistance at the Cassino front. Hitler intended for Kesselring to continue in this manner in the west. However, this hope was not fulfilled.

The discussion of the situation on March 10⁹² dealt with the question of transferring the Führer headquarters from the Reich Chancellery to the bunker of the Air Fleet “Reich” at Wannsee or camp “Zeppelin” at Zossen. Hitler’s entourage questioned the security of the Reich Chancellery, which had been hit during the most recent air raids. However, Hitler did not agree to their plans and mockingly commented on the supposed advantages of the bunkers at Wannsee and at Zossen.

As before, he still pretended confidence and concerned himself with the need for more laborers, since “everything has to be employed.”

No matter how bad the laborers are, I need eight hundred thousand additional workers for the railroads alone.⁹³ We cannot afford this, it is sheer madness. People come and say: we want to get started. If I don’t get it done, I’ll drop everything here and now. Ultimately, manpower is today one of the most decisive factors; whether girls or women, I don’t give a damn (*ist ganz Wurscht*): everything has to be employed.

Heroes’ Memorial Day was scheduled for March 11. In the previous year, Hitler had successfully managed to get out of attending the traditional festivities in Berlin and had not even issued a proclamation. Claiming that he was needed at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, he had had Dönitz speak on his behalf.⁹⁴ Shortly afterwards, he had left for the Berghof for his annual spring vacation with Eva Braun.

He had already spent several weeks in Berlin this year. Therefore it would be difficult for him to remain in the Führerbunker while wreaths were being laid at the Unter den Linden memorial and a parade was taking place. Excuses like his “bad state of health,” his “dragging” left leg, and so forth,⁹⁵ would hardly be persuasive, since Hitler was quite capable of walking without difficulty and assuming the old poses, greeting and smiling, whenever he wished. This was evidenced by the *Wochenschau* films (the week in review) of March 1945.

However, Hitler did not at all feel like appearing before the public in Berlin on Heroes’ Memorial Day and personally laying a wreath at

March 11, 1945

the memorial in honor of the millions of men whose death he had caused. Cowardly as he was, he sought a way out. In fact, he even came up with one: for the sole purpose of explaining his failure to attend the festivities in Berlin, a frontline trip was arranged along the Oder River.⁹⁶ Hitler visited the headquarters of an army corps at the Oder front. Smiling and self-confident, wearing his gray leather coat, he greeted the soldiers he met while stopping over at a few divisional headquarters. Carefully groomed, he appeared in front of the assembled generals at the headquarters of the army corps. He took a seat at the map table and developed operational plans for the future, while the generals stood around him and listened with reverent attention.

In Berlin in the meantime, as usual in difficult situations Göring had to jump into the breach and “substitute” for Hitler in public. He laid the Führer’s wreath at the Unter den Linden memorial during the official celebrations and afterwards reviewed the parade.⁹⁷

Hitler had arranged the Heroes’ Memorial Day affair cleverly. So that he would not remain completely in the background, he made a proclamation on this occasion. The citizens of Berlin were supposed to believe that he was at the “front” and personally keeping the Russians away from the German homeland.

In his proclamation, Hitler recalled the introduction of general conscription ten years earlier and stated, with some justification, that this had given Germany those instruments of power that were necessary for its “self-assertion,” that is, expansion.

Hitler’s proclamation to the Wehrmacht read as follows:⁹⁸

Führer Headquarters, March 11, 1945

Soldiers!

In the Treaty of Versailles, the same enemies as today made it a condition that Germany totally disarm and maintain a ridiculous professional army instead of popular armed forces. They solemnly promised that this disarmament would only be a prerequisite for the general disarmament of the world. That was all swindle and fraud!

Barely had Germany laid down its arms for good when an age of blackmail and exploitation began. The Reich was hacked to pieces in the peace treaty. The enemy powers armed as never before, at their head the Soviet Union. Concealed from the eyes of the rest of the world, this state built up gigantic armed forces, never denying their goal of suddenly attacking from the east a Europe made defenseless by Jewry. How well they were armed, my soldiers in the east, you know best yourselves. Had Germany remained in this state of military impotence, then today Europe would already have become the victim

March 11, 1945

of Bolshevism, that is, the war of extermination against the European people would long ago have got underway.

Realizing that the impending future lies beyond our continent, I ordered immediately after the seizure of power that the Reich be prepared for its defense to the extent that at least a light attack no longer needed to be feared. I did so only after my countless proposals for general disarmament—the limitation of the air force, the elimination of bomb warfare, the abolishment of heavy artillery and tanks, the restriction of troop strength to a minimum—had been rejected by our adversaries. This rejection at the same time revealed the aggressive intentions of our enemies.

Ten years have now passed since those days in March 1935, when I announced my general conscription and thereby obtained for Germany those instruments of power that were necessary for its self-assertion. Without this action, there would be no Germany today.

The Jewish alliance between capitalism and Bolshevism, which today threatens Europe, had in the meantime lifted the veil from the gigantic armament for the destruction of our continent. In spite of this, the German Reich, which has been dishonorably betrayed by most of its allies, has put up military resistance for nearly six years now, and has gained successes of unparalleled greatness. Even if everything now appears to be going against us, we still do not doubt that, with steadfastness, courage, perseverance, and zeal, we will overcome these setbacks again, as so often before.

There is no great historic state of the past that did not face similar situations: Rome in the Second Punic War against the Carthaginians, Prussia in the Seven Years' War against Europe. These are only two examples among many.

Therefore, it is my unalterable decision, and it must be our general and unyielding will, to set no worse example for posterity than earlier ages have set for us. Thus, the year 1918 will not be repeated. We all know what Germany's fate would otherwise be. Intoxicated with victory, our adversaries have made it clear: extermination of the German nation!

On this day, on which the introduction of general conscription returns for the tenth time, there is only one commandment: to do with grim determination everything in order to defy the dangers; to bring about a turn of events and, to this end, to reinforce materially and spiritually the power of resistance of our Volk and its Wehrmacht. No less great should our zeal be in the destruction of those who try to put up resistance to that. If a great nation like the German one, with a history of nearly two thousand years, never allows the belief in success to be taken from it, but instead fanatically does its duty, no matter whether the times ahead are good or bad, then the Lord Almighty will in the end not deny it His blessings.

In history, that alone falls which is judged to be too light. The Lord of the worlds will help only him who is determined to help himself.

What is impending for our Volk we already see in large sections of the east and in many areas in the west. What we must therefore do is clear to everybody: to put up resistance and pound our enemies until they become

March 18, 1945

weary in the end and nevertheless break down! Therefore, let every man do his duty!

Adolf Hitler

On March 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on the Slovak national holiday.⁹⁹

The next day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Hácha on the sixth anniversary of the “reunification of Bohemia and Moravia with the Reich.”¹⁰⁰

On March 16, a major new Russian attack began in the vicinity of Stuhlweissenburg in Hungary. This time, Sepp Dietrich and his SS troops in the Sixth Panzer Army were also forced to retreat. Hitler was angry and ordered that the *Leibstandarte* “*Adolf Hitler*” hand in its sleeve stripes.¹⁰¹

It will be left open to question whether the members of the *Leibstandarte*, whom Hitler had chased from one theater of the war to the next in the past years, still felt the removal of their sleeve stripes to be a “disgrace” in March 1945.¹⁰² Their idealism had been placed under too much strain. It was mostly Hitler who regarded sleeve stripes as a “distinction” and spent much of his time designing such “badges of honor.”¹⁰³

On the evening of March 18, Hitler received Speer, who handed him a memorandum.¹⁰⁴ Speer knew just as well as Hitler and his *Untersführers* that the war was lost. However, he was not willing to carry out the measures of destruction on Reich territory that Hitler had ordered for all military retreats in enemy country and which had either been carried out or were supposed to have been carried out. Such destruction would mean the “elimination of all possibilities for the future life of the German Volk,” Speer declared.

After the war, a document was presented to the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg that Speer claimed to have sent Hitler on March 29. Excerpts from it read as follows:¹⁰⁵

From the explanations you gave me on the evening [of March 18]—if I did not misunderstand you—it was clear and unequivocal: if the war is lost, then the Volk will also be lost. This fate is unavoidable. It is not necessary to take into consideration the bases the Volk needs for the continuation of its most primitive existence. On the contrary, it is better to destroy these things yourself. After all, the Volk would then have proved the weaker nation, and the future would exclusively belong to the strongest nation of the east. What would remain after this fight would in any event be inferior subjects, since all the good ones would have fallen.

March 19, 1945

The above statements by Hitler were rendered in this manner only by Speer. Therefore, they cannot be regarded as completely authentic.¹⁰⁶ First, the reference to Russia as the “strongest nation of the east” appears odd, since Hitler always spoke of the “primitive” Soviets. Second, he seemed eager, during the last months of his life as well as before, to be recognized and treated by the German Volk as a hero.

There is no doubt about his indifference to the fate of the German people. They served only as an instrument for him to satisfy his lust for power and to achieve his political and military goals. In the past, Hitler had spoken disparagingly about the German Volk on several occasions, in particular to threaten them in the case of their potential “failure.”¹⁰⁷ However, while he scolded the intellectuals, officers, and other leading personalities, he spared the so-called “Volk” to the end and showered it with praises. Even in his last proclamation, his political testament of April 29, 1945, he prophesied “the shining rebirth of the National Socialist movement and the realization of the true Volksgemeinschaft.”¹⁰⁸

Even the often cited and condemned *Zerstörungsbefehl* (Destruction Order) of March 19 was in keeping with this line of thought. All destructive measures were supposed to harm only the advancing enemy. They were supposed to be necessary to win this “fight for the life of the Volk.” It would be the enemy who, forced to retreat, would “leave behind only scorched earth and abandon all consideration for the population.” Hitler’s order of March 19 read as follows:¹⁰⁹

High Command of the Armed Forces (Operations Staff)

Subject: Demolitions on Reich territory

The Führer issued the following order on March 19, 1945:

The struggle for the existence of our people compels us, even within the territory of the Reich, to exploit every means of weakening the fighting strength of our enemy and impeding his further advance. Every opportunity must be taken of inflicting, directly or indirectly, the utmost lasting damage on the striking power of the enemy. It is a mistake to think that transport and communication facilities, industrial establishments and supply depots, which have not been destroyed or have only been temporarily put out of action, can be used again for our own ends when the lost territory has been recovered. The enemy will leave us nothing but scorched earth when he withdraws, without paying the lightest regard to the population.

I therefore order:

1. All military transport communication facilities, industrial establishments and supply depots, as well as anything else of value within Reich territory, which could in any way be used by the enemy immediately or within the foreseeable future for the continuation of the war, be destroyed.

March 21, 1945

2. The following are responsible for carrying out these demolitions:

The military commanders for all military establishments, including the transport and communications networks, the Gauleiters and Reichskommissars for defense for all industrial establishments and supply depots and anything else of value. The troops are to give to Gauleiters and Reichskommissars for defense such help as they require to carry out their tasks.

3. This order will be made known to all officers commanding troops as quickly as possible. Directives to the contrary are invalid.

Adolf Hitler

On March 20, Hitler welcomed twenty “battle-tested Hitler boys,” that is, members of the Hitler Youth, in the garden of the Reich Chancellery. They lined up in front of him as he slowly approached in the company of Reich youth leader Axmann and other prominent persons. He had the collar of his coat turned up and his cap pulled down over his eyes. He had the boys make a report, reviewed the lineup, and patted some boys on the shoulder and cheek. The youngest of the boys—Hitler gave him a pinch on the ear—was twelve years old. His name was Alfred Czech and he had received an Iron Cross for the “rescue of twelve wounded men and the arrest of a Russian spy” in the Oppeln area. The communiqué read as follows:¹¹⁰

The Führer shook hands with every single one of the Hitler Youth boys and had them describe their experiences. “You know the battle from your own experience,” the Führer exclaimed to the boys in the end, “and you know that we are in a struggle of life and death for the German Volk. In spite of the gravity of the times, I am convinced that we will achieve victory in this fight, with our German youth and particularly with you, my boys.”

The *Wochenschau* filmed the scene.¹¹¹ This was the last time that Hitler was filmed.

At a rally in Görlitz, Goebbels shared a similar statement by Hitler with the audience:¹¹²

It was only yesterday that he [the Führer] said to me: I remain firmly convinced that one day the banners will signal our victory.

On March 21, Hitler informed Guderian of another change in the command of the general staff. Following the discussion of the situation, he told him:¹¹³

I can see that your heart problems have become worse. You must immediately take four weeks of convalescent leave.

March 23, 1945

Guderian replied that he felt he could not leave his post, since he had no “substitute.” Hitler was content for the time being. He would see to providing Guderian with a deputy in the next few days!

While the two men were still talking, Hitler received a request for an audience by Speer. Hitler sent a message back, saying that he was unable to see anybody on this day.

Every time somebody wants to speak to me privately, he has something unpleasant to say. I cannot bear any more bad news. His memoranda always open with this sentence: “The war is lost!” He just wants to repeat that to me. I just keep putting his memoranda in the safe, without ever reading them.

Hitler’s reaction was understandable. However, it was remarkable that he allowed people he liked to tell him that the war was lost without punishing them.

On March 23, or rather the previous night, the Allied troops under Montgomery crossed the Rhine at Vesel and those under General Patton near Oppenheim. Additional crossings would soon take place near Worms and Mannheim. The war had entered its final phase.

Hitler was greatly preoccupied by the Allied crossings of the Rhine at the late night discussion of the situation.¹¹⁴ Other matters were also discussed, which likewise showed how serious the situation had become. For instance, there was talk about setting up the east-west axis in Berlin (from the Brandenburg Gate to the Siegessäule) as a runway for airplanes by removing the lampposts. The situation in the air above the Berghof was also a topic of discussion. Hitler had declared on February 24 that he almost regretted that the destruction of his Berghof “has not yet happened.”¹¹⁵ However, when someone at the meeting suggested that the Berghof should no longer be covered with a smoke screen at every air-raid alert (acid for making the smoke was running out!), Hitler was hesitant. He replied as follows:

Yes, but then everything will be gone, you have to realize that. That is one of the last ways out we have. Nothing will happen to the bunker [on the Obersalzberg]. It is not a question of my house, but the whole installation will be gone. If they smash up Zossen here [in the Berlin area] one day, then where do we go?

Hitler grumbled about the bad “army concrete” that he said had been used in Zossen, and stated that he felt the Reich Chancellery bunker was safer. For the rest, the main topic of this discussion was where new troops could be obtained, what, for example, “still existed of

March 23, 1945

the mobilization of foreigners.” Up to this point, Hitler had always ridiculed the idea of Ukrainian, Russian, or Indian “legions.” This time, too, he called the Indian legion, certainly not without justification, a “joke,” but then he said the following:

Of course, I do not want to claim here that you cannot do anything with these exotic people. Something can surely be done. But you need time for that.

It was sad but true what things had come to with Hitler: he was now ready to place his hopes on foreign legions, which he despised and would have liked to see disarmed.

On the eastern front, a period of relative calm was nearing its end. In all likelihood, the next Russian advance would be directed against Danzig. The concentration of tanks in this area suggested as much. It was for this reason that the Gauleiter of Danzig, Albert Forster, appeared in despair at the Reich Chancellery, declaring that four thousand Russian tanks were headed for the city. Only a small number of German panzers confronted them. He went to see Hitler and came back a changed man. “He told me,” Forster exclaimed, “that he will save Danzig. There is no doubting it.”¹¹⁶

Russian troops under Marshal Rokossovski conquered Zappot on March 23. The next day, the marshal demanded the surrender of the garrisons at Danzig and Gdynia.¹¹⁷ Hitler forbade a surrender and ordered the following on the night of March 24 to 25:¹¹⁸

Every square meter of the area Danzig-Gotenhafen is to be decisively defended.

This order naturally did not change the situation. A few days later, the Russians took Danzig and Gdynia.

As Speer told the court in Nuremberg,¹¹⁹ he had decided to join the ranks of the “assassins” in the meantime. He claimed that he had planned to poison Hitler by introducing gas into the Reich Chancellery bunker from the outside. In this case, Speer would have been no different from other “would-be assassins” who tried to kill Hitler over the years: he too readily accepted the death of innocent bystanders,¹²⁰ he too wanted to stay alive himself.

In February and March, Speer went to see Hitler repeatedly, even talked with him in private. He could have stabbed, shot, strangled, or beaten him to death¹²¹—but he could simply not get himself to do it. He preferred the plan of letting poison stream into the fresh-air vent at the

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entry of the Reich Chancellery. By the time he concluded his preparations, Hitler had had a four-meter high chimney built around the opening!¹²² It was hard to believe how “unlucky” Hitler’s assassins were.

Speer was undoubtedly one of the more harmless among Hitler’s staff. He deserved credit for trying to undermine or circumvent Hitler’s destructive orders. However, he would have done well to remain silent on his alleged “assassination attempt.”

On March 28 Hitler finally dismissed Guderian as chief of the general staff. The official reason for the dismissal, which Hitler had already planned for a long time, was an argument about accusations directed against General Busse in the course of the noon discussion of the situation.¹²³ Hitler turned to those present: “I ask all gentlemen to leave the lecture hall, with the exception of the field marshal [Keitel] and the colonel general [Guderian].” When the others had left, Hitler said, “Colonel General Guderian! The state of your health demands an immediate convalescent leave of six weeks.” As Guderian turned around to leave, Hitler called him back: “Please, why don’t you stay until the end of the presentation.” This polite request was in accordance with Hitler’s old method of keeping the person he had reprimanded from open opposition and of avoiding a scene in front of the others.

Thus, the discussion of the situation continued as though nothing had happened. Hitler refrained from any further attacks on General Busse. Two or three times, he politely asked Guderian for his opinion on a subject. After the discussion, Hitler was even nicer to Guderian and told the former chief of the general staff:

Please take care to restore your health. In six weeks, the situation will have become very critical. Then I will urgently need you.

On March 29, Guderian handed over the affairs of the general staff to his successor, General Krebs.¹²⁴

April had begun, the last month of Hitler’s life. In early April, he appointed another field marshal, even though he had sworn in 1943 that Paulus had been his last.¹²⁵ This time, Schörner was the lucky man. The official announcement of his appointment read as follows:¹²⁶

The Führer has promoted Colonel General Ferdinand Schörner, commander in chief of an army group, to field marshal on April 5. By granting this promotion, the Führer has distinguished an army leader who has, unlike

April 12, 1945

almost any other German general, become a symbol of the unshakable steadfastness of the German power of resistance in the east.

The overall situation had continued to deteriorate because of the rapid advances of the Allies. Montgomery's Twenty-First Army Group was in the process of taking northwestern Germany, while the Seventh American Army had moved across Baden and reached Würzburg and Crailsheim. As usual, Hitler attempted to overcome the situation by reorganizing and reshuffling the command posts. On April 6, he issued this order:¹²⁷

The development of the position in the west and the loss of many operational communication links make it necessary to adjust the organization of command in the western theater of war to conform with changed conditions. I therefore order the following reorganization of command in the west:

[A series of technical details follow.]

On April 12, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to state leader Ante Pavelich on the Croatian Independence Day.¹²⁸ On the same day, he awarded Gauleiter Hanke, who was holding out in Breslau, which had been cut off, the highest order of merit. With the exception of Hierl,¹²⁹ only dead men had received this distinction up to now. Hitler sent Hanke this telegram:¹³⁰

In grateful appreciation of your great services in the fight for the future of our Volk, I award you the Golden Cross of the German Order.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, Eva Braun had arrived at the Reich Chancellery without having been summoned by Hitler. She had stayed at the Reich Chancellery in January and February, following his return from Ziegenberg, but had then left for Munich. In view of the dangerous situation, which made it likely that Berlin would soon be cut off, she had returned to Berlin on her own, fully realizing that this decision would be her last one.

Hitler did not agree to her staying in Berlin and called his photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. He asked him to take her back to Munich.¹³¹ Hoffmann tried to persuade her to leave, but she remained adamant:

Perhaps no one knows better than you do, Mr. Hoffmann, what Hitler is to me. What would people say if I left him now, at this time of need? If it is a question of the Führer, then I also draw the ultimate conclusion.

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Hoffmann told Hitler what she had said. Hitler listened in silence. He accepted her decision. One last time, Hitler and his photographer and friend shook hands, and then Hoffmann left Berlin in the car of the Reich postal minister.

Here a few remarks on Hitler's relationship to the opposite sex are perhaps appropriate. The English journalist Ward Price reports that Hitler replied as follows to a reference to his luck:¹³²

In my political life, I have always been lucky, but in my private life I have been more unfortunate than anyone I have ever known.

While with such remarks Hitler was always quick to become sentimental and pity himself, in this instance he was in all likelihood referring to his "unfortunate" relations with women.

In his early years, when he lived at a homeless shelter in Vienna, he was not a very attractive man. Nevertheless, there are many examples of men who do not look very good and are still successful with women. The reasons for his bad luck with women of his age probably lay rather in his contradictory nature. On the one hand, he was maladroit, shy, and clumsy with women, afraid of doing something wrong and embarrassing himself. Moreover, he greatly feared contracting venereal diseases.¹³³

On the other hand, Hitler wished to dominate in the sphere of love, as in all others.¹³⁴ He demanded unconditional admiration and submission. Women were not ready to provide this, particularly since Hitler's main strength lay in talking, something that for ages has always been considered the domain of women. It is therefore not surprising that Hitler's advances to the female sex failed at first. Only when he got older and could play the patronizing uncle did he score several successes. It is revealing that Hitler's great love was his niece Geli Raubal, a daughter of his half-sister Angela. Like her, the other women who loved Hitler, for example, Eva Braun and Maria Reiter, or Unity Mitford, too, were twenty years or more younger than he, and so a type of "uncle-niece" relationship existed from the beginning: the effusive love of the young woman to the admired mighty and mature man. After all, Hitler's charisma together with his political importance afforded him the element of submission in these relations. It is conspicuous that all four women mentioned above seriously attempted suicide (Geli Raubal succeeded) within a few years after meeting Hitler.

Angela Maria Raubal,¹³⁵ nicknamed "Geli", was born on June 4, 1908 in Linz (Austria). She was the daughter of the deputy head of the

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tax department, Raubal, and his wife Angela, born Hitler (from the second marriage of Hitler's father, Alois). She studied singing in Munich, although her voice was only average. When Hitler took up residence at Prinzregentenplatz No. 16 in 1929, she got her own room in the huge but sinister apartment of her uncle. She committed suicide there on September 18, 1931. By the time Hitler returned from an engagement in Nuremberg, her corpse had already been removed. Hitler did not attend the funeral in Vienna but instead retreated to the home of his publisher Müller at the Tegernsee. He spent several days there in seclusion. His court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann was the only one allowed to accompany him. Many feared the shock of Geli's unexpected death might lead him to commit suicide, too. On the anniversary of his niece's death on September 18, 1932, Hitler secretly visited her grave in Vienna. Goebbels noted in his diary: "Führer gone to Vienna for private visit. Nobody knows about it so that there won't be any crowds." News of Hitler's presence in Vienna leaked, however, and led to many political rumors. On Hitler's orders, Geli's room remained untouched. Before the war, he spent every Christmas Eve there in sentimental reflection.

Eva Braun¹³⁶ was born on February 6, 1912, in Munich. She was the daughter of a teacher (later student counselor) at a trade school, Friedrich Braun, and his wife, Franziska, born Kranburger. Eva received her education at a boarding school in Simbach am Inn. In 1929, she began working at Heinrich Hoffmann's photography studio in Munich. There she first met Hitler and entered into a more intimate relationship with him in the course of 1931 and 1932. Still living with her parents in their apartment at Hohenzollernstrasse No. 93, she attempted to commit suicide in 1932 by shooting herself in the chest. After that, Hitler became closer to her. Hitler's physician Morell as well as his valet Linge testified to the non-platonic nature of this relationship. After his half-sister Angela Raubal had left the Berghof and several restructuring projects had taken place, Eva Braun assumed the role of quasi-official mistress of the house. At the dinner table, she would sit to the left of Hitler, who nevertheless insisted that he alone took care of setting arrangements and other household concerns. Hitler ordered a small house built for Eva Braun in Munich. It was located at Wasserburger Strasse No. 12 (today Delphstrasse) and was within walking distance of his Munich apartment at Prinzregentenplatz. The official Munich address book listed the residence as that of "Eva Braun, private

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secretary.” From 1936, Eva Braun lived at the Obersalzberg. She was finally accorded her wish to marry Hitler on April 29, 1945, and died the next day.

Maria Reiter, nicknamed “Mimi,” or “Mizzi,” also “Mizzerl,” was born on December 23, 1909, in Berchtesgaden, where her father was one of the founding members of the local Social Democratic Party of Germany [SPD] branch and where her mother ran a fashion shop. Her sister Anni introduced her to Hitler in the Berchtesgaden park (*Kurgarten*) in late 1926. A year later, as Hitler paid increasingly less attention to her, she attempted to hang herself. In 1930, she married a hotel owner in Innsbruck and moved to Seeld with him. They were divorced in 1934. Contact between her and Hitler was renewed in the years 1931 through 1934, and also in 1938. In 1935, she married SS Hauptsturmführer Kubisch. He died in the west in 1940. There is no doubt of the intimate character of the relationship between Maria Reiter and Adolf Hitler.¹³⁷

Very little is known about Hitler’s affair with the Englishwoman Unity Mitford. Obviously, political considerations played a role in this. Born the daughter of Lord Redesdale in London on August 8, 1918, Unity Valkyrie Mitford was the sister-in-law of the British Fascist Leader Sir Oswald Mosley. She spent the years 1934 to 1939 as an art student in Munich. In 1934, she became a regular at a little restaurant Hitler also frequented, the “Osteria Bavaria” (today “Osteria Italiana”) at Schellingstrasse No. 62. Ward Price described her with these words: “No one could sit for long in the same room as Miss Unity Mitford without noticing her. Her golden hair, fair skin, and blue eyes attain the highest standards of that Nordic beauty which Germans especially admire.”¹³⁸ On one occasion, Hitler sent his adjutant Brückner to her in the “Osteria Bavaria” to convey the chancellor’s compliments. This marked the beginning of a friendship, which soon was to be platonically extended to her sister, Mrs. Diana Guinness. Shortly after the war broke out, Unity Mitford attempted to end her life by shooting herself in the temple in Munich’s “Englischer Garten.” Hitler ordered the best doctors to her side. After her health was restored, Hitler’s personal physician Morell brought her to Switzerland. From there, she returned to England where she died in 1948, as a patient in the Oban Hospital.

In May 1939, Count Ciano mentioned another pretty woman in his diaries:¹³⁹

April 12, 1945

For the first time I hear hints, in the inner circles, of the Führer's tender feelings for a beautiful girl. She is twenty years old with beautiful quiet eyes, regular features, and a magnificent body. Her name is Sigrid von Lappus.¹⁴⁰ They see each other frequently and intimately.

The woman who is meant here is Sigrid von Laffert, born December 28, 1916, in Damaretz, Mecklenburg, as the daughter of Oskar von Laffert auf Damaretz and Erika von Pressentin.

In his report, Hitler's court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann further mentioned a woman who later married somebody else and whose name he did not wish to reveal. Hoffmann recalled that this affair had already taken place in 1921. It had ended when the girl attempted to hang herself in a hotel room, but she was discovered in time.¹⁴¹ Apparently, attempted or successful suicides were a required ingredient in Hitler's amorous escapades.

Hitler was also very fond of seeing Ley's wife, Inga,¹⁴² whom he granted a privileged position in his Berlin household for some time. She committed suicide in 1943.

It may remain an open question whether this list of women around Hitler is complete or not. There are rumors of affairs with Mrs. Winifred Wagner and Leni Riefenstahl, a photographer and film director. However, there is no evidence in support of them.

It was known that, as long as he was the Führer of the German Volk, Hitler did not wish to get married. He felt that marriage was incompatible with his divine mission, his status as a god-man or a Messiah like Jesus Christ. The German public was supposed to believe that his love belonged to his Volk alone, not to women. After all, as some kind of superstar, he wanted to appear theoretically free for all women.¹⁴³

Nor did Hitler want a woman to tell him what to do¹⁴⁴ or share his power in any manner, even if this was only in matters of representation. Moreover, it was a well-known fact that Hitler was hostile to all legal norms. He wished to exercise an arbitrary reign in all realms, even in personal affairs. As a result, he despised marriage because it could entail uncomfortable obligations. As mentioned in the "Table Talk," he once told his entourage:¹⁴⁵

What is most terrible about marriage is this: it creates legal claims! It is much better to have a mistress. There is no burden, everything is a gift. Of course, this applies only to the outstanding man.



LXIII Invasion of Normandy on D-day

Photo: Publisher's archives



LXIV Morgenthou at Normandy in 1944

Photo: Publisher's archives

April 12, 1945

2

On April 12, 1945, President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt died. He had been in office since 1933, like the German Führer and Reich Chancellor. A real psychosis took hold of Hitler's entourage when the news of his death arrived. For instance, Goebbels, who had internalized Hitler's idea of the "miracle of Providence,"¹⁴⁶ truly believed that it signaled a turning point in the war and that Germany would now have a chance of winning it. He and his National Socialist Unterführers became the victims of a delusion. This "Fredericus complex," the historically inaccurate myth that Frederick the Great was saved in the Seven Years' War by the death of the empress Elizabeth [of Russia], had captured their imagination. The legend attributed this death to an act of God, to an intervention by Providence to change the war. This Fredericus complex now deluded them into believing that Hitler would also be saved by such a last-minute miracle. Of course, Hitler had done his part to further this hallucination.

It is doubtful that the Führer himself earnestly believed that Roosevelt's death was the "miracle" for which he was waiting. After all, it was sheer madness to think that a change of presidents in the United States would bring about a complete reversal in American foreign policy. Not all madness of the time can be blamed on Hitler.

Moreover, he was not all that concerned about America. What he was waiting for was a telegram from the senile English. He still hoped that they would come around and pay tribute to him as their rescuer from Bolshevism, just as von Papen, von Hindenburg, and Hugenberg had at one time subordinated themselves to him for fear of Communism. That was the last-minute miracle that Hitler was waiting for: the savior of Germany would become the savior of the world! He clung to this obsessive idea to the last minute!

April 13, 1945

On April 13, the armies of Marshal Tolbukhin took Vienna. A major Russian offensive was expected at any moment at the Oder front. Undoubtedly, the goal of this operation was Berlin. Under this impression of an impending attack, Hitler issued an order on April 15 concerning the structure of command in case the Allies from the west and the east should join in central Germany. This Führer order read as follows:¹⁴⁷

In case communications on land in central Germany are broken, I order as follows:

1. In the separate area in which I am not present myself, a commander in chief appointed by me will conduct all military operations and will, in the area concerned, take command of all forces of the three branches of the Wehrmacht on all fronts, of the reserve army, the Waffen SS, the police, and other organizations attached to them.

2. If I myself should be south of the interrupted communications, Admiral Dönitz will be appointed commander in chief in the northern area. An army general staff (commander, Lieutenant General Kinzel), which will be kept as small as possible, will be attached to him as operations staff. The following will come under his command:

(a) commander in chief of the Army Group Vistula, who will command the eastern front;

(b) commander in chief northwest, who will command the western front;

(c) commander of the armed forces Denmark;

(d) commander of the armed forces Norway;

(e) commander in chief of the air fleet, Reich, for the air forces engaged.

3. If I myself should be north of the interrupted communications, Field Marshal Kesselring will be appointed commander in chief in the southern area. The following will come under his command:

(a) commanders in chief of Army Groups South and Center, for the eastern front;

(b) commander in chief Army of Group G, for the whole of the western front;

(c) commander in chief, southeast;

(d) commander in chief, southwest;

(e) commander in chief of the air fleet, for the air forces engaged.

4. The commanders in chief appointed for separate areas in paragraphs 2 and 3 will conduct the overall defense of the Reich in their areas, if necessary independently, should my orders and decisions, even by wireless, not reach them in time in view of the communications situation.

They are personally responsible to me for the entire employment of their entire war potential, in closest cooperation with the Reichskommissar for defense of the separated area. Apart from this, as far as communications allow, the unified control of operations by myself personally, as hitherto, will not be altered. In particular, the duty of supplying day-to-day reports is not affected.

April 13, 1945

The high command of the Luftwaffe and the Reichsführer SS, as the superior officer responsible for the military duties of the Waffen SS, will be kept informed of decisions as quickly as the technical possibilities of communications allow.

5. The commander in chief in an area which is temporarily cut off will also avail himself of the services of the local representatives of the supply, transport, communications, and armaments organizations as laid down in the order issued on April 11, 1945.

6. The headquarters of the proposed commander in chief of a separated area will be identified and prepared forthwith, in agreement with the chief of armed forces communications, General of the Signal Corps Praun, and in accordance with the order by the chief of the high command of the armed forces dated April 11, 1945, "Establishment of subsidiary headquarters."

7. The activity of the commander in chief of a separated area will be initiated only on special orders from me. These will also define the army groups under whose command each army will come.

8. Similarly, I shall appoint a supreme Reich commissar for defense for a separated area under whom all authorities of the party and the state will be coordinated, and who must cooperate closely with the commander in chief of the separated area.

9. The chief of the high command of the armed forces will issue operational orders.

The following supplementary order is for the commander in chief of the navy:

I entrust the commander in chief of the navy with immediate preparations for the total utilization of all possible sources of manpower and matériel for defending the northern area, should land communications in central Germany be interrupted. I delegate to him plenipotentiary powers to issue the orders necessary for this purpose to all authorities of the state, the party, and the armed forces in this area.

Hitler's order revealed that, at this time, he had not yet definitely decided to remain in Berlin and that he favored Dönitz and Kesselring among his commanders because of what he believed was their determination to hold out to their last breath.

At the time of the order to the commands in the northern and southern areas, Hitler issued a proclamation for the soldiers at the eastern front that was to be given to them once the Russian attack on Berlin had got underway.¹⁴⁸

Like Napoleon at one time,¹⁴⁹ Hitler tried to portray the fight for the capital as a desirable outcome which would, against all realistic considerations, lead to a decisive defeat of the enemy. "Berlin will remain German. Vienna will again become German, and Europe will never become Russian." At a time when Providence had "removed

April 16, 1945

Roosevelt, the greatest war criminal of all time, from this earth," he felt certain that "the turning point of this war is being decided."

Hitler's proclamation was written in his usual demagogic style as follows:¹⁵⁰

Soldiers of the German Eastern Front!

For the last time, our deadly Jewish-Bolshevik enemy has lined up his masses for the attack. He is trying to smash Germany and exterminate our Volk. To a great degree, you soldiers of the east know yourselves what fate is threatening all German women, girls, and children. While the old men and children will be murdered, women and girls will be degraded to barrack whores. The rest will march off to Siberia.

We have anticipated this hour. Since January, everything possible has been done in order to erect a strong front. Our mighty artillery greets the enemy. Our infantry's losses have been made good by countless new units. Units on the alert, newly activated units, and the Volkssturm reinforce our front. The Bolshevik will this time meet the old fate of Asia, that is, he must and will bleed to death in front of the capital of the German Reich.

He who fails to do his duty at this time commits treason against our Volk. Any regiment or division that abandons its position acts so disgracefully that it should be ashamed before the women and children who are enduring the terror bombing against our cities.

Above all, watch out for the few treacherous officers and soldiers who, in order to save their own lives, will fight against us, paid by the Russians, perhaps even wearing German uniforms. Whoever orders you to retreat must be immediately arrested and, if necessary, killed on the spot, no matter what his rank may be.

If, in the coming days and weeks, every soldier does his duty at the eastern front, then the last Asian attack will be broken, just as the invasion of our enemies in the west will be broken in spite of everything.

Berlin will remain German. Vienna will again become German, and Europe will never become Russian.

Form a sworn community not with upon the empty concept of a "fatherland" but for the defense of your homeland, your women, your children, and thereby our future.

In this hour, the entire German Volk looks to you, my fighters in the east, and hopes that, through your steadfastness, zeal, arms, and leadership, the Bolshevik attack will drown in a bloodbath. At this moment, in which Providence has removed the greatest war criminal of all time¹⁵¹ from this earth, the turning point of this war is being decided.

Adolf Hitler

On April 16, the major Russian offensive began, both on the Oder front (Marshal Zhukov) and in Silesia (Marshal Konev). The attack progressed quickly.

April 16, 1945

In the Ruhr area, Army Group B surrendered to the English on April 18. Field Marshal Model committed suicide. American troops had reached Halle and Nuremberg.

As Hitler's loyal servant, Martin Bormann had ordered "victory or death" for the Gauleiters.

Obviously inspired by Frederick the Great's style, Bormann had issued the following resounding proclamation on April 2, Easter Monday, 1945:¹⁵²

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

It was the collapse of 1918 that led us to dedicate ourselves, body and soul, to the struggle for our Volk's right to exist. Now the hour of our greatest trial has come: our Volk is faced with the real possibility of a renewed enslavement. This demands of us a last great rallying of our forces. From now on, our motto shall be to lead the struggle relentlessly and unyieldingly everywhere against the enemy forces penetrating the Reich. Gauleiters and Kreisleiters, other political leaders or heads of the subdivisions are fighting in their area or Kreis, until either victory or death.

Whoever leaves his Gau under attack without permission of the Führer is a scoundrel. Whoever does not fight down to his last breath shall be regarded and treated as absent without leave. Take heart and overcome your weaknesses. There is only one rallying cry: Victory or Death!

Long live Germany! Long live Adolf Hitler!

However, only a few of them were inclined to carry out the suicide order and defend their Gau to their last breath. Following the conquest of their Gaus, many of the Gauleiters preferred to put on Volkssturm uniforms, escape to the interior of the Reich, or go south. At the time, this was referred to as "making off" (*sich absetzen*) in the official language.

In Nuremberg, Deputy Gauleiter Holz, who had been acting Gauleiter of the Gau Franconia since Streicher's elimination, was one of the few men who really wished to die fighting on the streets of his Gau capital. Hitler sent him this telegram on April 16:¹⁵³

I thank you for your exemplary behavior. Your actions not only uplift the Volksgenossen in your Gau, all of whom know you, but also millions of other Germans. Now a fanatical fight begins, which recalls our own struggle for power[!]. However great the superiority of our enemies may be at this moment, it will in the end break, just as it did once before. I appreciate your heroic work with heartfelt gratitude and award you the Golden Cross of the German Order.

Adolf Hitler

April 20, 1945

Gauleiter Eggeling of the Gau Halle-Merseburg was apparently less ready to put up a fight. His deputy Tesche telephoned the Reich Chancellery and suggested that “party comrade Eggeling be ordered to make off.”

Hitler replied to this “impertinence” by telegram:¹⁵⁴

Because of the cowardly character evidenced by your telephone call yesterday, I strip you of your rank and, because of cowardice in the face of the enemy, I expel you from the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. Only by the utmost proof of worth in the immediate frontline deployment can you regain your honor.

On April 19, the eve of Hitler’s birthday, Goebbels spoke on the air, as he had in each of the preceding twelve years, and ended his speech with the passionate cry: “Our Hitler!”¹⁵⁵ One has to grant it to Goebbels: he was truly the only National Socialist Unterführer who staunchly stood by Hitler and even now still defended him in public. In his speech, Goebbels attempted to explain the discrepancy between Hitler’s prophesies and the outcome of his politics by coming up with irrational explanations: the work of the devil, of satanic powers; madness; the perverse coalition between plutocracy and Bolshevism, which was, however, in the process of breaking apart. Lucifer would soon be sent to hell again. Moreover, he said that he could discern the workings of a pro-German Providence: “The head of the enemy conspiracy [Roosevelt] has been smashed by Fate. It is this same Fate that allowed the Führer to stand upright and without any injuries among the dead, the seriously injured, and the ruins of July 20, so that he would be able to conclude his work.”

On April 20, his last birthday reception took place at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁵⁶ One last time, the heads of the state and the Wehrmacht assembled to congratulate the Führer and supreme commander on his birthday: Göring, von Ribbentrop, Bormann, Keitel, Dönitz, Jodl, Himmler, Goebbels, Speer, Krebs, Koller, and others. A congratulatory telegram from Mussolini also arrived.

It was the last relatively normal day at the Reich Chancellery. In spite of the disastrous situation, even Hitler felt that his birthday was not going badly and seriously considered heading for the Berghof.¹⁵⁷ It was April, after all, a month he usually spent with Eva Braun at the Obersalzberg under all sorts of pretexts. He surely could have thought of something this time, too. Maybe a meeting with statesmen from the

April 21, 1945

satellite states could have been arranged at Klessheim Castle, with Mussolini, Pavelich, or Tiso, for instance.

On April 21, Hitler was rudely awakened from his daydreams: the first Russian shells hit the center of Berlin. Hitler was outraged. He personally put a call through to General Koller, the chief of the Luftwaffe general staff, who was at the Luftwaffe high command Wildpark-Werder headquarters west of Potsdam:¹⁵⁸

Do you know that Berlin is under artillery fire? The city center? It is probably a rail battery of a large caliber. The Russians probably have a railroad bridge across the Oder. The Luftwaffe must immediately locate this battery and fight it.

Koller rightly doubted that the fire came from a long-range rail battery.¹⁵⁹ However, Hitler tried to convince himself and others in the hope that the Russians were still as far away from Berlin as the Germans had been from Paris in 1918.¹⁶⁰

On the same day, Hitler again telephoned Koller several times, said that SS Obergruppenführer Steiner would soon lead an attack, and ordered the following:

Every available man from the Luftwaffe in the area between Berlin and the coast up to Stettin and Hamburg is to be mobilized for the attack ordered by me in the northeast of Berlin.

Do you still doubt my orders? I believe I have expressed myself clearly enough. All forces of the Luftwaffe in the north sector that can be made available for deployment on the ground must immediately be brought up to Steiner. Any commander who withholds his forces will be dead within five hours. The commanders must be informed of this. You will be responsible to me with your head for every last man being deployed.

Even at 11:50 p.m. Hitler did not give Koller any rest. He lectured him on the situation during another telephone call and finally declared the following:

You will see, the Russians will suffer their greatest defeat, the bloodiest defeat in their history, in front of the gates of Berlin.

In the same spirit, he sent this telegram of thanks to Mussolini:¹⁶¹

My thanks to you, Duce, for congratulating me on my birthday. The battle we are now waging for our bare existence has reached its climax. By the unrestricted deployment of matériel, Bolshevism and the troops of Jewry are sparing no effort in order to unite their destructive forces in Germany and are plunging our continent into chaos. In the spirit of dogged defiance of death, the German Volk and all who are of one spirit with it will put a stop to this attack,

April 22, 1945

no matter how difficult the fight may be, and by their unique heroism they will change the course of the war. In this historic moment, in which the fate of Europe is being decided for the next centuries, I send you my heartfelt greetings.

Adolf Hitler

In spite of this displayed confidence in victory, it was obvious that the shelling of Berlin by the Russians, which began on April 21, had made Hitler nervous. When his physician Morell wanted to give him a caffeine injection, he screamed:¹⁶²

What do you think I am—crazy? You are probably trying to give me a morphine injection!

Hitler immediately fired Morell and demanded that he take off his uniform, telling him that he was not his personal physician any longer.

On April 22, telephone calls between the Reich Chancellery and Koller continued. Hitler again asked how things were going with Steiner's attack. He wanted to have airplanes deployed for observing the attack. There was a flurry of excitement at the Führerbunker, Luftwaffe Adjutant Colonel von Below said on the telephone. Hitler had ordered the attack to begin in the morning. He had counted on it before noon at the latest. He wanted to get a clear picture immediately of how things were going. Koller made a few calls himself, but all he could find out was that Steiner had not yet begun the attack, since the troops from the army and SS had not yet been brought up.

This information and the increased shelling by the Russians was all Hitler needed. On this day, the Germanic god was probably not very content with him. Hitler despaired, even though only for a few hours, about the future and said he no longer wanted to remain "steadfast in the face of the impossible." He said that the war was lost and that he would commit suicide.

After his return from the Führerbunker at 8:45 p.m., General Christian told Koller about the dramatic discussion of the situation on April 22:¹⁶³

The Führer has broken down. He thinks the fight has now become hopeless. He does not want to leave Berlin, however. Instead, he wants to stay in the bunker and defend Berlin. If the Russians come, he will draw the conclusions and shoot himself. Keitel, Jodl, Bormann, Dönitz, Himmler—the last two on the telephone—have tried to change his mind and get him to leave Berlin—all in vain. The Führer had his files, documents, and papers taken from his rooms to the yard in order to be burned. This [the burning] is taking place

April 22, 1945

right now. The foreign minister also came, but Hitler did not want to see him. He asked for Goebbels, his wife, and the six children, and now they are sitting around him at the bunker.

The Führer said that he will stay there, the others should leave Berlin, they could go wherever they wanted to go.

Koller drove to Jodl, who had gone to the Kramnitz barracks. Shortly after midnight, Jodl told him a nearly identical story:

Hitler has given up. He has decided to stay in Berlin, lead its defense, and shoot himself at the last moment. He said that he could not fight for physical reasons; he would not fight because he could not risk falling wounded into enemy hands. We all tried our utmost to dissuade him and suggested deploying troops from west to east in the battle. He responded that everything would still fall apart; he could not do it, the Reichsmarschal should do it instead.

When somebody remarked that no soldiers would fight for the Reichsmarschal, Hitler said the following: "What do you mean fight? There is not much fighting left to be done. And if it's a question of negotiation, the Reichsmarschal is better at that than I am." The most recent development of the situation has made a great impression on him. He keeps talking about treason and failure, corruption of the commanders and the troops. Even the SS is lying to him now: Sepp Dietrich [for example !]; Steiner [also] did not do his job.

In spite of his depression, Hitler sent a telex to Dönitz, who received it at 7:15 p.m. on April 22.¹⁶⁴ In it, he called the fight for Berlin "Germany's fateful battle"—dwarfing all other tasks in comparison. He ordered Dönitz to support the fighting and temporarily disregard all other missions of the navy by bringing troops "into the city by air, and by land and sea to the fronts fighting on the outskirts of Berlin."

The German people were informed about the developments at the Reich Chancellery through two appeals from Goebbels to the citizens of Berlin. In the first appeal, dated April 22, the public was told that Lieutenant General Reimann had been charged with the military defense of Berlin.¹⁶⁵ Goebbels further declared the following:

Of course, I will stay in Berlin, together with my staff. My wife and children are also here and will stay here. In the event that agents, provocateurs, and criminal elements attempt to stir up the citizens by running up white flags or other cowardly behavior and paralyze the resistance, it must be met by immediate intervention by all means.

The second appeal, issued on the following day, informed the public that the Führer was in the Reich capital and had taken command of "all

April 23, 1945

forces deployed for the defense of Berlin.”¹⁶⁶ Goebbels continued as follows:

It is a question of a decision of supreme importance, not only for us, but also for Europe. That is why the Führer has deployed all military forces available in Germany, to throw them immediately against Bolshevism.

By April 23, Hitler had recovered from his depression. Perhaps all this was just one last trial, the final “hammer blow of Providence.”¹⁶⁷ Perhaps a turn of events would soon come about. He could not allow himself to lose heart at the last moment. This would only elicit the fury of the Almighty, who demanded that he “remain steadfast in face of the impossible.”

More importantly, Hitler was cheered up by a radio message from Göring, who asked if he would now be allowed to take over the Reich. After Koller’s report on the desperate situation of the Reich capital, Göring wired his superior as follows:¹⁶⁸

Mein Führer!

In view of your decision to remain in the fortress of Berlin, do you agree that I should take over the leadership of the whole Reich as your deputy with complete liberty of action at home and abroad, in accordance with your decree of April 29, 1941? If I receive no reply by 22 [22:00 hours or 10 p.m.], I shall assume that your freedom of action has been curtailed. I shall then regard the conditions of the decree as fulfilled. I shall act in the best interest of Volk and Fatherland. You are aware of my feelings for you in this darkest of hours of my life, as words fail me. May the Lord protect you and allow you, despite everything, to come here as soon as possible.

Your loyal Hermann Göring.

This was tantamount to treason! This man wished to claim power while he, Hitler, was still alive!

Immediately, Hitler again struck the pose of the ruler. How could anyone claim that the Führer no longer possessed “freedom of action” or was indisposed by illness?! He was in excellent condition, his health was perfect, and he enjoyed complete possession of his freedom of action. He would show Göring and those like him who had the say in Germany: he, Adolf Hitler, and nobody else! Immediately, he sent this radio message to Göring:

The Führer decree of June 29, 1941, is herewith declared null and void. Your behavior and your measures constitute a betrayal of my person and the National Socialist cause. I am in complete possession of my freedom of action and forbid any further measures.

Adolf Hitler

April 25, 1945

Also on April 23, Speer returned to Berlin by plane in order to “place himself at the disposal” of Hitler, as he put it. He witnessed the arrival of Göring’s radio message and Hitler’s reaction to it. He told the following to the military tribunal at Nuremberg:¹⁶⁹

Hitler was very upset about the content of the telegram. He unequivocally stated his opinion of Göring. He said that he had known for a long time that Göring was corrupt and a morphine addict.

It was characteristic of Hitler when he finally declared: “But let him handle the negotiations for surrender anyway. It will make no difference then who does it.”

Speer said goodbye to Hitler and left Berlin. On Hitler’s orders, Bormann instructed the SS to arrest Göring in Berchtesgaden.¹⁷⁰ Göring was told that, legally speaking, his life was over, and that he owed his pardon only to the “generosity” of the Führer.

Hitler wanted to name the commander of the Sixth Air Fleet, Colonel General Ritter von Greim, as his new Luftwaffe commander in chief. He sent him a telegram, ordering him to come to Berlin from Munich at once.¹⁷¹

The following announcement by Hitler informed the public of the recent events:¹⁷²

Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring has become acutely ill due to a chronic heart problem which has long troubled him. He himself has requested to be relieved of the command of the Luftwaffe and the connected tasks in view of the current situation, which demands the deployment of all forces. The Führer has granted this request. He has appointed Colonel General Ritter von Greim as the new commander in chief of the Luftwaffe and promoted him to field marshal.

On April 25, this official communiqué on Hitler’s activities in Berlin was handed to the press:¹⁷³

The Führer in the Fortress Berlin

In the defense of the Reich capital against the Bolshevik attack, the Führer himself makes the decisions on the deployment of the forces and the bringing up of reinforcements. In nearly hourly discussions, the men responsible for the defense of Berlin report the situation to the Führer.

The Führer directly summons the officers and men who have proved themselves outstanding in battle from their place of deployment and personally hands them their medals. In this manner, Captain Jaschke, the commander of an assault gun unit, received the Knight’s Cross from the Führer’s hands, as did the noncommissioned officer Paul.

April 26, 1945

According to Boldt's report,¹⁷⁴ the discussions of the situation and the award ceremonies continued until April 29. Hitler Youth boys, who took part in the street fighting and were brought to the Führerbunker by Axmann, were especially frequently decorated.

On April 25, the Sixty-Ninth American Infantry Division and the Thirty-Eighth Russian Infantry Division deployed near Torgau. Royal Air Force squadrons dropped bombs on the Obersalzberg.

On this day, Hitler called in his servant Linge to see him. He gave him several orders on how to proceed in the event he committed suicide.¹⁷⁵ He instructed him carefully to burn his body and that of Eva Braun. He told him to destroy everything in the bunker reminiscent of him, with the exception of the "Frederick the Great" painting by Lenbach, which he was supposed to hand over to the chief pilot Baur.

At 12:26 a.m. on April 26, Jodl received this telex from Hitler:¹⁷⁶

The most immediate implementation of all relief attacks in the directions previously ordered is urgently necessary. The Twelfth Army [Wenck] has to deploy on the line Beelitz-Ferch and immediately continue the attack in an easterly direction until it meets up with the Ninth Army [Busse]. The Ninth Army attacks along the shortest route in the west and establishes contact with the Twelfth Army. After the meeting of the two armies, everything hinges on destroying the enemy forces in the southern sector of Berlin, by swinging north, and establishing broad contact with Berlin.

Undeniably, Hitler was a master in writing orders. However, that alone was not enough. As in so many other respects, Hitler resembled Napoleon in this, too, who exclaimed in November 1813: "What can I do? I give orders, but nobody listens to me!"¹⁷⁷

Between six and seven o'clock on the evening of April 26, Colonel General Ritter von Greim arrived at the Reich Chancellery after an adventurous trip. Accompanied by the pilot Hanna Reitsch, he had first flown to Rechlin, then had been brought to the Gatow airfield in another plane, and from there had taken a training plane to the center of the Reich capital. Above Berlin, his plane was hit by fire and his right foot was injured. Nevertheless, with the help of his pilot he managed to land the small plane on the east-west axis. In a requisitioned car, they finally reached the Reich Chancellery.

After Greim's injuries had been treated, Hitler received him and told him that Göring was a traitor. He gave him Göring's telegram of April 23 to read. Finally, he made a scene and shouted the following, full of self-pity:¹⁷⁸

April 27, 1945

An ultimatum! A crass ultimatum! There is nothing else left. I am not spared anything! Nobody stays loyal, nobody lives up to his honor! There is no bitterness, no treason, that has not yet been heaped on me; and now this! This is the end. I am not spared any insult!

Hitler's sentimental outburst was greatly exaggerated. After all, Göring had had the decency of asking him for his approval. Soon, he would have far more reason to be angry with Himmler, who acted in a far more highhanded manner.

Hitler finished his outburst before Greim with the announcement that he had had Göring arrested and dismissed from office. Then he portrayed the general situation in rosy colors to Greim, named him commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, and promoted him to field marshal. It was the twenty-ninth promotion to field marshal (or grand admiral) Hitler carried out, more than the number Napoleon had achieved (twenty-six).

Greim, who had arrived very depressed after his long flight over the an occupied land that was spilt into two parts, literally blossomed during Hitler's fantastic report on the situation, forgot about every pain, and said the final victory lay within his reach.

When Koller, who had returned from Berchtesgaden, phoned Greim from the high-command headquarters in Fürstenberg on the next day, Greim told him: "Just wait and see, don't lose your faith, everything will go well in the end. I was extraordinarily invigorated by the meeting with the Führer and by his strength. This is like a fountain of youth for me here!"¹⁷⁹

How worried Hitler actually was became evident in his conversation with Hanna Reitsch on the same day. He gave her two poison capsules to use in her discretion in case of an emergency and said the following:

I do not want us to fall into the hands of the Russians alive, or for them to find our bodies. The body of Eva and my own will be consigned to the flames. Choose your own way of departing from this world.

However, he added, there was still a well-founded hope of General Wenck's relieving Berlin.

On April 27, Hitler ordered that "Attack Group Oranienburg with the Forty-First Panzer Corps (instead of Steiner's corps) be placed under General of Panzer Troops Wenck."¹⁸⁰

On the afternoon of April 27, Hitler said that he wished to see his liaison man with Himmler, SS Gruppenführer Fegelein, but Eva Braun's

April 27, 1945

brother-in-law was nowhere to be found. Finally, he was discovered at his apartment in Charlottenburg. Apparently, he was fed up with life at the bunker. He was even wearing civilian clothes.

Hitler ordered him back by telephone and had him arrested and locked up in the Gestapo's bunker.¹⁸¹

On the evening of April 27, the Reich Chancellery came under heavy fire from Russian artillery. Hitler still hoped that Wenck's army or Attack Group Oranienburg would come to his rescue.

At 3:00 a.m. on April 28, Hitler ordered General Krebs to call Keitel:¹⁸²

The Führer is interested mostly in the attack west of Oranienburg. How are things going there? Is the attack making progress? The Führer does not want Steiner as a commander there. Has Holste¹⁸³ taken over the command? If we do not get help in the next thirty-six to forty-eight hours, then it will be too late!!

The Führer is expecting help as quickly as possible; we have forty-eight hours at most. If we do not get help by then, it will be too late!!! The Führer wants me to say this again!!

A new order came out of the Reich Chancellery at 12:30 p.m.:¹⁸⁴

The task of all units fighting in the area between the Elbe and the Oder: for the relief of the Reich capital to bring the sweeping assault to a victorious end with all means and with the utmost speed; with regard to this decisive task, the fighting against the enemy breakthrough toward Mecklenburg is of secondary importance.

What arrived at the Führerbunker instead of the anticipated reports on the advances of Wenck's army¹⁸⁵ or other relief units, however, turned out to be depressing news.

That afternoon, British radio broadcast a sensational report. Himmler had met with Count Bernadotte of Sweden in Hamburg on April 24. He had made an offer of surrender to the western powers.¹⁸⁶ In order to convince them of his authority, he had said that Hitler was ill and perhaps even dead. In any event, he would not live another forty-eight hours.¹⁸⁷

Hitler was shocked by the news. He raged like a madman. "His face became purple," Hanna Reitsch reported, "and it was barely recognizable." This was the worst betrayal of all time, Hitler finally told Axmann.

However, that was not the last bad news of the day. Shortly thereafter a report arrived that the Russians were approaching the

April 28, 1945

Potsdam Square. Machine-gun fire was already to be heard. The end of the fighting in Berlin appeared to be at hand.¹⁸⁸

Now Hitler finally had to admit that there was no way out. The “miracle” he had counted on was not going to come about, although he had remained “steadfast in the face of the impossible.” His belief in a “divine Providence” collapsed.¹⁸⁹ The “final blow” would, after all, not be landed by him¹⁹⁰ but instead by his enemies abroad whom he had provoked in his crazy blindness. Hitler withdrew for a consultation with Goebbels and Bormann in order to discuss his last instructions.

In addition, he summoned a drumhead court-martial and had Fegelein sentenced to death, in Himmler’s place, so to speak. Supposedly Fegelein had known about the secret negotiations. Immediately after the sentence was passed, Fegelein was executed.

Greim and Hanna Reitsch were ordered to leave Berlin, so that the new commander in chief of the Luftwaffe could intervene in the final battle for the Reich Chancellery by bringing in airplanes. In addition, he was to arrest Himmler.¹⁹¹

Never may a traitor succeed me as the Führer. You must go and see to it that this does not happen!

Hanna Reitsch managed to get Greim and their plane out of burning Berlin and land in Rechlin.¹⁹²

At 11:02 p.m. on April 28, a radio message went out to the “fortresses in the west,”¹⁹³ informing them that “the Führer thinks of them and expects that they will continue to fulfill their duty in an exemplary soldierly manner. There are to be no highhanded actions.”

Hitler’s most significant decision was, however, to marry Eva Braun. She was described as a nice girl and of a positive character by almost everybody who met her.¹⁹⁴ Eva Braun had been depressed by the news of Hitler’s appointment as Reich Chancellor, since this seemed to rob her of all hope of ever marrying the man she loved.¹⁹⁵ In his pose as a heaven-sent Führer, as superman or god-man, Hitler balked at every marriage proposal. Nevertheless, Eva Braun apparently made him promise that, should his political and military mission fail and his ideas prove wrong, he would marry her. Heaven knew that hour had come. For the first time in decades, Hitler behaved like a normal human being at least in this matter, and fulfilled the last wish of the woman who would die with him. Hitler’s marriage on the day before he died

April 29, 1945

represents his only, even if indirect, admission of his complete political and military failure.

The wedding ceremony took place at 1:00 a.m. on April 29 in the map room of the Führerbunker, with all the necessary bureaucratic formalities. Goebbels had called a registered civil magistrate and city councilor of Berlin, the head of the Gau office Walter Wagner. It took Wagner, wearing his Volkssturm uniform, some time to reach the Reich Chancellery.

Hitler's marriage license was found, together with his last will and testament and a letter by Bormann, in the luggage of SS Standartenführer Wilhelm Zander, who was Bormann's adjutant, and who had taken them with him as he attempted to escape. He was found in the village Tegernsee close to Bad Tölz. The marriage license read as follows:¹⁹⁶

Berlin, April 29, 1945

The Mayor of the Reich Capital

For the purpose of the solemnization of a marriage, there appear before Walter Wagner, alderman and civil magistrate in the Reich Capital:

1. Adolf Hitler, born on April 20, 1889, in Braunau; Address: The Reich Chancellery, Berlin; Father: [blank]; Mother: [blank]; Parents' date of marriage: [blank] Proof of identity: personally known.

2. Miss Eva Braun, born on February 6, 1912, in Munich; Address: Munich, Wasserburger Strasse 12; Father: Friedrich Braun; Mother: Franziska Braun (maiden name: Kranburger); Parents' date of marriage: [blank]; Proof of identity: special identity card, dated April 4, 1939, issued by the chief of the German police.

3. Witness: Reich Minister Dr. Joseph Goebbels, born on October 26, 1897, in Rheydt; Address: Berlin, Hermann-Göring-Strasse 20; Proof of identity: personally known.

4. Witness: Martin Bormann, born June 17, 1900, in Halberstadt; Address: Obersalzberg; Proof of identity: personally known.

The persons named under 1 and 2 state that they are of purely Aryan descent and that they have no hereditary diseases which would stand in the way of their marriage. In consideration of the state of war and the special circumstances which concern the solemnization of a marriage under the special laws of war, they request that a verbal notice of an intended marriage is accepted and that all legal delays are disregarded. This request is considered and found to be in order. I now advance to the formal act of the solemnization of a marriage.

In the presence of the witnesses named under 3 and 4, I ask you, my Führer, Adolf Hitler, are you willing to take Miss Eva Braun as your lawful wedded wife? If you are willing, so reply by saying yes. Now I ask you Miss Eva Braun,

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are you willing to take the Führer Adolf Hitler as your lawful husband? If you are willing, so reply by saying yes.

Now that the two fiancés have declared their willingness to enter into the marriage, I declare this marriage contracted before the law.

Read and signed:

1. Husband:	Adolf Hitler
2. Wife:	Eva B. Hitler, born Braun
3. Witness for 1:	Dr. Joseph Goebbels
4. Witness for 2:	Martin Bormann
5. Civil Magistrate:	Wagner

At the signing of the marriage licence, two of those involved made mistakes because of the great excitement: Eva Braun was about to sign her maiden name and started with a "B," then crossed it out and wrote "Hitler, born Braun;" the civil magistrate signed "Waagner" instead of Wagner.

After the formalities were done, the wedding couple stepped out into the hallway to accept the best wishes of the entourage. A small festive dinner in their private rooms followed. Goebbels, his wife, Bormann, Hitler's secretaries Mrs. Christian and Mrs. Junge, and later the Generals Krebs and Burgdorf, and Colonel von Below attended, as well as Adjutant Günsche and Hitler's dietary cook, Miss Manzialy. Champagne was offered, only Hitler had tea. They spoke about the good old times, especially about Goebbels' wedding, at which Hitler had been witness.

After some time, Hitler retired in order to dictate to Mrs. Junge his political and private last will and testament.

Hitler had previously made a political testament, at the end of the second volume of *Mein Kampf*. At the time, he had written the following:¹⁹⁷

The political testament of the German nation concerning its actions toward others should and must always be as follows: never tolerate the emergence of two continental powers in Europe. Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, to hinder the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, to destroy it.

Take care that the strength of our Volk is not derived from colonies, but from the soil of the homeland in Europe. Never think the security of the Reich assured, unless it is able, for centuries to come, to give every scion of our Volk

April 29, 1945

his own piece of property. Never forget that the most sacred right in this world is the right to the soil you want to cultivate yourself, and the most sacred sacrifice is the blood you shed for this earth.

This political testament of 1928 was supposed to come into force as soon as Hitler had established the German continental empire which he envisioned and which would encompass all of central and eastern Europe up to the Urals, and as soon as he had destroyed all “military powers” at Germany’s borders (hence, France, Poland, Russia, Italy, and so on).

In his political testament of 1945, Hitler used less high-flown phrases. All that counted in 1945 was the incredible chaos he had provoked by his politics. Naturally, he was not about to admit any guilt in this respect. On the contrary, he kept serving up the old sentimental phrases about how he had “used up” his health in the fight for Germany.¹⁹⁸ He spoke of his unsurpassed love for peace, his countless offers of friendship to England. Not surprisingly, he blamed the Jews for the outbreak of the war and its “murderous” consequences for the German people. Not only the Jews were at fault, so were the officers of the German army who, contrary to those in the navy, had no “sense of honor.” He also blamed the “former” Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring and the “former” Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler.

Even now, he saw himself at the center of the universe. Just as he had announced at the beginning of the war, on September 1, 1939, that he wished not to “live to see the day” if things went badly,¹⁹⁹ he now said that he did “not wish to fall into the hands of the enemy who, for the amusement of their incited masses, need a new spectacle directed by the Jews.”

After his death, the fight should “under no circumstance be given up” and should be continued “no matter where.” For this reason, Hitler appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz as his successor in the office of head of state and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. This appointment came as a surprise to many, including Dönitz. However, considering Hitler’s mentality, it was not really all that surprising. The reason was quite obvious. He even said it explicitly in this last will: “May it one day form part of the sense of honor of the German officer—it is already the case with our navy—that the surrender of a region or city is impossible and that, above all, the leaders should set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.”

April 29, 1945

Hitler made Dönitz's mission perfectly clear in the above sentence: he should continue to wage the fight mercilessly until the glorious end, even if the entire German Volk would go down with him, like the crew of a ship. Dönitz should follow the example that fleet commander Admiral Lütjens had set on May 26, 1941, when, confronted with a hopeless situation, he scuttled the no longer maneuverable *Bismarck* with its flag flying, a crew of two thousand men and himself on board. That was the "sense of honor" Hitler was referring to and he believed that the grand admiral was the only officer in his entourage whom he could trust to carry out this mission. But Hitler was mistaken in this, as in so many other regards!

Hitler's political last will and testament read as follows:²⁰⁰

[National Emblem]

ADOLF HITLER

My Political Testament

More than thirty years have passed since I deployed my modest forces as a volunteer in the First World War, a war forced on the Reich.

In these three decades, all my thoughts, actions, and life have been guided by my love for and loyalty to the Volk. They gave me the power to make many more difficult decisions than any mortal man before me. I have used up my time, my working power, and my health in these three decades.

It is untrue that I or any other person in Germany wanted war in the year 1939. It was desired and instigated exclusively by those international statesmen who are either of Jewish origin or work for Jewish interests. I made too many proposals for the limitation and control of armament, which posterity will not be able to deny eternally, for the responsibility for this war to be placed on me. Further, I never wanted, after the first accursed World War, a second one against England or even America to come about. Centuries will go by, but from the ruins of our cities and monuments of art, hatred for the people who are ultimately responsible will always renew itself; against those whom we have to thank for all this: international Jewry and its helpers!

Only three days before the outbreak of the German-Polish war, I proposed a solution for the German-Polish problems to the British ambassador in Berlin—similar to the one for the Saarland under international control. That proposal cannot be disavowed. It was only rejected because the influential circles in English politics wanted war, partially for business reasons, partially driven by propaganda directed by international Jewry.

I never left any doubt about it: should the nations of Europe again be regarded only as the portfolio of stocks of these international monetary and financial conspirators, then the race would be held responsible that actually is guilty in this murderous struggle: Jewry! Further, I made it perfectly clear that this time that millions of grown men would not die and hundreds of thousands of women and children would not burn in the cities or die

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under the rain of bombs without a punishment's being inflicted on the guilty, although by more humane means.

After a six-year-long fight which, in spite of all the setbacks, will one day go down in history as the most glorious and brave avowal of a Volk's will to live, I cannot leave this city, the capital of the Reich. Since there are not enough forces to withstand the enemy attack at this point and our resistance is slowly being weakened by blinded and spineless characters, I wish to join my fate to that which millions of others have taken upon themselves and remain in this city. In addition, I do not wish to fall into the hands of an enemy who, for the amusement of its incited masses, needs a new spectacle directed by the Jews.

I have, therefore, decided to remain in Berlin and to choose death there voluntarily at the moment when I believe that the seat of the Führer and Chancellor²⁰¹ cannot be held any longer. I die with a joyous heart in view of the immeasurable deeds and accomplishments of our soldiers at the front, which I am well aware of; of our women at home, of our peasants and workers, and the unparalleled deployment, unique in history, of our youth, which bears my name.

That I express to all of them my profound heartfelt gratitude is as natural as my wish that they may under no circumstance abandon the fight. Instead they will continue to wage it no matter where against the enemies of the fatherland, loyal to the creed of the great Clausewitz. From the sacrifice of our soldiers and my own solidarity with them unto death, a seed will one day germinate in German history, in one way or another, and bring about the shining rebirth of the National Socialist movement and the realization of a true Volksgemeinschaft.

Many of the bravest men and women decided to bind their lives to mine unto death. I asked them and finally ordered them not to do this but to participate in the continued fight of the nation. I ask the commanders of the armies, the navy, and the Luftwaffe to reinforce—with the utmost efforts in the National Socialist spirit—the power of resistance of our soldiers. I especially point to the fact that I myself, as the founder and creator of this movement, preferred death to a cowardly resignation much less a surrender.

May it one day form part of the sense of honor of the German officer—as is the case with our navy already—that the surrender of a region or city is impossible and that, above all, the leaders should set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.

Second Part of the Political Testament

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring from the party and strip him of all his rights that might be derived from the decree of June 29, 1941, and my Reichstag declaration of September 1, 1939. In his place, I appoint Grand Admiral Dönitz as Reich President and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht.²⁰²

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsführer SS and Reich Minister of the Interior Heinrich Himmler from the party and all state offices. In his place,

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I appoint Gauleiter Karl Hanke as Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, and Gauleiter Paul Giesler as Reich minister of the interior.

Göring and Himmler, by their secret negotiations with the enemy, which took place without my knowledge and contrary to my will, as well as by attempting to usurp power in the state in violation of the law, have done immeasurable damage to the country and the entire Volk, not to mention their disloyalty to my person.

In order to give the German Volk a government made up of men of honor, who fulfill their duty to continue the war by all means, I appoint, as the Führer of the nation, the following members of the new cabinet: Reich President, Dönitz; Reich chancellor,²⁰³ Goebbels; party minister,²⁰⁴ Bormann, foreign minister, Seyss-Inquart; minister of the interior, Gauleiter Giesler; minister of war,²⁰⁵ Dönitz; commander in chief of the army, Schörner, commander in chief of the navy, Dönitz; commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, Greim; Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, Gauleiter Hanke; economy, Funk; agriculture, Backe; justice, Thierack; culture, Dr. Scheel;²⁰⁶ propaganda, Dr. Naumann; finance, Schwerin-Krosigk; labor, Dr. Hupfauer;²⁰⁷ armament, Saur;²⁰⁸ head of the German labor front and member of the Reich cabinet, Reich Minister Dr. Ley.²⁰⁹

Although a number of these men, like Martin Bormann, Dr. Goebbels, and others, including their wives, joined me out of their own free will and wished to leave the capital of the Reich under no circumstances, but instead were willing to go down with me, I have to ask them to comply with my request and to place the interest of the nation above their own feelings in this case. Through their work and loyalty, they will be as close to me as companions after death, as I hope to be among them in spirit and will always accompany them. May they be hard, but never unjust, may they never allow fear to become the guide of their actions, and may they place the honor of the nation above all else there is on earth. May they finally realize that our mission in expanding the National Socialist state will be a work for coming centuries, which obliges every individual always to serve the common interest and to put aside his own advantage in its favor. I demand of all Germans, all National Socialists, men and women, and soldiers of the Wehrmacht that they will be loyal and obedient to the new government and its president unto death.

Above all, I oblige the leadership of the nation and its followers to a meticulous observance of the racial laws and to a merciless resistance to those world-wide poisoners of all Völker, international Jewry.

Given at Berlin, April 29, 1945, four o'clock

Adolf Hitler

As witnesses:

Dr. Joseph Goebbels

Wilhelm Burgdorf

Martin Bormann

Hans Krebs

Hitler still persevered in the role of the god-man in this "political testament" whose various versions were addressed to Fleet Commander Dönitz, Field Marshal Schörner, and "the public." He did not mention

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his marriage with Eva Braun. Such a human touch would have been out of place in this last grandiose proclamation. The German public was truly astonished when, following the complete collapse of the Third Reich, it heard about the “last-minute marriage” of Eva Braun and Hitler.

The only place Hitler mentioned this marriage was in his “private testament.” It is not entirely clear whether or not he wished this document to be published. He could not resist using the same proclamation style in this last private piece of paper, although it was less heroic in tone than his political testament. He admitted that it was possible that the party “no longer existed,” and spoke once again of the “disgrace of a withdrawal” (*Absetzen*) which he wanted to avoid. He probably meant to say “make off” (*sich absetzen*), “escape” in plain English, not “being deposed” (*abgesetzt werden*) by a legal resolution of the Reichstag, as Napoleon had experienced in a similar form.²¹⁰ Hitler had always feared such a resolution’s removing him from office, especially since 1942.²¹¹

Hitler’s private last will and testament read as follows:²¹²

[National Emblem]
ADOLF HITLER
My Private Testament

Although I believed in the years of fighting that I could not take the responsibility of entering into a marriage, now, before the end of my life, I decided to take as my wife the lady who, after many years of true friendship, came into this all but besieged city of her own free will in order to share my fate. At her own wish, she will go into death with me as my wife. This will compensate us both for what my work in the service of my Volk took from us.

Insofar as they are of any value, my possessions are the property of the party and, should it no longer exist, of the state. Should the state be destroyed, then any further directives by me would be superfluous.

The paintings in the collections that I bought over the years I never intended for private purposes, but for the establishment of a gallery in my home town of Linz on the Danube.

It is my most heartfelt wish that this bequest be executed.

As the executor of my testament, I appoint my dearest party comrade Martin Bormann.²¹³ He will be entitled to make all decisions final and legal. He will be allowed to give everything of personal value as a remembrance or necessary to maintain a modest bourgeois living standard for my siblings, likewise especially to my wife’s mother,²¹⁴ and my secretaries, whom he knows well, Mrs. Winter,²¹⁵ and others who supported me for many years in my work.

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My wife and I choose to die in order to escape the disgrace of a deposition or surrender. It is our wish to be cremated immediately at the site where I did the larger part of my daily work in the course of a twelve-year-long service to my Volk.

Given at Berlin, April 29, 1945, four o'clock Adolf Hitler

As witnesses:

Martin Bormann, Dr. Goebbels, Nicolaus von Below

Both last wills were signed at 4:00 a.m. It was remarkable that the witnesses who countersigned the documents were not exactly the same in both cases.

Following the signature, Hitler went to rest, while Goebbels wrote an "addendum" to Hitler's private testament. He signed it at 5:30 a.m.²¹⁶ The "addendum" read as follows:

The Führer has ordered me to leave Berlin in the event of a failure of the defense of the capital, and to take part in a leading capacity in the formation of a new government, which he will appoint.

For the first time in my life, I must categorically refuse to comply with an order by the Führer. My wife and my children join me in this refusal. First, because of humanitarian considerations it would break our hearts to abandon the Führer in his hour of greatest need.

Second, for the rest of my life I would feel myself to be a worthless subject devoid of honor. I would lose all self-respect along with the respect of my Volk. I believe I will hereby render the greatest service to the German Volk in the future, for it will need inspiring examples more than actual men in the difficult times to come.

It is for these reasons that, along with my wife, I wish to express the unshakable determination not to leave the Reich capital, and rather to end my life alongside my Führer than to lead a life that will have lost all its meaning unless it can be spent in his service or at his side.

For "the first time in his life," Goebbels said, he refused to comply with an order by the Führer. He preferred to die rather than to go on without him.

Bormann added the following postscript to the letter:

Dear Grand Admiral!

As none of the divisions have broken through and our situation appears hopeless, the Führer dictated the enclosed political testament last night.

Heil Hitler!

Yours,

Bormann

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The three official versions of the testament were handed to the following couriers: Bormann's adjutant, SS Standartenführer Wilhelm Zander, took the copy for Dönitz;²¹⁷ Hitler's army adjutant, Major Willi Johannmeier the one for Schörner;²¹⁸ and press chief Heinz Lorenz the one for "the public."²¹⁹

At the noon discussion of the situation, Krebs suggested sending out three officers in order to try to establish contact with Wenck: Major Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven, cavalry captain Boldt, and Lieutenant Colonel Weiss.²²⁰ Hitler had him find an escape route and then gave his approval. He shook hands with each of the officers and said: "My regards to Wenck. He should hurry up or it will be too late!"

In the afternoon, Hitler had had his dog Blondi poisoned by his former surgeon, Professor Haase, head of a military hospital in the big air-raid shelter under the Reich Chancellery, which was open to the public. News of this event, which made it clear that the end was near, caused a number of nurses, wounded men, and other patients of the hospital to ask to see the Führer one last time before he died.²²¹ Hitler granted this request and, his hands in his coat pockets, walked through the room in silence.

Hitler handed his secretaries poison capsules and said that he regretted not being able to give them a nicer parting gift.

In spite of all this, he had not yet given up completely. Colonel Nicolaus von Below, inspired by the departure of the three army officers, had come to the conclusion that he could try something similar in order to escape a macabre end in the bunker of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler agreed and gave him a dispatch for Keitel at 10:00 p.m.

Below reported the following on the content of this message:²²²

In it, Hitler declared that the battle for Berlin was nearing its end, that he preferred suicide to surrender, that he had named Dönitz as his successor, and that two of his earliest followers, Göring and Himmler, had betrayed him in the end.

Then he talked about the accomplishments of the Wehrmacht. He praised the navy: its great courage had redeemed the disgrace of 1918,²²³ it could not be blamed for the defeat. He excused the Luftwaffe, since it had fought bravely.

The Volk and the Wehrmacht had given their all and everything in this long and hard fight. It had been a great sacrifice. However, his trust had been abused by many people. Disloyalty and treason had undermined the power of resistance throughout the war. He was therefore unable to lead his Volk to

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victory. The general staff of the armed forces could not be compared with the general staff of the First World War.²²⁴ Its achievements were far behind those of the fighting front.

“The efforts and sacrifices of the German Volk in this war were so great that I cannot believe that they were in vain. It must continue to be its objective to gain space [Lebensraum] for the German Volk in the east.”

So even in the last hours of his life, Hitler was still preoccupied with the question of Lebensraum in the east. He was his old self. No hard facts could move him to abandon his theories of 1919.

Before he died, Hitler heard about the fate of Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, on the radio. The station of the Italian “National Liberation Committee” broadcast news on April 29, according to which they had been sentenced by a “special court” and executed.²²⁵

On September 28, 1937, Mussolini had declared in Berlin: “Fascism has an ethic to which it intends to remain true, and this ethic corresponds to my personal morals: to speak clearly and openly, and if you have a friend, to march with him to the end.” In spite of his indecisiveness, Mussolini had remained true to his fateful “ethic” for exactly seven-and-a-half years. However, on April 28, 1945, his march had come to an end.

Though they lived in different areas, both dictators met death at nearly the same time, both in the company of their mistresses of many years.

One hour before midnight, Hitler attempted one last time to find out whether a “miracle” had not somehow come about in the meantime. He did not want to disappoint the Almighty by giving up prematurely in case this was just a “trial” and he would be saved at the last moment.

At 11:00 p.m., Jodl received this radio message at Dobbin from Hitler:²²⁶

I demand immediate reports on the following:

1. Where are the spearheads of “Wenck” [Twelfth Army]?
2. When will they continue the attack?
3. Where is the Ninth Army [Busse]?
4. In what direction is the Ninth Army breaking through?
5. Where are the spearheads of “Holste” [Attack Group Oranienburg]?

Hitler had only sixteen-and-a-half hours to live, but the tone of his orders was no different from those of twenty-five years ago!

At 1:00 a.m. on April 30, Keitel replied to Hitler’s radio message as follows:²²⁷

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1. Spearhead of Wenck is stuck south of the Schwielow Lake.
2. Twelfth Army can therefore not continue attack on Berlin.
3. Ninth Army massively surrounded.
4. Corps Holste driven onto the defensive.

That was a clear, unpretentious reply—the final blow to Hitler’s delusions. Now the end had irrevocably come. His God had forsaken him. The “Almighty,” the “Providence,” had failed him and taken no steps to save Adolf Hitler who had remained “steadfast in the impossible.” It was finished.

Hitler had those to whom he wished to say goodbye assemble in the hall. Accompanied by Bormann, he appeared early at 2:30 for the final scene. He walked past the twenty or so persons,²²⁸ shook hands with the ladies, and mumbled a few inaudible words.

When he had left, those who had gathered stood together for a while. Somehow they all breathed a sigh of relief. Since Hitler’s death was now imminent, they felt that no more unpleasant surprise or final drama awaited them. After all, it had not been entirely clear what the end would be like. It would have been possible that, in “the frenzy of a cornered maniac,”²²⁹ Hitler would have ordered some act of desperation, perhaps a mass suicide by poison, the shooting of all residents of the Reich Chancellery bunker, or driving everybody out onto the Wilhelmsplatz for a joint heroic death in a hail of Russian bullets.

The majority of the residents of the bunker, whose number amounted to a few hundred, did not share Goebbels’s opinion that life after Hitler was not worth living. Therefore, they were greatly relieved when they heard that Hitler had decided that only he and Eva Braun would commit suicide and the rest could do as they pleased. Soon the general tension gave way to dancing and drinking. The affair ended up being so loud that the residents of the Führerbunker had to request some peace and quiet, although in vain.

However, Hitler was not yet ready to put an end to everything. On the morning of April 30, he summoned his chief pilot and told him:²³⁰ “Baur, I would like to say goodbye to you.” Greatly upset, Baur asked: “Does this mean you want to end it all?” Hitler replied: “Regrettably, the time has come. My generals betrayed me, my soldiers do not want to go on, and I cannot go on!”

Baur tried to change his mind, suggesting an escape by plane to Argentina, Japan, or an Arab state. But Hitler declined:

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I still have two choices: I could go into the mountains or to Dönitz in Flensburg.²³¹ Fourteen days later, I would be just where I am today, I would face the same alternatives. The war ends in Berlin. I stand and fall with Berlin. You have to have the courage to draw the ultimate conclusions—I put an end to it! I know that already tomorrow millions of people will curse me. Fate wanted it this way. The Russians know that I am still here in the bunker, and I fear that they will use gas. In the course of the war, we developed a gas that can make people unconscious for twenty-four hours. We know from our intelligence service that the Russians have that gas, too. It would be disastrous if I fell into their hands alive. There are gas sluices installed here, but who would want to rely on that? Not I, in any event—and so I will put an end to everything today.

Hitler left his painting of Frederick the Great by Lenbach to Baur.²³² Through the years, he had always believed in its magical powers.

I do not want this picture to get lost. I would like it to be preserved for posterity. It has great historic value. It is for you. It suffices that it is in your hands.

After some reminiscences about the travels during which the painting had accompanied him, Hitler continued:

I have two more orders for you, Baur. I hold you responsible²³³ for the burning of my wife's and my bodies. In addition, I made Dönitz my successor. Bormann has a number of orders from me that need to be transmitted to Dönitz. See to it that you get out of here. It is very important that Bormann reaches Dönitz.

The men shook hands, and Hitler turned to go. But then he came back again. He could not resist, he simply had to put an idea into the head of this upright air-force captain who was an excellent pilot but had no clue about politics and strategy: "Baur, they should write on my tombstone: 'He was the victim of his generals.'" When Baur looked at him in utter amazement, Hitler added in a secretive tone the following words: "Baur, there are many things you do not know. You will find out many things that will surprise you."

One last time, Hitler managed to confuse a man and rob him of his sense of judgment. When Baur later met with the generals of the "National Committee [named] Free Germany" in Russia, he remembered Hitler's words and sincerely believed that these generals were responsible for Hitler's and Germany's downfall. In reality, however, Hitler's undoing was his politics, which had led them to "abandon" him, just as the marshals of Napoleon I had turned away

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from him once they realized that his plans would fail because of the resistance of the entire world.

After the talk with Baur, the Führer attended a discussion of the situation as though it was a completely ordinary day.²³⁴ He was informed that the Russians had already reached the Potsdamer Platz and the Weidendammer Bridge.

Hitler had lunch with his secretaries and the dietary cook. His wife remained in her room. Shortly after 3:00 p.m., a new farewell scene took place in the hall where Goebbels and the Generals Krebs and Burgdorf had gathered. Eva and Adolf Hitler showed themselves, arm in arm, and then went into the map room.

The door closed. The time for Hitler's suicide had come. He had thought about it for so long. In December 1932, he had said:²³⁵

If the party ever falls apart, I will take a gun and end it all in a minute.

Following the debacle with Paulus at Stalingrad, he had said on February 1, 1943:²³⁶

What is life? Life is people. Some of them die, but those who survive are the people. But how can one fear that second which may free him from the sorrows of life, if only he is not kept back by his sense of duty in this trouble?

And he had tried to console himself on August 31, 1944:²³⁷

It takes only a fraction of a second, and you are relieved of all that and you can have some quiet and eternal peace.

On April 30, 1945, in the bunker of the Reich Chancellery, he finally ended his life, something he could have done as early as September 3, 1939. It was already clear on that day that Hitler's foreign policy had suffered a complete collapse with the declaration of war by the English, and that his downfall was inevitably sealed. At the time, he had just stared in front of him for several minutes and then asked: "What now?" However, he had been too cowardly and too proud to draw the conclusions at that time. Now, he was after all forced to pick up his pistol. At the time, he had still sat in his magnificent study at the Reich Chancellery, now he sat in the musty concrete cellar of the same building. Five years, eight months, and twenty-seven days had passed in the meantime. Not for one hour had he stood a chance of winning the war. All these years and months had been just a delay—a desperate attempt to postpone the certain end, which drew inevitably nearer with terrible consequences. Meanwhile, tremendous destruction had taken

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place in Europe, many millions had died under the most terrible circumstances. But Hitler was no more moved by these considerations than Napoleon had once been. On June 26, 1813, Napoleon challenged Metternich: "It is war you want, isn't it? Well, you shall have it. I don't give a damn about one million lives more or less!"²³⁸

Now Hitler had reached the end of his days and, as he claimed in his political testament, he now pulled the trigger with a "joyous heart."

At one time, he had solemnly announced:²³⁹

No matter when Providence will end my life, not even at the last moment will I regret to have led this fight. On the contrary, I will be able to tell myself: It was a life worth living! It was not a life of cowardice, indolence, and restraint. Instead, it was a life that will one day hold its own before German history!

Had it really been worthwhile for him—this life with its comet-like rise to political stardom and its catastrophic end? From Hitler's point of view, the answer to this question would certainly have been an unconditional yes. After all, in the years 1932 to 1945, he had had the opportunity to satisfy his lust for power to a degree which no man on earth had ever been able to in the past. Up to the last minute, he had relished this feeling of power, indulged himself in demagogic speeches, fantastic prophesies for the future, grandiose proclamations, military orders, and the brutal or malicious use of force. Even though his sphere of influence had constantly shrunk, until it finally extended only to the Reich Chancellery, he had still continued to indulge his passion.

The fate of the German Volk, whose name he had had always in his mouth, had made as little difference to him as the judgment of history to which he had referred from the very beginning. Whether or not "millions would curse him," or the nations would remember his name with disgust, did not touch him, as long as he was able to quench his thirst for power time and again. He had lived only for the present, for the ecstasy of the moment—he was a gambler of tremendous proportions.

If he did not wish to be captured and face an Allied war tribunal, then he truly had only one way out: a bullet through his head. He could not make use of the opportunity to go into exile as the Kaiser had done after the lost World War; not only because he was not born as a member of an imperial house with important relationships abroad, but also because his politics had made it impossible. He realized that. No neutral country would have granted him asylum, and had he gone there

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clandestinely, it would have immediately granted an extradition request by the Allies.

Nor could Hitler claim religious motives in refusing to commit suicide, as the Kaiser had done, referring to his alleged "Christian convictions."²⁴⁰ Regardless of whether this step required courage or was a sign of cowardice or mental illness, Hitler had decided to do so of his own free "will," much as when he forced himself to ever new "tests of courage" in the First World War, which had earned him the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st class.

From the point of view of the public, one ought to be grateful to Hitler for putting an end to himself and not continuing to torment the public with the spectacle, lasting months or perhaps even years, of his attempts to rationalize his behavior, accuse others of his own misdeeds, and so on. There is little doubt that, had Hitler been captured, he would have talked endlessly about his miraculous life story, his struggle at home and abroad, his unsurpassed love for peace, his countless offers of friendship to England, the failure of his allies, the "betrayal" of his generals and other coworkers. Like Napoleon, he would have repeated time and again what he had achieved, and would have been capable of achieving, if others had only let him.

After the Hitler couple had retired, his loyal followers, Goebbels, Bormann, Linge, and others, remained in the hallway. They did not have to wait long. A few minutes later, they heard a shot. After a short silence, they opened the door and saw Hitler sitting dead on the couch. His head had fallen back, blood streamed down his temple. He had shot himself with a 7.65 mm pistol,²⁴¹ which then had fallen from his hand. Next to him was slumped the body of Eva Hitler. She had taken poison, and her outward appearance was unchanged. She had not used her little 6.35 mm revolver. It was 3:30 p.m.²⁴²

Goebbels took the Reich youth leader Axmann, who had arrived in the meantime, into the room. In silence, they stood there for about a quarter of an hour before the corpses. Then, Linge came in and put a blanket over Hitler's head, which was covered with blood. He carried the body outside into the garden of the Reich Chancellery, where he laid it down at a distance of about three meters from the emergency exit of the bunker. Hitler's chauffeur Erich Kempka carried Eva's body outside and placed it next to the dead Hitler.²⁴³ Then, gasoline was poured over the bodies from canisters which Kempka had procured earlier.²⁴⁴ Because of the wind and the Russian artillery fire, Linge did not manage

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to light a match. The small group had to take cover at the entrance of the bunker. There Linge set fire to a piece of cloth, or rather a piece of paper, and threw it over to the dead bodies which immediately went up in flames. Goebbels, Bormann, Günse, Linge, Kempka, and Burgdorf stood at attention, arms outstretched in the Hitler salute.

The bodies burned for several hours but, as is natural with gasoline, they did not burn completely. In the late evening, a commando force under SS Brigadeführer Rattenhuber took the remains and buried them in a bomb crater, a few meters from the site of the burning, covering them with earth.²⁴⁵

In the meantime, things had considerably relaxed at the bunker. The demon who had constantly kept his entourage under pressure was dead. And almost everyone felt a sense of relief. The whole atmosphere had changed. The bunker even smelled different, because people could now smoke if they pleased—something that would have been unthinkable while Hitler was still alive. Even high-ranking SS commanders were happy that they could greet each other by saying “good evening” without having to fear being regarded as an enemy of the state. The eternal “*Heil Hitler!*” greeting, the repetition of a pledge of allegiance all day long, was a thing of the past. Few were unhappy about that.²⁴⁶

Undoubtedly, the chief mourner at the bunker was Goebbels, who had truly loved Hitler. Still, it was difficult for him to depart from this life. He admitted to Linge: “I wanted to die at the same moment he did. But, at the last minute, I suddenly could not do it.”

At 6:35 p.m., Dönitz received this radio message:²⁴⁷

Grand Admiral Dönitz

In the place of the former Reichsmarschal Göring, the Führer has named you, Grand Admiral, as his successor. Written grants of power are on the way. As of this minute, you will decree all measures that the present situation may require.

Bormann

Since Bormann had neglected to mention that Hitler was dead, Dönitz immediately sent a telegram expressing his loyalty to the Führer whom he thought to be still alive.²⁴⁸

My Führer!

I shall not waiver in my loyalty to you. I shall persist in undertaking everything possible and imaginable within my powers to relieve you in Berlin. Should destiny force me to assume the responsibilities of leadership, which you

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imparted to me as the successor whom you yourself appointed, I vow to bring this war to the end required by the singularly heroic fight of the German Volk.

Grand Admiral Dönitz.

In the meantime, there was some debate on what was to be done at the Führerbunker. Finally, the decision was made to establish contact with the Russian headquarters by radio and initiate negotiations. Chuikov²⁴⁹ agreed. At midnight, General Krebs, who spoke Russian, went to see Chuikov in order to attempt to surrender the Reich Chancellery in return for the permission for all its occupants to leave for the unoccupied zone in the north, where Dönitz was.

Before Krebs returned, Bormann sent another telegram to Dönitz, who received it at 10:35 a.m. on May 1:²⁵⁰

Grand Admiral Dönitz

Last will and testament in force. I will join you as quickly as possible. I believe you should wait with the publication until then.

Bormann

At noon, Krebs returned to the Reich Chancellery. Zhukov had not agreed to any deal and demanded unconditional capitulation and the surrender of all the occupants of the Reich Chancellery.

Since a safe retreat had become impossible, it was high time for a decision. A new radio message was sent to Dönitz at 3:18 p.m.:²⁵¹

Grand Admiral Dönitz

Führer passed away at 3:30 p.m. yesterday. Testament dated April 29 confers the office of Reich president on you, the office of Reich chancellor on Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels, the office of party minister on Reichsleiter Bormann. On the Führer's orders, the testament was taken out of Berlin to you and to Field Marshal Schörner, and to guarantee the security of the public. Reichsleiter Bormann will try to join you today in order to inform you of the situation. Form and time of the announcement to the public and the troops are up to you. Confirm receipt.

Goebbels—Bormann

Even this radio message did not communicate how Hitler had "passed away." In any event, it was clear that he had not died in combat. Goebbels also did not mention that he intended to follow suit and commit suicide as well. It was not until that evening that he told his adjutant Schwägermann that he and his family would depart from this life. He ordered him to burn their bodies. Schwägermann did, but the bodies did not burn completely.²⁵²

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Bormann, Axmann, state secretary Naumann, Baur, Kempka, and the other residents of the bunker, about 300 to 500 persons in all, attempted the next night to get through the Russian lines in small groups.²⁵³ Some of them succeeded, others got killed, and the remainder ended up in Russian captivity.

Even after Hitler's death, his orders were carried out unquestioningly in Germany. The appointment of Dönitz as Reich president and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, a clear violation of the constitution, was accepted without question by the Unterführers. Neither Göring nor Himmler, nor Bormann, von Ribbentrop, Keitel, nor Jodl dared in the least to doubt the legality of Hitler's order.

According to law, the president of the Reichsgericht would have been the deputy of the head of state and, therefore, the commander in chief or rather supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. On his behalf, the senior field marshal, that is, Keitel as the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, should have been serving in this capacity. Up to now, Keitel had always passed on directives to the entire Wehrmacht in Hitler's name. Moreover, he had been field marshal for a much longer time than Dönitz had been grand admiral, and stood in rank above him in this respect too.

However, Keitel willingly complied with Hitler's order, as always, although it represented a violation of the law. An old principle, in force in Germany since 1934, was apparently destined to apply in Germany even after Hitler's death, no matter whether it was legal or not: "We will all always approve of everything our Führer does."²⁵⁴ Only the Allies completely disregarded it and demanded that Keitel sign the surrender papers.

It was astonishing how quickly Dönitz adapted himself to his new role, even though he had been surprised by his appointment. He complied with Hitler's order and immediately began to "govern." During his time in office, he made bombastic proclamations and issued untruthful official announcements entirely in Hitler's style.

Even though Dönitz was not aware of the concrete circumstances of Hitler's death, he realized that Hitler had not "fallen" on the battlefield but instead had simply "passed away" as Goebbels put it. In spite of this, he had the following announcement broadcast on the air at 10:26 p.m. on May 1, accompanied by the mighty sounds of "Siegfried's Funeral Music" from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*.²⁵⁵

May 2, 1945

There is a report from the Führer headquarters that, this afternoon, our Führer Adolf Hitler, fighting to the last breath against Bolshevism, fell for Germany at his command post in the Reich Chancellery. On April 30, the Führer appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz as his successor.

Following this announcement, Dönitz read a proclamation to the German Volk. He repeated the tall story about Hitler's "heroic death" and said that the war would continue.²⁵⁶

In addition, Dönitz issued a proclamation to the German Wehrmacht in which he called Hitler "one of the greatest heroes in German history" and demanded the continuing "unconditional risk of life."²⁵⁷

German Wehrmacht, my Comrades!

The Führer has fallen. True to his great idea to guard the people of Europe against Bolshevism, he risked his life and died a hero's death. One of the greatest heroes in German history has passed away with him. In proud reverence and mourning, we lower our flags before him.

The Führer has chosen me as his successor, as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht and head of state. I take over the command over all branches of the German Wehrmacht with the will to continue the fight against Bolshevism for as long as it takes to save the fighting troops and hundreds of thousands of families in the German eastern areas from enslavement and destruction. I must continue the fight against the English and the Americans insofar and for as long as they prevent me from the fight against Bolshevism.

The situation demands of you, who have already accomplished such great historic deeds and who now yearn for an end to the war, your continued unconditional risk of life. Only by implementing my orders without reservation can chaos and ruin be avoided. A coward and a traitor is the man who fails to fulfill his duty at this hour and, thereby, abandons German women and children to death or enslavement. The oath of loyalty by which you once pledged yourselves to the Führer binds every single one of you to me, as the successor he appointed.

German soldiers—do your duty! The life of the Volk is at stake.

The OKW report of May 2, 1945, also failed to reveal the truth about Hitler's death; namely, the fact that he had committed suicide:²⁵⁸

At the head of those daring men who defend the capital of the Reich, the Führer fell. He sacrificed his life, inspired by the will to preserve his Volk and Europe from destruction by the Bolsheviks. His example—loyalty until death—obliges all soldiers.

SS Obergruppenführer and General of the Waffen SS Karl Wolff and General Vietinghoff,²⁵⁹ the German commanders at the southern front, proved less "resolute" than Dönitz. Without Hitler's knowledge, they



LXV German prisoners of war marched through Moscow, captured in battle of Army Group Center, 1944

Photo: Publisher's archives



LXVI Auschwitz liberated

Photo: Publisher's archives

May 4, 1945

had already agreed to an armistice with the Allies and an “unconditional surrender” on April 29. On May 2, this armistice came into force in northern Italy and the neighboring Austrian areas.

On May 2, the commander of Berlin, General Weidling, capitulated and gave himself up to the Russians. He immediately absolved his soldiers of their oath of allegiance when he heard that “the Führer committed hara-kiri at the Reich Chancellery.”²⁶⁰ This had truly disgusted him. He had fallen for Hitler and his assurances that he would “bear the entire responsibility.”²⁶¹ When push came to shove, however, the Führer had proved himself a coward and disappeared. What remained were memories of his grandiose claims, like the following:²⁶²

It is one of the most uplifting tasks of a leader to allow one’s followers to participate in victory but to take upon oneself the entire responsibility at critical moments and then step in front of one’s followers to shield them against this responsibility.

While Dönitz had sworn to Hitler that he would “bring this war to the end as the unique heroic fight of the German Volk would require it,”²⁶³ the Allied strikes quickly forced him to become disloyal to Hitler and offer to capitulate, although this was something the Führer had strictly forbidden!

On May 4, he sent Admiral General von Friedeburg to Montgomery’s headquarters south of Lüneburg.²⁶⁴ He offered the capitulation of the armed forces in the northwestern area of Germany, Holland, and Denmark. Montgomery gladly accepted, because this spared the lives of many British soldiers. Of course, Dönitz mistakenly believed that the Anglo-American troops would now march straight through Germany in order to confront the Russians.

He would soon be awakened from these Hitlerian daydreams. Montgomery sent Friedeburg on to Eisenhower at Reims. Eisenhower told the German negotiator that only the unconditional surrender of all German troops to England, America, and naturally also to Russia, was acceptable. Colonel General Jodl arrived in Reims in order to support Friedeburg. He wanted to gain four days until the unconditional surrender came into force, but two days were all he got.

Supposedly the German rulers had once again the “rescue of the German Volk from Bolshevism” in mind. In truth, the German generals did not want to think at all of keeping up their resistance against the Red Army for as long as possible. On the contrary, they wanted to give their

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officers and men time to disengage in the east and retreat as quickly as possible to the west, where the conditions of their captivity would be far more agreeable. The expected harsh treatment by the Russians was not surprising, considering for how many years the Russian prisoners of war had been treated like outlaws and denied the terms of the Geneva Convention on Hitler's orders!

At 2:41 a.m. (Western European Standard Time) on May 7, the instrument of unconditional surrender for all German armed forces was signed by Colonel General Jodl and Admiral General von Friedeburg in front of General Eisenhower in Reims.

On May 8 or rather 9,²⁶⁵ this state act was repeated at the Military Academy in Berlin-Karlhorst in front of Marshal Zhukov²⁶⁶ and the British marshal of the Royal Air Force Tedder.²⁶⁷ On the German side, the document was signed by Keitel on behalf of the Wehrmacht high command, by Friedeburg for the navy, and by Colonel General Stumpff for the Luftwaffe. The instrument opened with these words:²⁶⁸

Only this text in English is authoritative

ACT OF MILITARY SURRENDER

1. We the undersigned, acting by authority of the German High Command, hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command all forces on land, sea, and in the air who are at this date under German control.

2. The German High Command will at once issue orders to all German military, naval and air authorities and to all forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours Central European time on 8 May and to remain in the positions occupied at that time. No ship, vessel, or aircraft is to be scuttled, or any damage done to their hull, machinery or equipment.

3. The German High Command will at once issue to the appropriate commanders, and ensure the carrying out of any further orders issued by the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Soviet High Command.

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4. This act of military surrender is without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender, imposed by, or on behalf of the United Nations and applicable to GERMANY and the German armed forces as a whole.

5. In the event of the German High Command or any of the forces under their control failing to act in accordance with this Act of Surrender, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and the Soviet High Command will take such punitive or other action as they deem appropriate.

Signed at Rheims at 0241 on the 7th day of May, 1945.
France

On behalf of the German High Command.
Jodl

IN THE PRESENCE OF

On behalf of the Supreme Commander,
Allied Expeditionary Force.
W. B. Smith

On behalf of the Soviet
High Command.
Ivan Susloparov

F. Sevez
Major General, French Army
(Witness)

[typography adjusted to resemble original document]

May 23, 1945

Things were different this time from what they had been at the capitulation in 1918. At that time, the German military had left the signing of the document up to civilians, who had in no way been responsible for the conduct of the bankrupt German politics and strategy. In the following years, they had been branded as the “November criminals” by right-wing extremists in Germany, and even blamed for the German defeat in the First World War.²⁶⁹

On May 9, the guns finally fell silent on nearly all German fronts. Fighting continued only in Czechoslovakia, where Schörner was in command and refused to accept the unconditional surrender.²⁷⁰ The only thing that was achieved by this refusal was the more severe treatment of the German troops, who were in the end overwhelmed by the enemy.

In northernmost Germany, in the area around Flensburg, the remnants of the Third Reich managed to hold out for a few more days. Dönitz, who owed his appointment to an arbitrary action by Hitler,²⁷¹ headed the so-called “government.” On May 23, British troops occupied the Naval Academy at Flensburg-Mürwick and took the “cabinet” members prisoner.

Although he was a naval officer, Dönitz proved by surrendering that he lacked what Hitler had called a “sense of honor.” In spite of orders to the contrary, he was not willing to “set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.”²⁷² He preferred instead to surrender and save himself. Even Dönitz was a disappointment, a “traitor” to Hitler’s ideas.

And so even the last of Hitler’s theories had broken down. The war was over and it had not ended as Hitler had foretold.²⁷³

I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged inside Germany.

It was not Hitler’s prophecies that had been fulfilled but those of Chamberlain and Churchill:

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.^{274, 275, 276}

On May 23, 1945, the time had finally come: Hitler was dead, and there was nothing left of his Reich.

For the second time within one generation, the Anglo-American powers put a bloody end to the attempt to expand Germany’s borders

May 23, 1945

by brute force. Neither the example of the First World War, which he had witnessed firsthand, nor the incessant warnings of British statesmen had kept Hitler from following down the path that Franz Joseph I, Wilhelm II, Graf Berchthold, and Bethmann Hollweg had taken.

In 1914, it had been the attack on Serbia and Belgium that had resulted in the English declaration of war. In 1939, the attack on Poland and Danzig had led to the same result. In both instances, the confrontation ended in the political and military collapse of Germany. However, the consequences of the debacle of 1918, because of the early capitulation, proved to be not as devastating as those of the catastrophe in 1945.

From the beginning, Hitler's use of terror in warfare had at best postponed the end of the Second World War, but it had not changed its outcome. Everything he had tried to do in this respect had been in vain: the cruel ordeal and massacre of millions of Jews, Gypsies, Russians, Poles, Serbs, and members of other European nations in the concentration and extermination camps, as well as in the prisoner-of-war camps; the unscrupulous killing of thousands of his opponents at home; the subjugation of foreign nations and states; the indiscriminate bombardment of London, Belgrade, and Antwerp; the unscrupulous sacrifice of millions of German soldiers along all fronts of Europe and North Africa, on the high seas and in the air; the merciless sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of German civilians in the cities—nothing had prevented the end from coming.

Hitler was obsessed by the same delusion to which Napoleon also succumbed: the fixed idea that it was possible to establish a continental European empire at the expense of the smaller states and Russia, and to win the friendship or at least benevolent neutrality of England at the same time. As with Napoleon, rivers of blood had to flow before Hitler was ready to give up his fixed idea and disappear from the stage. Like Napoleon, Hitler refused to the end to admit any responsibility for the unprecedented catastrophe into which he had plunged his own people and the world.

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Final Remarks

Hitler undoubtedly is the most extraordinary figure in German history. This is not only true because of his rise from unskilled laborer and resident of a homeless shelter in Vienna to become the German head of state and government and supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht. It is above all true of the extent of the power which he amassed in the course of only a few years, which he incessantly expanded, and which he jealously defended until he died.

No German king or emperor, no German statesman—head of state or government—no German general ever held and exercised as much power as Hitler did.

Hitler was unwilling to allow any person to exercise power that did not devolve from his person. He wanted to be in complete control, no matter whether it was a question of national or local government functions, judicial or military issues, economic, cultural, or social spheres of influence. Everything was all right as long as prominent persons in influential positions submitted to Hitler and were willing to comply with his orders. Then, he let them have their way. However, he moved mercilessly against any person who tried to expand a position that could be significant in terms of political power and threatened him, even though only theoretically. Hitler did not shrink from any intrigues or even murder in order to eliminate such a person.

Hitler was power incarnate, a true demon, obsessed with power, the like of whom the world has rarely seen. In this respect, Hitler was a supranational phenomenon. Since Napoleon, there had been no tyrant on this scale. Of course, the special circumstances of the times played a great role in both cases. Without them, the rise of such men as Napoleon and Hitler would have been inconceivable.

Marshal Foch, who was a great admirer of Napoleon, acknowledged that the circumstances of the times—the chaos of the French

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Revolution—opened up a range of possibilities for the Corsican: “Assume that Bonaparte had been born under Louis XIV or, as was I, had been sent to the garrison in Tarbes or Montpellier when he was twenty-four years old, then even his most extraordinary talents would not have allowed him to reach the goal that he did.”¹

Foch was honest enough to concede that Napoleon’s downfall was caused by his intoxication with power: “Among the reasons which decided his overthrow, the problem was mainly that Napoleon confused the greatness of his country with his own, that he wanted to found the fate of the nation exclusively on the force of arms, as if a nation could live on glory instead of work, and as if, in a civilized world, there was no room for morals next to a power based on force, no matter how clever this power might be.”²

Just as Napoleon benefited from the chaotic times during the French Revolution, so Hitler was able to use to his advantage the chaos in Germany which followed on the revolution of 1918, defeat in the First World War, and the international economic crisis of 1931.

To let Hitler’s case rest at that, not to go beyond such terse statements and historic parallels, would be a considerable mistake. After all, Hitler’s rule was made possible not just by the chaos in Germany after 1918. It should not be overlooked that his demagogic ideas fell on fertile ground because many mischievous falsehoods were in circulation at the time. They represented the fateful legacy of imperial Germany and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and formed the basis for Hitler’s rhetorical creations.

All of the following theses were used by Hitler in his speeches from 1919 to 1945: that the “November criminals” had robbed the German army of the victor’s laurels in 1918; that Wilson’s Fourteen Points had led to ruin because they had lured the Germans into laying down their arms prematurely; that there existed something like an international solidarity among all socialists, which had worked to the disadvantage of Germany’s interests; and that the Germans would be invincible if only they were united. All these ideas can be found almost verbatim in the works of Wilhelm II³ and other nationalist authors. The idea that “the Jews are to be blamed for everything,” especially for Germany’s misfortune, was an established slogan, current at least since 1918, and popular with nationalist parties and groups in Germany.

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Another essential role in Hitler's rule was played by the supposedly constant threats to Germany, which allowed him to operate permanently with martial law and special laws.

Even the most exemplary democracy will immediately be transformed into an authoritarian state⁴ if it is threatened by war or if war is declared on it. Any violation of the laws of the state will then automatically become "high treason." The legal regulations and moral rules of conduct which normally apply will be suspended for the most part. Even the ten commandments will largely lose their force.

The so-called "people" (Volk) has no say in such developments. Which ordinary man on the street can assess whether the war that is being waged is offensive or defensive in character, especially given the fact that the government in question will always claim only to be defending itself? And even if he is in a position to assess the situation, he really has no choice: either he submits to the decisions of the government or he commits high treason at the risk of severe punishment.

When a government claims to be acting in the national interest, it will always be difficult or impossible, even for the influential circles made up of politicians, parliamentarians, military men, leaders of the economy, bishops, and so on, to resist governmental measures.

Of course, such a situation was ideal for Hitler's purposes. For this reason, he declared one state of emergency after another. Germany was always in danger: Communists supposedly threatened a revolt in Germany in 1933, the SA was allegedly planning a putsch in 1934, the Bolsheviks and their "101 Soviet divisions" and the introduction of a two-year compulsory conscription in France were reputed to threaten the country in 1935.⁵ By 1936, there was supposed to be the threat of a "Bolshevization" of Europe, based on a French-Russian mutual-assistance pact. The danger reappeared in 1937 because of the Spanish Civil War. By 1938, Czechoslovakia, "the aircraft carrier in the heart of Europe," was supposedly planning an attack on Germany. Poland meant to attack in 1939. Even though all of these "threats" did not really exist, Hitler's claims were effective.

Who in Germany would have dared to oppose a measure which served the rescue of the German Volk and Europe from Bolshevism? Who in Germany would have risked being regarded as a Communist or Bolshevik?

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Hitler's use of nationalist arguments was no less successful. Everything he did, planned, and ordered done supposedly served the welfare of the German people and was therefore necessary in the interest of the German Volk!

In Germany, the workers made up the class which was the most susceptible to this nationalist rhetoric. This had already been evident in the First World War.⁶ Hitler was least afraid of speaking before uncritical groups of workers. Moreover, he could still impress them with his nationalist slogans and fantastic descriptions of the future, even when hard facts already provided unequivocal evidence of the failure of his politics. The German intellectuals were more or less immune to wild nationalist proclamations. It was not surprising that Hitler poured scorn on them and vented his anger in tirades full of hatred.

Yet, who could tell whether or not a certain move was truly in the best interest of the German Volk? Had there been only Germans on earth, this question would never have arisen. Nor would the Third Reich ever have collapsed and Hitler might still be in power today (1973).

However, Germany is not alone in the world. To a decisive degree, it is dependent on other powers in the world. While at home the Germans are free to live as they wish, there are limits to their foreign policy. As soon as measures in Germany begin to affect or threaten other countries, they cease to be in "the interest of the German Volk." Other states are not willing to tolerate Germany's highhanded measures, either in the east nor in the west. They strike back. Naturally, this is not to the advantage but to the disadvantage of the German people. Their historical experience in this context is clear.

This work proves Hitler's statements incorrect in many crucial aspects, particularly regarding his military and foreign policies. No matter how masterly his speeches were composed, they could not change the hard facts. Declarations like those below could not stand up against reality:

"A place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!

"Germany shall not be overrun, neither from within nor from without!

"Today's Reich is different from that of yesterday. It is not just a passing fancy."

In addition, it has been the intention of the author to demonstrate that, while Hitler's rhetoric had a certain influence on the masses, they

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were by no means decisive for his seizure of power and the fashioning of his rule. After Hitler had taken over the government, it was no longer a question of whether the people approved of him or not, since he was determined to see his ideas through—one way or another.

What was important and decisive was Hitler's rhetorical success as a convincing personality speaking with influential figures. Their circles in Germany had theoretically been in a position to keep him from power or to remove him from office once he had seized power. However, he managed to instill the belief in them that only he was capable of saving Germany and that all his actions served this goal.

It is remarkable that in Germany Hitler's foreign policy was the least criticized of all his ideas, even though it was foreseeable that it was exactly his foreign policy theory that was to prove the most fateful for Germany and that was responsible for the declaration of war by the English and their allies.

After 1945, Hitler was praised for eliminating unemployment, sponsoring the Volkswagen, generously funding the Autobahn, and so on. He was condemned for his harassment of the Jews, the limitation of the Church's rights, the outlawing of all parties save his own, the dissolution of the unions, the muzzling of the press, the regimentation of cultural life, and the elimination of most of the rights of the individual.

While the above negative aspects of Hitler's rule at home were the characteristic symptoms of a despicable dictatorship, they did not cause his downfall. Had they been practiced within the borders of the Reich, they would never have led to the armed intervention of the western powers. The English and their allies moved against Hitler only after he attacked Poland in 1939. They had made up their minds to intervene, no matter what country Hitler attacked.

Of course, Hitler was also criticized in postwar Germany for his decision to attack Poland. However, it was often overlooked in this context that this decision was only the logical consequence of his ideas on foreign policy.

They were based on a number of claims. For one, the German Volk had been denied its rightful "place in the sun." Second, a trick (i.e., Wilson's Fourteen Points) had led Germany to lay down its arms in 1918, when it was on the brink of gaining the victory. Moreover, the Treaty of Versailles was a great injustice to the German people. The elimination of its provisions—that is, the restoration of the

borders to their status in 1914 and the return of the German colonies—was a matter of course. He maintained that Germany was “threatened” by all sorts of enemies in the east and west. As long as the German Volk was united, he claimed, it would be invincible. It had a right to a Lebensraum, which corresponded to its population.

Hitler believed that domestic and foreign policy were identical. Therefore, his enemies abroad would behave just as those at home had. The Anglo-Americans were “nothing other than a branch of our German Volk.” It was Germany which had “colonized England.”

Therefore, the English would sooner or later become Germany’s friends. The English resembled the German nationalists: they were just as “senile” and would under no circumstances be able to resist a German policy of expansion. On the contrary, they would welcome the German campaign against Russia in order to prevent a Bolshevik invasion of western Europe.

The English had done their best to reinforce Hitler in this belief, which had to prove fatal for Hitler’s warfare and for Germany. A similar strategy had already proved successful for England in the case of Napoleon, to keep him from invading the British Isles and to bring about his downfall. English experts already knew from detailed studies of Hitler’s ideas after the publication of *Mein Kampf* in the mid 1920s that Hitler strikingly resembled Napoleon in his boundless ambition, megalomania, and lust for power, but that he likewise lacked the intellectual background and the historical-political knowledge to recognize the real power structures of the world or to think through superior world-historical contexts and refined strategic considerations.

Hitler likened the Bolsheviks to the Communists in Germany. He felt that “communism is not a higher evolutionary stage, but the most primitive basic form of shaping people and nations.” The Soviets were best dealt with by brute force.

These were the guiding principles of Hitler’s foreign policy. They did not at all correspond to the actual power structures in the world which had developed during the last centuries. Hitler’s attempt to apply his foreign-policy concepts in the real world inevitably ended in the greatest political and military catastrophe which Germany ever suffered.

Since Hitler’s foreign policy was intertwined with his dictatorial domestic and racial policies, the danger existed and exists today that the actual cause of the great German catastrophe of 1945—Hitler’s foreign

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policy—is overlooked and ignored. Therefore, this work has also tried to elucidate this foreign policy.

The Second World War and the destruction of Hitler and his Reich undoubtedly taught Germany a lesson. Apparently, the lesson of the First World War did not bear any fruits. Only the future will tell whether the lesson of the Second World War has been of any use.

In any event, it is necessary to draw the proper consequences from Hitler's rise and fall. In summary, they are the following.

1. The world has no desire to be healed by the "German essence."⁷ And surely it does not want to be healed by force!

2. Any attempt to use force in changing the borders of the German state will result in the declaration of war by the western powers. This was true both in 1914 and in 1939. This principle also applies to areas such as Danzig which are inhabited by Germans or which belonged to the German Reich at one time.

3. There was no such thing as a "secret Jewish world government." All claims that Jews as an international corporation influence the governments of the great powers, or exercise political or military influence in non-Jewish states, are mere fantasy. Perhaps, in certain ages, the Jews may have had the opposability of exercising influence internationally in matters of economics or culture, but never have they achieved political influence on the international stage. Hitler's fight against the Jews was nothing other than a tilt at windmills.

Regardless of how abominable and horrible Hitler's slaughter of the Jews was, it was not the cause of his fall. It would be a grave mistake to assume that he could have reached his power-political goals had he treated the Jews differently. Like Napoleon I and William II, in whose undertakings the Jewish question did not play a role, he would still have failed. His fate was sealed at 11 o'clock on September 3, 1939. And the reason for it was the same as for the collapse of the Kaiser's empire in World War I, namely, the attempt to expand Germany's borders by the use of force. This is a clear, historic fact, and it would be dangerous to try to diminish it by pointing to the Holocaust.

4. Hitler's claim that the Germans had the best soldiers, scientists, leaders of the economy, workers, peasants, and so on,⁸ represents a subjective judgment. Nobody can tell the Germans not to believe this, whether or not it corresponds to reality. Even should it be objectively correct, no universally valid conclusions can be drawn from it. Above

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all, it is not possible to derive from such statements of quality a German right to hegemony in Europe or in the world.

Hitler repeatedly claimed that the German Volk was not only the best, but also the numerically strongest in the whole world, with the exception of China.⁹ The figures which he presented were all too transparently false to merit further consideration. Both world wars amply prove that Germany was never in a position, either in terms of power or strength, to force its beliefs on the rest of the world.¹⁰

5. Neither the betrayal of military secrets nor the invention of new weapons decisively influence the outcome of a war. While they could temporarily obstruct individual measures or operations, and perhaps postpone the end of the war, they do not result in a different outcome of the war.¹¹

6. Propaganda (so-called psychological warfare) is effective only with the aggressor's own people or with inferior nations, whose inevitable collapse may be hastened by them. The weapon of propaganda is ineffective when used against an opponent of equal or superior strength. By no means does it out-perform military weapons. Words cannot change hard facts.¹²

7. Bravery, perseverance, unity, self-sacrifice, and other such national virtues may at best delay an unfortunate end to a war for some time, but they cannot prevent it. The outcome of a war is determined by the military resources of a country. Neither the Leonidas myth nor the legend of Frederick the Great can erase the hard facts presented by the military superiority of a strong country over a weaker one.

In all likelihood, the entrusting of absolute power to one man will lead to disastrous consequences in most countries. The temptations of power are so great that even individuals who only want "the best" for their country can be induced to pursue over-ambitious plans and thus end up the victim of their lust for power. This must spell ruin not only for these individuals, but also for their supporters and their nation. History affords us countless examples of it. Nevertheless, history also proves that men will make the same mistakes time and again, and that the warnings of the past go unheeded.

It would be wrong, however, to hold the "people," that is, all those who have no say in the state, responsible for such development. The appeal should be directed instead to the responsible statesmen and influential circles, the parliamentarians, the leaders of the economy, the

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military men, the bishops, and so on. It is their responsibility to be aware of the lessons of history and act accordingly.

In extraordinary times, when war, misery, and chaos prevail, there is a great danger that extraordinary men will attempt to seize power—all power. The fact that Hitler managed to win power and to remain in power for twelve years without being challenged proves that such a development could come about time and again, given the same conditions. Laws and constitutional provisions provide only slight protection against such a development. After all, the born dictator will soon eliminate such limitations, either legally or illegally.

History teaches us that all the extraordinary figures who made their way to become dictators and conquerors—Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler among them—did so with the help of the demon of rhetoric, which they used in a manner that befitted their extraordinary times.

The series of great demagogues in world history, who rose to triumph and pulled their nations down in their fall, reached its barbaric climax in Adolf Hitler. That this was once again possible in a highly civilized country and in the twentieth century should be a warning to us all.

Hitler and History

Hitler used the word “history” nearly as frequently as he did “Providence.” In most instances, he referred to “history” in an attempt to justify his measures and to silence potential critics. After all, who could debate the “verdict of history”? It was a judgment to be passed by future generations and, as such, it was immune to opposition in the present. Only Adolf Hitler felt competent to say what “future generations” and “coming centuries” would think of his era.

In reality, however, he did not care much more for the verdict of history than he did for the fate of the German people. Like everything else, “history” was a means to an end for him in the quest to satisfy his tremendous lust for power.

Napoleon had once compared his life with a novel, In many aspects, Hitler’s career from the First World War on was even more incredible. From beginning to end, he loved to take extreme and dangerous risks. He became veritably the most hazardous gambler of all time. If he won, all right. If he did not, then at least he would have tried to win and he would have led a life to his taste, a life which would “one day hold its own before history.”

No matter when Providence will end my life, not even at the last moment will I regret having led this fight. On the contrary, I will be able to tell myself: It was a life worth living! It was not a life of cowardice, indolence, and restraint. Instead, it was a life that one day will hold its own before history!¹

The question remained, however, in what light history would see this life now and in future centuries. It is not worthwhile contrasting Hitler’s countless references to history with the hard facts. A selection of Hitler’s statements in this context serves by itself to illustrate Hitler’s megalomania and arrogance:

If historiography in coming centuries one day critically reviews the years of the National Socialist rebirth, uninfluenced by the pros and cons of an age of war, then it will not be able to avoid the conclusion that it was a question of the most wonderful victory of faith over the supposed elements of the materially possible.²

I can do this because these miserable little scribblers will not be the ones to write history, thank God; instead my life's work will speak for itself. And I am able to do this also because I am indifferent to the judgment passed upon me by these folk at this moment.³

This great responsibility forces us to lead this movement in such a way that we will be able to hold our own before history at all times, and that later generations will look back on this time with pride.⁴

I would like only for posterity to bear out one day that I decently and honestly endeavored to translate my program into reality.⁵

One day we will all be weighed together and judged together; either we will pass this test together or the future will condemn us all.⁶

Posterity will one day say of us: Never was the German nation stronger and never was its future more secure than at the time when the ancient Germanic people's old mystical symbol of salvation (*Heilszeichen*) was rejuvenated in Germany to become the symbol of the Third Reich.⁷

We, my party comrades, co-leaders of the Volk and the army, have been chosen by Fate to make history in the loftiest sense of the word. What millions of people are deprived of has been given to us by Providence. Even most distant posterity will be reminded of us by our work.⁸

One day I will be able to demand from history confirmation of the fact that at no time in the course of my struggle on behalf of the German Volk did I forget the duties I myself and all of us are obliged to assume toward maintaining European culture and civilization.⁹

No doubt, posterity will see that it was morally more decent and appropriate to eliminate the cause of these insupportable tensions in order to arrive finally at a reasonable approach in that opening of doors we all desired. It was far better to proceed in this manner than to try to maintain such a position, a position which ran contrary to any considerations of common sense and reason.¹⁰

The history of my Volk would never acquit me were I to omit—for any reason whatsoever—doing something which is imperative for the preservation of this Volk.¹¹

I believe that one day posterity and German history will affirm that in the time in which I conducted the affairs of the German state, I rendered the greatest service to the German Volk.¹²

The party, the state, the Wehrmacht, and the economy are all institutions and functions which are valuable only as a means to an end. In the eyes of history, they will be judged on the basis of the services they performed toward this goal. Yet their goal is always the Volk.¹³

Just as the hero has renounced his life to live on in the pantheon of history, so must a truly great movement perceive—in the rightness of its concept, in the

Hitler and History

sincerity of its actions—the talisman which will safely lead it from a transient present to an immortal future.¹⁴

Those who saw to their division [the division of Central Europe by the Treaty of Versailles and the Polish Corridor] committed a crime against humanity. To have expunged this crime does not constitute a promise broken by me; rather it is a great honor for me in which I take pride, an accomplishment of truly historic proportions.¹⁵

And, before German history, I may be faulted on many a thing, but on one topic assuredly not: that I had not done my utmost, what was humanly possible, to prepare the German Volk better for this struggle than, regrettably, it had been prepared in the year 1914.¹⁶

Fortunately, historians do not have to pass the verdict of history on Hitler. After all, he himself took care that this verdict would not be written by “little scribblers” and that his life’s work would speak for itself.¹⁷

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

The main body of this work has already shown that Hitler refused to admit any responsibility for the outbreak and the outcome of the Second World War, which was most unfortunate for Germany.

Who was at fault, according to Hitler? He repeatedly discussed this question and offered a variety of answers. It is therefore necessary to put his thoughts on this subject in order and to divide the guilty parties into two camps:

- 1) those who were responsible for the outbreak of the war and
- 2) those whom he blamed for its unfortunate outcome.

The following belong to the first group:

A) The German Volk

In Hitler's eyes, the German Volk brought about the Second World War through its capitulation in 1918. He declared the following:

Had the German Volk continued to wage the struggle with iron determination, instead of believing Wilson's untruthful, hypocritical phrases in the year 1918, then the hostile environment would already have collapsed at the time. That this did not happen, not only brought nameless economic misery over our Volk and tore millions of Germans from the homeland, but it also was the cause of this present war.¹

B) The Italians

Hitler also felt that the Italians bore some of the blame, because they had remained neutral in 1939. He said the following:

After all, had Italy made a declaration at the time [1939], in which it declared its solidarity with Germany, as it was obliged by treaty to do, then war would not have broken out; then the English would not have started it, and the French would not have started it²

C) The Jews

It is not surprising that Hitler felt that the Jews were responsible for everything, including the outbreak of the Second World War. After all, General von Ludendorff and Hitler's other nationalist precursors had already blamed them for the outbreak of the First World War. On the topic of the Jews, Hitler stated the following:

Eternal Jewry forced on us a pitiless and merciless war.³

It was wanted and incited exclusively by those international statesmen who are either of Jewish origin or work for Jewish interests.⁴

D) The Poles

Hitler felt that the Poles were responsible for the outbreak of the war, because they had not accepted his generous "peace offers" and had not agreed voluntarily to surrender Danzig, the Corridor, and their entire state territory—as had Czechoslovakia. He declared the following:

Truly I know not what strange state of mind inspired the Polish government to reject my proposal. But I do know this was a great relief to millions of Germans who held that I had already ventured too far with this offer. Poland's only reply was an immediate mobilization of its troops, accompanied by a wild campaign of terror. My request to speak with the Polish foreign minister in Berlin, to discuss these questions once more, was declined. Instead of going to Berlin, he went to London!

Did the Poles truly believe that, in the long run, the German nation would stand for all this from so ludicrous a state?⁵

E) The English

The English were responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War, because they had supposedly given Poland a "carte blanche" and had rejected Hitler's peace offers. He stated the following:

There they declared that Germany need not be considered a power, There they convinced the Poles that they could, at any point, mount a sufficiently strong resistance to Germany without great difficulty, There they went yet a step further, reassuring the Poles that, should their own resistance falter, others would instantly come to their rescue, that is, relieve them of this burden. It was there that they received this infamous guarantee, effectively placing the decision whether or not to go to war in the hands of an insignificant, megalomaniacal state.⁶

You know of my proposals to England, All my ambitions were to enter into a sincere and friendly relationship with England. Now that all of them have been rejected and that the English today believe they must wage war against Germany, I must say the following: Never again will the Poland of the

Versailles Treaty arise! Not only Germany guarantees this, the Russians do so as well!⁷

Further, I never wanted that, after the first accursed World War, a second one against England or even America should come about.

Only three days before the outbreak of the German-Polish war, I proposed a solution of the German-Polish problems to the British ambassador in Berlin—as with the Saarland under international control. This proposal, too, cannot be denied. It was rejected only because the influential circles in English politics wanted war....⁸

Most of the persons and nations named above also are to be found in the second category (those responsible for the unfortunate outcome of the Second World War). However, Hitler felt that others were responsible, too. The following belonged to this second group:

A) The German Volk

From Hitler's point of view, the German people had failed to seize the opportunity to assert its "right to life," which the Second World War had offered it, and it would therefore have to "sink back." He said the following:

It is a question of whether these eighty-five million people, in their national unity, can assert their right to life or not. If yes, then the future of Europe belongs to this Volk. If no, then this Volk will perish and sink back, and it will no longer be worthwhile to live among this Volk.⁹

B) The Italians

According to Hitler, the Italians were responsible not only for the outbreak of the war, but also for the unfortunate course the war took. Had the Italians not invaded Greece, then Germany would have beaten Russia, and the whole war would have ended quite differently. Hitler explained as follows:

The alliance with Italy has quite obviously helped our enemies more than it benefited us. While I was on my way to Montoire, Mussolini took advantage of my absence to start his ill-starred Greek campaign. [—] Against our will, we were forced to take up arms and intervene in the events in the Balkans, which inevitably resulted in the fateful delay in the concentration against Russia. Had we started the attack on Russia from May 15 on, things would have developed differently.¹⁰

C) Germany's Allies in Europe

Whereas the Italians were responsible for both the outbreak and the outcome of the Second World War, Germany's other European allies

(Romania, Finland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Croatia) were “only” responsible for its military defeat, Hitler said the following:

After a five-year-long and most difficult struggle, as a result of the failure of all our European allies, the enemy stands at a few fronts close to or on the German borders.¹¹

If we have not been spared great setbacks in this mighty struggle, which is being fought not only for Germany but also for the future of all of Europe, then the reason for that does not lie with the German Volk and its Wehrmacht but with our European allies. Starting with the collapse of the Romanian-Italian-Hungarian front on the Don River and their later complete dissolution, to the sabotage of the joint conduct of the war by the Italian royal house and the Putsch against the Duce’s Fascist Italy, which was on our side, there is a straight line of treason. It has found its prolongation in the pitiful capitulation of the Finnish state leadership, the breach of faith of the Romanian king and his entourage, the giving up of Bulgaria, as well as in the disgraceful behavior of the former Hungarian regent. The results for the political and military conduct of the war were grave.¹²

D) The Jews

According to Hitler, the Jews had caused not only the outbreak of the two world wars, but they were also responsible for the military and political catastrophe which the German people faced at the end of the Second World War. Hitler declared the following:

What this Jewish plague does to our women, children, and men there [in the east] represents the cruelest fate which a human brain is capable of concocting.¹³

The life which remains for us must be dedicated to the commandment to make up for what the international Jewish criminals and their helpers have done to our Volk.¹⁴

E) The English

Hitler felt that the English were responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War, because they had rejected his “peace offers.” He likewise blamed them for its unhappy end, because they had dared continually to reject his offers of friendship even during the war and had instead summoned the help of the Bolsheviki “from the steppes of Asia.” As a punishment, they would one day be ruined by Bolshevism themselves. Hitler explained as follows:

Not only will England not be in a position to tame Bolshevism, but its own development will follow the inevitable course of this degenerative disease. The democracies can no longer get rid of the spirits which they have summoned up from the steppes of Asia. All the small European nations which capitulated,

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

trusting in the Allied assurances, are heading for their complete extermination.¹⁵

That this struggle is so endlessly difficult is the result of the essence of the abovementioned objectives of our enemies. After all, since they intend to exterminate our Volk, they are already applying this method in the war by means that civilized mankind has not known hitherto. By wrecking our cities, they hope not only to kill German women and children but also and above all to eliminate the documents of our thousand-year-old culture, which they are not in a position to oppose with anything of equal quality.¹⁶

F) The German Officers

According to Hitler, the officers of the German army, but not those of the navy, were responsible for the unfortunate outcome of the Second World War, because they had no “sense of honor” and had capitulated instead of fighting to the bitter end. Hitler said the following:

May it one day form part of the sense of honor of the German officer—as this is already the case with our navy—that the surrender of a region or city is impossible and that, above all, the leaders should set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.¹⁷

G) Göring and Himmler

Hitler blamed even two of his closest coworkers for the unfortunate end of the war, because, in late April 1945, they tried to put an end to the senseless slaughter. He declared as follows:

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsmarschall, Hermann Göring, from the party and strip him of all his rights

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsführer SS and Reich minister of the interior, Heinrich Himmler, from the party and from all state offices. In his place, I appoint Gauleiter Karl Hanke as Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, and Gauleiter Paul Giesler as Reich minister of the interior.

Göring and Himmler, by their secret negotiations with the enemy, which took place without my knowledge and contrary to my will, as well as by attempting to usurp power in the state in violation of the law, have done inestimable damage to the country and the entire Volk, not to mention their disloyalty to my person.¹⁸

H) The Almighty

The “Lord Almighty” (“Providence”, “Fate”) had failed to save Hitler and Germany by a last-minute miracle. Hitler felt this would have been His duty, as he had observed many times:

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If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give his blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible.¹⁹

Work such as ours which has received the blessings of the Omnipotent can never again be undone by mere mortals.²⁰

It is not the point of the actions of Providence which has accompanied and blessed our miraculous path that, perhaps now in the final act, the fruits of this struggle should be lost.²¹

I do not doubt for one second that we will win. It was not in vain that Providence has had me stride forth along the long path from the unknown soldier of the World War to the Führer of the German nation, to the Führer of the German Wehrmacht. It has not done this only in order suddenly to take away again all we had to struggle so hard for, as if it were only for the fun of it.²²

Yes, the “Almighty” had had His “fun” with Hitler! First, He had “miraculously” spared his life on July 20, 1944, then He had removed Roosevelt, “this greatest war criminal of all time from this earth.”²³ He had made Hitler “pass” trial after trial and, then, practically at the last minute, He had abandoned Germany! Truly, even the “Almighty” had betrayed Hitler and the German Volk. He had joined the “senile” English, the “uncultured” Americans, and the “primitive” Russians.

That was how Hitler saw the question of war guilt. However, who was truly responsible for the war?

It cannot be denied that Hitler delivered countless “peace speeches.” In the years 1932 to 1939, he was literally overflowing with his “love for peace.” He made the motivation behind this “love for peace” perfectly clear in an address before German editors and other members of the press on November 10, 1938:

For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace. Only by constantly emphasizing the German Volk’s desire for peace and its peaceful intentions was I able to gain the German Volk’s freedom step by step and thus to give it the armament necessary as a prerequisite for accomplishing the next step. It is self-evident that this peace propaganda throughout the decades may well have had quite questionable effects. It might well leave the mistaken impression in the minds of many that the present regime stands for the resolution and the willingness to preserve peace under any circumstances.

This would not only lead to a wrong assessment of the ambitions of this system. It would also, and above all, lead the German nation, instead of being prepared for what is to come, to fall prey to a spirit of defeatism. In the long run, this could, and most certainly would, obliterate the successes scored by the present regime.

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For years, I spoke only of peace because of this forced situation. Now it has become necessary slowly to prepare the German Volk psychologically for the fact that there are things that cannot be achieved by peaceful means. Some goals can only be achieved through the use of force.²⁴

Naturally, Hitler did not want war with England. All he wanted was a small expedition into Poland, followed by one into Russia. He was thunderstruck when England declared war in the year 1939 because he had used force in the attack on Poland and Danzig. He simply could not understand the British.

In reality, the question in 1939 was the same as in 1914, namely: Would the western powers, especially England, tolerate or not tolerate the conquest by force of new areas for Germany or for the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

In 1914, Austria began the war against Serbia in order to conquer its territory in part or in its entirety. The assassination in Sarajevo served as a pretext for the military intervention. An ultimatum was delivered to Serbia, but its acceptance was neither expected nor waited for, and the war started. For Germany [in 1914], there was the attack on Belgium. This provoked an immediate declaration of war by Great Britain.

In 1939, Germany began the war against Poland in order to conquer its entire territory. Numerous incidents in the border area, especially the *coup de main* at the Gleiwitz radio station (which German commandos in Polish uniforms attacked), served as a pretext for military intervention. An ultimatum was delivered to Poland, the acceptance of which was not waited for, and the war started. This provoked an immediate declaration of war by Great Britain.

Those were the facts, both in 1914 and in 1939.

This brings up the question: Were the English responsible for the outbreak of both world wars, because they opposed the armed conquest of neighboring states by Germany and Austria? Or, on the contrary, are Germany and Austria responsible for the outbreak of the two world wars, because they launched both expeditions according to plan, in spite of repeated, unequivocal warnings that this would lead to a declaration of war by England?

While it was still possible in 1914 to disregard the English warnings as a bluff, the course of the First World War made it abundantly clear to anyone who cared to listen that the world was not willing to tolerate the armed policy of expansion either of Germany or of Austria, even if this concerned only the Balkans. It further made it clear that Germany's

military strength did not suffice to overcome the united forces of the Anglo-American powers.

By way of objection, some people have claimed that, in the years 1933 to 1938, the western powers always “yielded” to Hitler’s demands and accepted his *faits accomplis*. As a result, he might have assumed that the western powers would also “yield” in the case of Poland. He might have thought that they would let the matter rest with their protest on record.

In reality, however, the western powers had only “yielded” to Hitler in those instances where he insisted on equal treatment, Germany’s sovereign rights, and the right to self-determination of people, and, most importantly, where he abstained from the use of force. On the other hand, the western powers made it quite clear from the start that they would declare war once Hitler fired the first shot, no matter at what country.

In the summer of 1938, for example, the ambassadors and ministers representing the western powers, even Chamberlain himself, assured Hitler time and again that they would declare war on Germany if he used force against Czechoslovakia, as planned on October 1.

At the conference in Munich, the western powers succeeded in securing Hitler’s signature beneath an international agreement which prohibited the use of force and mandated mutual consultation in the event of problems in the future. After all, Hitler had declared over and over in the past that he would never sign a treaty which he would not be in a position to abide by. What he signed, he would “blindly and loyally” fulfill.²⁵

Not even half a year later, Hitler marched into Prague in spite of all his solemn promises and the international agreement. He could not claim any justification for this in international law. For the first time, he had revealed himself as a man who broke his word.

On March 17, 1939, Chamberlain declared the following in a speech at Birmingham:

Germany, under her present regime, has sprung a series of unpleasant surprises upon the world. The Rhineland, the Austrian Anschluss, the severance of Sudetenland—all these things shocked and affronted public opinion throughout the world. Yet, however much we might take exception to the methods which were adopted in each of those cases, there was something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long

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resisted—there was something to be said for the necessity of a change in the existing situation.

But the events which have taken place this week in complete disregard of the principles laid down by the German government itself seem to fall into a different category, and they must cause us all to be asking ourselves: “Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?”

“Is this the last attack upon a small state, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?”

It is an undeniable fact that, from mid-March 1939, until September 1, 1939, the English unequivocally stated their resolve to declare war on Germany in the event that Hitler attacked Poland, even if the issue at stake was Danzig.

Already on March 17, 1939, Chamberlain said the following:

I feel bound to repeat that, while I am not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it ever were made.

Churchill also stressed this in a radio broadcast on August 8, 1939:

If Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war. No one else is going to make war. Britain and France are determined to shed no blood except in self-defence or in defence of their Allies. No one has ever dreamed of attacking Germany. If Germany desires to be reassured against attack by her neighbors, she has only to say the word and we will give her the fullest guarantees in accordance with the principles of the Covenant of the League.

The numerous English declarations to this effect were followed by a letter from Chamberlain on August 22, 1939. It contained this warning:

It has been alleged that, if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding. If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.²⁶

It would have been difficult for Chamberlain to state his case more clearly. However, Hitler naturally paid no heed to such warnings. He disregarded them as empty phrases, void of any significance in reality. He thought of the English as “senile” bourgeois who acted like the German Nationalists. They would not have the strength for military action. He called the English “my Hugenbergers.”

As discussed in the main part of this work, Hitler had a rude awakening on September 3, 1939. After he had received the British declaration of war, all he had been able to do was stare straight ahead and then helplessly ask: “What now?” He had not cut a better figure than Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, when he had been handed the British declaration of war on August 4, 1914. The day before, he had still solemnly assured the crown prince that the British would remain neutral in the war.

That the same event repeated itself twice in Germany within twenty-five years could be termed *the* German tragedy. However, this does not lessen the guilt of the responsible heads of state and statesmen, all of whom—from William II, Franz Joseph I, Bethmann-Hollweg, Berchthold to Hitler—could and must have known what was coming!

For Germany and for Austria, there were only two alternatives: either they renounced military expansion and submitted to international arbitration in order to achieve desired goals, or they resorted to force and immediately received a British declaration of war. This was true even of those instances, as the case of Danzig proves, when the area at stake was inhabited by Germans or had earlier belonged to the German Reich.

There is no doubt that, had England so desired, it could have prevented the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, and pressured Poland to cede Danzig and the Corridor. But why should they have done this? After all, Hitler had just amply proved with Czechoslovakia that any concessions to acceptable demands only induced him to see through his unacceptable demands by force half a year later.

Hitler had maneuvered himself into a position where he faced this alternative: either surrender to the English and bow to their will or to use force. He chose the latter option, because this corresponded with his conceptions of 1919, according to which England and Germany would become friends, once Germany “joined the march on the road of the Teutonic Knights of old.”²⁷

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

However, he did not receive England's friendship for his efforts, but an English declaration of war, as any sane man could have told him! Hitler could not claim that he had not realized this or had not believed it. For months, he was incessantly told exactly what would happen. There was no excuse for him. He had passed judgment on himself:

There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, in the sense that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously. Standing at the head of the German Reich, I feel responsible for the German Volk, its existence, its present, and, insofar as this is possible, for its future.²⁸

A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false then acts decently only if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence.



LXVII Prisoners in the dock at International War Crime Trials

Photo: Publisher's archives

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

The widespread belief that Hitler gained only victories in the first years of the war and did not meet with defeats before Stalingrad in 1943 is incorrect. In truth, Hitler not only experienced important diplomatic defeats from September 1939 on, but also suffered military defeats. Furthermore, his numerous victories over—with the exception of France—small states and nations in the years 1939 through 1942 were deceptive, since they used up his strength and hastened his downfall.

VICTORIES: 1939

September 1, 1939:

Attack on Danzig and Poland without declaration of war.

Conquest of the entire Polish territory, with the exception of those areas ceded to Russia for the time being.

September 28, 1939:

Conclusion of the so-called “Boundary and Friendship Treaty” with the Soviet Union.

DEFEATS: 1939

September 3, 1939:

Great Britain's declaration of war.

September 3, 1939:

Complete collapse of Hitler's foreign policy concepts based on friendship with England.

September 3, 1939:

Further declarations of war by France, Australia, New Zealand, Jordan, Italy remains neutral.

[India and Burma were British colonies, and Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam were French colonies (and had no legal right to make peace or war), and Pakistan did not exist until 1947.]

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1939

VICTORIES: 1940

- April 9, 1940:
Attack on Denmark and Norway without declaration of war. Afterwards, conquest of the territories.
- May 5, 1940:
Attack on Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg without declaration of war. Afterwards, conquest of the territories. Beginning of the attack on France.
- June 10, 1940:
Italy enters the war.
- June 17, 1940:
France capitulates.
- June 22, 1940:
Cease-fire agreement signed by France at Compiègne. Afterwards, occupation of two thirds of its sovereign territory.
- August 30, 1940:
Viennese sentence. The Axis powers dictate cession of the Transylvania area by Romania to Hungary.

DEFEATS: 1939

- September 6, 1939:
Declaration of war by the Union of South Africa.
- September 10, 1939:
Declaration of war by Canada.
- October 12, 1939:
Renewed diplomatic defeat. England rejects German "peace proposal" of October 6.

DEFEATS: 1940

- July 19, 1940:
England again rejects German "peace proposal" of July 19.
- September 1940:
Military defeat in the Battle of Britain. As recently as September 4, Hitler had insisted that his air raids would "erase" English cities.
- September 17, 1940:
Announced landing on the British mainland (Operation Sea Lion) has to be abandoned because of technical difficulties. Severe loss of political and military prestige.
- October 23, 1940:
Diplomatic defeat at the Hendaye meeting with Franco, who refuses to enter into the war on the side of Germany.
- October 24, 1940:
Diplomatic defeat. Meeting with Pétain at Montoire brings about no results.

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VICTORIES: 1940

- September 27, 1940:
Conclusion of political alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan (Tripartite Pact) in an effort to prevent the entry of the United States into the war.
- October 18, 1940:
German troops, disguised as training units, move to occupy Romania.
- November 14–15, 1940
German air raids destroy Coventry.
- November 20, 23, and 24, 1940:
Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia join the Tripartite Pact.

VICTORIES: 1941

- March 1, 1941:
Bulgaria joins the Tripartite Pact, German occupation of Bulgaria.
- March 25, 1941:
Under Zvetkovich's regime, Yugoslavia joins the Tripartite Pact.
- April 1941:
German counteroffensive in North Africa
- April 6, 1941:
Attack on Yugoslavia and Greece without declaration of war. Germany and its allies occupy the territories of both states, including the island of Crete.
- May 24, 1941:
The *Bismarck* sinks the British cruiser *Hood*.
- June 18, 1941:
Friendship pact with Turkey.

DEFEATS: 1940

- October 28, 1940:
Loss of prestige. Mussolini attacks Greece without consulting Hitler. The war spills over into the Balkans.
- November 12 to 14, 1940:
Diplomatic defeat. Molotov refuses to engage the Soviet Union in the war on the side of Germany.
- December 7, 1940:
Renewed loss of military prestige. Orders for Operation Felix (occupation of Gibraltar) have to be rescinded.

DEFEATS: 1941

- January–February 1941:
Italian units in North Africa take severe beatings. Hitler is forced to deploy German troops in the area.
- March 27, 1941:
Severe diplomatic defeat. Zvetkovich's regime is overthrown because he joined the Tripartite Pact. Putsch in Belgrade. Peter II ascends the throne.
- May 27, 1941:
Battleship *Bismarck* sunk in the Atlantic. End of German active naval warfare by surface craft; restriction to submarine warfare.
- June 1, 1941:
Collapse of an uprising supported by Germany in Iraq. British take German advisers and auxiliary troops prisoner.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1941

June 22, 1941:

Attack on the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) without declaration of war. Afterwards, occupation of the Baltic states, Belorussia, and the Ukraine by German troops. Italy, Finland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia join in the war against the Soviet Union. One Spanish division participates in the fighting. Volunteer groups, recruited in the occupied territories in western Europe, make insignificant contributions to the war effort.

October 2, 1941:

Renewed attack on Moscow.

December 7, 1941:

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor without official declaration of war.

December 11, 1941:

Germany declares war on the United States of America.

December 11, 1941:

Conclusion of a military alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan.

DEFEATS: 1941

July–September 1941:

Campaign against Russia proves a failure. German troops fail to take Murmansk, Leningrad, and Moscow. Despite territorial gains and heavy losses by the Red Army, no substantial damage is done to its fighting capacity. German advances along the central sector of the front halted by Zhukov. Bulgaria remains neutral.

August 14, 1941:

The Atlantic Charter, drawn up by Churchill and Roosevelt aboard the battleship *Prince of Wales*, was made public.

October–November 1941:

German offensive against Moscow fails because of resistance mounted by Soviet troops despite Hitler's announcement.

December 1941:

Severe military defeat at Moscow. Surprise large-scale offensive mounted by Red Army. German troops retreat up to one hundred kilometers. Further defeats at Rostov and on the Crimean Peninsula.

December 7, 1941:

Japan maintains its neutrality regarding the Soviet Union.

December 11, 1941:

Nationalist China declares war.

December 12, 1941:

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador declare war.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1941

VICTORIES: 1942

- January 28, 1942:
Italian-German forces recapture Benghazi [a port city in Libya].
- May-June 1942:
Rommel launches an offensive against Egypt in North Africa; early success at Tobruk.
- June 1942:
German troops capture the entire Crimean Peninsula.
- June 28, 1942:
Renewed German offensive in the direction of Stalingrad and the Caucasus region. German troops reach the Volga River, raise the swastika flag on the Elbrus, the highest peak of the Caucasus. Failed attempt to secure the vital oil fields in the Caucasus, Stalingrad, and Voronezh.
- November 10, 1942:
German troops land at Tunis.
- November 11, 1942:
German troops occupy southern France.

DEFEATS: 1941

- December 13, 1941:
Nicaragua declares war.
- December 16, 1941:
Czechoslovak government-in-exile declares war.
- December 18, 1941:
Panama declares war.
- December 1941:
Defeats in North Africa. British take Cyrenaica.

DEFEATS: 1942

- March 29, 1942:
Large-scale bombing raid on Lübeck. Start of the Royal Air Force's strategic air offensive on German population centers with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. These are leveled in the following three years. The Luftwaffe proves unable to defend them.
- May 22, 1942:
Mexico declares war.
- August 22, 1942:
Brazil declares war.
- November 4, 1942:
Severe military defeat in North Africa. The British Eighth Army takes the "invincible" German outposts at El Alamein. German Africa Corps forced to retreat.
- November 8, 1942:
Severe political defeat. Anglo-American forces move to occupy Morocco and Algeria.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1942

November 27, 1942:
German troops occupy Toulon.

VICTORIES: 1943

September 12, 1943:
German elite units rescue Mussolini from the Gran Sasso (highest range of the Abruzzi Apennines) and bring him to Germany.

September 28, 1943:
Formation of a Fascist-Republican exile government under Mussolini.

December 6, 1943:
German drive against Zhitomir; offensive serves propaganda purposes.

DEFEATS: 1942

November 19, 1942:
Large-scale Russian offensive along the Don and Volga Rivers. Four days later, the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad is encircled.

December 14, 1942:
Ethiopia declares war.

DEFEATS: 1943

January 16, 1943:
Iraq declares war.

January 1–February 2, 1943:
German Sixth Army surrenders at Stalingrad. Soviets capture one German field marshal, twenty-four German generals, and two Romanian generals.

May 1943:
Collapse of German U-boat offensive.

May 13, 1943:
German Africa Corps beaten at Tunis. Anglo-Americans capture eleven German generals.

July 5, 1943:
German offensive against Kursk fails because of strong resistance by the Russians; abandoned after a week.

July 10, 1943:
Allied landings on Sicily.

July 19, 1943:
Diplomatic defeat. Mussolini refuses German demands at Feltre.

July 25, 1943:
Mussolini deposed and imprisoned in Italy.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1943

- August 29, 1943:
Danish government-in-exile declares war.
- September 3–8, 1943:
Severe military and political defeats. Allied landings in southern Italy. Italy capitulates.
- September 9, 1943:
Iran declares war.
- October 13, 1943:
Italy declares war.
- November 29, 1943:
Colombia declares war.
- December 9, 1943:
Bolivia declares war.
- December 24, 1943:
Russian counteroffensive in the direction of Zhitomir. German troops lose remaining territorial gains.
- VICTORIES: 1944**
- March 19, 1944:
German troops occupy Hungary.
- June 15–16, 1944:
Beginning of German bombardment to terrorize British population centers.
- July 20, 1944:
Hitler celebrates his survival of an assassination attempt, which he thinks means that Providence has blessed his mission.
- September 6, 1944:
Beginning of deployment of V-2 rockets in the bombardment of England and Belgium.

DEFEATS: 1943

- August 29, 1943:
Danish government-in-exile declares war.
- September 3–8, 1943:
Severe military and political defeats. Allied landings in southern Italy. Italy capitulates.
- September 9, 1943:
Iran declares war.
- October 13, 1943:
Italy declares war.
- November 29, 1943:
Colombia declares war.
- December 9, 1943:
Bolivia declares war.
- December 24, 1943:
Russian counteroffensive in the direction of Zhitomir. German troops lose remaining territorial gains.

DEFEATS: 1944

- January 18, 1944:
Military defeat at Leningrad. German troops retreat behind Lake Chudskoe.
- January 26, 1944:
Liberia declares war.
- May 13, 1944:
Crimean Peninsula is lost.
- May 15–16, 1944:
Allied breakthrough at the “Gustav Line” in central Italy.
- June 4, 1944:
Evacuation of Rome in light of Allied advances.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1944

October 15, 1944:
German-backed *coup de main* in Budapest. Arrest of Regent von Horthy (in favor of peace) and his abduction to Germany.

December 16, 1944:
German offensive in the Ardennes for propaganda purposes, as with the drive against Zhitomir in 1943.

DEFEATS: 1944

June 6, 1944:
D-Day. Allied landings along the northern coast of France remain there longer than the famous "nine hours" which Hitler had forecast.

June 22, 1944:
New Russian offensive along the central sector of the front. Twenty-five German divisions are eliminated in two weeks.

July 20, 1944:
Assassination attempt in the Führer headquarters reveals opposition to Hitler even among his inner circle.

August 2, 1944:
Turkey withdraws its staff of diplomats. Hitler's Turkey policy collapses.

August 15, 1944:
Anglo-Americans land in southern France.

August 23, 1944:
Coup in Romania; Antonescu imprisoned; new government declares war on Germany on August 25.

August 25, 1944:
German troops retreat from Paris; continued Allied advances.

September 4, 1944:
Russian advances into Finland. They force the Finns to declare war on Germany on September 25.

September 8, 1944:
Bulgaria collapses and declares war on Germany.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1944

DEFEATS: 1944

September 11, 1944:

Allied forces reach the German border at Trier after the conquest of Belgium.

October 21, 1944:

Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) becomes first German city to be taken by the American troops.

December 24, 1944:

Allied counteroffensive in the Ardennes.

December 30, 1944:

Hungarian opposition government declares war.

VICTORIES:1945

DEFEATS: 1945

January 1–20, 1945:

Propaganda inspired small-scale offensive in the Vosges launched, soon abandoned.

February 19–March 5, 1945:

German advances in Hungary are initially successful.

April 12, 1945:

Death of Roosevelt encourages Hitler, who celebrates this as a victory and help from Providence.

January 12, 1945:

Large-scale Russian offensive along the central sector of the front. Territorial losses in Poland. Isolation of East Prussia. Russian troops reach the Oder River.

February 4–11, 1945:

Yalta Conference between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin.

February 13, 1945:

Budapest surrenders after many months of siege. Declarations of war: 2/8, Paraguay; 2/11, Peru; 2/16, Venezuela; 2/22, Uruguay; 2/26, Egypt; 2/26, Syria; 2/27, Lebanon; 3/1, Saudi Arabia; 3/1, Turkey; 3/27, Argentina.

February 23–March 8, 1945:

Allied forces break through the West Wall; take all areas left of the Rhine; obtain bridgehead at Remagen.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES:1945

DEFEATS: 1945

March 23–25, 1945:

Allied forces cross the Rhine and penetrate into Germany.

April 13, 1945:

Red Army takes Vienna.

April 16, 1945:

Large-scale Soviet offensive toward Berlin; reaches the outskirts by April 22.

April 25, 1945:

American and Russian troops meet at Torgau. Germany divided into two parts.

April 28, 1945:

Collapse of the German front in north Italy. Special cease-fire agreement arrived at with the German commanding generals on this sector.

April 30, 1945:

All hope of a relief of Berlin vanishes. Hitler commits suicide in Berlin.

May 2, 1945:

Red Army takes remaining districts of Berlin.

May 3, 1945:

German surrender accepted by Montgomery in northwest Germany.

May 7–9, 1945:

Unconditional surrender of Germany accepted by Eisenhower at Reims on May 7, and by Zhukov and Tedder in Berlin-Karlshorst on May 8–9.

May 23, 1945:

Arrest of Hitler's appointed successor, Admiral Dönitz, in Flensburg.

Hitler's Stays Abroad

1932

April 5: Danzig
September 18: Vienna

1934

June 14–16: Venice

1938

March 12: Braunau-Linz
March 13: Linz-Leonding
March 14: Linz-Melk-Vienna
March 15: Vienna
April 3: Graz
April 4: Klagenfurt
April 5: Innsbruck
April 6: Salzburg
April 7: Linz
April 9: Vienna
May 3: Brenner Pass–Rome
May 4: Rome
May 5: Rome-Naples-Rome
May 6–7: Rome
May 8: Rome–Civitavecchia–Santa Marinella–Rome
May 9: Rome-Florence
May 10: Northern Italy–Brenner Pass
October 3: Eger (Cheb)
October 4: Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary)
October 6: Schleckenu-Rumburk

Hitler's Stays Abroad

October 7:	Schönwies-Kohlbach-Jägersdorf-Neubersdorf
October 20:	Linz-Krumau
October 25:	Enger-Vienna
October 26:	Southern Moravia-Znaim (Znajmo)
October 27:	Laa-Nikolsburg
December 2:	Reichenberg (Liberec)

1939

February 18:	Klagenfurt
March 15:	Leipa (Bohemia)-Prague
March 16:	Prague-Sudeten Silesia
March 17:	Olmütz (Olomouc)-Brünn (Brno)-Vienna
March 18:	Vienna-Linz
March 23:	Memel territory
April 17:	St. Pölten-Krems-Strockerau-Strebersdorf
June 10-11:	Vienna
June 12:	Vienna-Linz
August 9:	Salzburg
August 14:	Salzburg
September 4:	Kulm-Polish Corridor
September 6:	Tuchel Moor
September 7-10:	Polish Corridor
September 11:	Lodz area-Rava
September 12-13:	Polish Corridor
September 13:	City of Lodz and surrounding areas
September 14:	Polish Corridor
September 15:	Galicia (Jarosław, Ubieszyn)
September 16-18:	Galicia-Polish Corridor
September 19:	Oliva-Sopot (Zopot)-Danzig
September 20:	Sopot
September 21:	Westerplatte-Gdingen (Gdynia)-Oxhöft
September 22:	Praga (near Warsaw)-Sopot
September 23-24:	Sopot
September 25:	Sopot-Bzura area
October 5:	Warsaw
December 24:	Spicheren area

Hitler's Stays Abroad

1940

March 18:	Brenner Pass–Innsbruck
May 24:	Charleville
June 2:	Langemarck–Vimy Heights–Loretto
June 3–25:	Bruly-le-Pêche
June 21:	Compiègne
June 26–27:	northern France (tour of World War I battlefields)
June 28:	Paris
June 29:	Strasbourg–Schlettstadt (Selestat)
June 30:	Mulhouse–Upper Alsace
October 4:	Brenner Pass
October 22:	Montoire-sur-le-Loir
October 23:	Hendaye
October 24:	Montoire-sur-le-Loir
October 25:	Yvoir (Belgium)
October 28:	Florence
November 20:	Vienna
December 23:	Calais–Boulogne area
December 24:	Abbéville area
December 25:	area north of Paris
December 26:	northern France

1941

January 19:	Puch (near Salzburg)
March 1:	Vienna
March 25:	Vienna
April 11–25:	Mönchskirchen
April 26:	Graz–Marburg on the Drau (Maribor)
April 27:	Klagenfurt
June 2:	Brenner Pass
August 26:	Brest-Litovsk
August 27:	Gorsk
August 28:	Uman-Gorsk
September 24:	Borisov
December 2:	Kiev–Mariupol–Mius front section
December 3:	Mariupol–Poltava
December 4:	Poltava

Hitler's Stays Abroad

1942

- April 29–30: Klessheim (near Salzburg)
June 4: Micheli (Finland)
July 17–October 31: Werewolf headquarters (with the exception of the period between September 28 and October 2)

1943

- February 17–19: Zaporozh'ye
February 19–March 13: Werewolf headquarters
March 10: Zaporozh'ye
March 13: Smolensk
April 7–10: Klessheim
April 12: Klessheim
April 16–17: Klessheim
April 23: Klessheim
April 27: Klessheim
April 29: Klessheim
July 19: Feltre (Belluno area)
August 27: Werewolf headquarters
September 8: Zaporozh'ye

1944

- March 18: Klessheim
April 22–23: Klessheim
May 12: Klessheim
June 17: Metz-Margival

Führer Headquarters

1939

- September 4–19: Special train in Poland.
September 19–25: Hotel Casino in Sopot (Zoppot)

1940

- May 10–(about) June 3: Felsenest near Münstereifel
June 3–25
(approximately): Bruly-le-peche (Belgium)
June 28–July 5: Tannenberg near Freudenstadt (Black Forest)

1941

- April 10–25: Special train near Mönchskirchen (Styria)
June 28–November 7: Wolfsschanze near Rastenburg (East Prussia)
November 29–
April 25, 1942: Wolfsschanze

1942

- Until April 25: Wolfsschanze
May 3–21: Wolfsschanze
May 31–June 8: Wolfsschanze
July 1–15: Wolfsschanze
July 16–October 31: Werewolf near Vinnitsa (Ukraine)
November 1–7: Wolfsschanze
November 23–
February 17, 1943: Wolfsschanze.

Führer Headquarters

1943

Until February 17: Wolfsschanze
February 19–March 13: Werewolf
March 13–20: Wolfsschanze
July 1–November 7: Wolfsschanze
November 19–
March 16, 1944: Wolfsschanze

1944

Until March 16: Wolfsschanze
July 15–November 20: Wolfsschanze
December 10–
January 15, 1945: Ziegenberg near Bad Nauheim (Hesse)

1945

Until January 15: Ziegenberg

For the periods not indicated above, the Führer headquarters was either located at the Reich Chancellery (Berlin) or at the Berghof (Berchtesgaden).

Ships Mentioned in the Text

Admiral Graf Spee (Pocket Battleship) Panzerschiffle/Armored Ships commonly known as Pocket Battleships. Later reclassified as Heavy Cruisers.

Displacement: 12,100 tons. Speed 26 knots. Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2) 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Scuttled outside Montevideo December 17, 1939.

Admiral Scheer (Pocket Battleship) Displacement: 12,100 tons. Speed 26 knots.

Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Capsized at Keil after RAF bombing raid April 9, 1945.

Bismarck (Battleship) Displacement: 41,700 tons. Speed: 30 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 12 - 5.9in (6 x 2), 16 - 4.1in A.A. (8 x 2), 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2), 6 aircraft. Sister ship to *Tirpitz*. Sank *HMS Hood* on May 24, 1941 and subsequently sunk by units of the Royal Navy May 27, 1941.

Blucher (Heavy Cruiser) Displacement: 13,900 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 8 - 8in (4 x 2), 12 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 37mm A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 3 aircraft. Sunk in Oslo Fjord by gunfire and torpedoes from shore tubes April 9, 1940.

Conte Di Cavour (Battleship) Displacement: 29,100 tons. Speed: 27 knots.

Armament: 10 - 12.6in (2 x 3 & 2 x 2), 12 - 4.7in A.A. (6 x 2), 8 - 3.9in A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 37mm A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 3 aircraft. Italian, *Cavour* Class Battleship. Sunk by F.A.A. aircraft at Taranto November 12, 1940. Refloated but not rebuilt when captured by German forces. Sunk by aerial bombs February 15, 1945.

HMS Cossack (Destroyer) Displacement: 1,960 tons. Speed: 36 knots. Armament: 8 - 4.7in (4 x 2), 4 - 2pdr A.A., 4 - 21in (1 x 4) Torpedo Tubes. *Tribal* Class Destroyer. Torpedoed and sunk by U.563 North Atlantic October 23, 1941.

Deutschland (Pocket Battleship) Displacement: 11,700 tons. Speed 26 knots.

Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Renamed *Lutzow*

Ships Mentioned in the Text

February, 1940. Bombed at Swimemund April 16, 1945. Blown up and scuttled May 4, 1945.

Europa (Passenger Liner) Displacement: 49,750 tons. Speed: 27 knots. German Luxury Liner launched in 1930. Held the Blue Riband. Survived the war and handed over to France. Eventually scrapped in Italy in 1962.

Gneisenau (Battlecruiser) Displacement: 32,000 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 11in (3 x 3), 12 - 5.9in (4 x 2 4 x 1), 14 - 4.1in A.A. (7 x 2), 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2), 6 - 21in (2 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 4 aircraft. Classified as Fast Battleship by Germans. Damaged by RAF air raids at Keil and Gdynia. Decommissioned. Later sunk as block ship at Gdynia March 28, 1945.

Graf Zeppelin (Aircraft Carrier) Displacement: 23,300 tons. Speed: 33 knots. Armament: 16 - 5.9in (8 x 2), 12 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 2), 22 - 37mm A.A. (11 x 2). Originally planned to carry 12 Ju 87D dive bombers and 30 Me 109F fighters. Never completed. Scuttled Stettin April 24, 1945. Raised 1946/47 but capsized in the Gulf of Finland in 1947 whilst on tow to Russia.

Grosserkurfurt (Battleship) Displacement: 25,390 tons. Speed: 22 knots. Armament: 10 - 12in (5 x 2), 14 - 5.9in (14 x 1), 6 - 3.4in (6 x 1), 4 - 3.4in A.A. (4 x 1), 5 - 20in (5 x 1) Torpedo Tubes. *König* Class Battleship. Launched May 5, 1913 and scuttled at Scapa Flow June 21, 1919.

Grille (Hitler's Yacht) Displacement: 2,560 tons. Speed: 26 knots. Armament: 3 - 5in (3 x 1), 4 - 37mm (2 x 2), 4 - 20mm (4 x 1). Served in peacetime as an Admiralty yacht during fleet reviews and visits by VIPs. During war used as a minelayer, then as a staff ship. Transferred to Great Britain, then to USA in 1947. Broken up in 1951.

Hamburg (Hitler's Yacht) No information available.

HMS Hood (Battlecruiser) Displacement: 42,750 tons. Speed: 30 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 12 - 5in (12 x 1), 8 - 4in (8 x 12), 24 - 2pdr A.A., 4 - 21in Torpedo Tubes. Lost to *Bismarck* in Demark Strait May 24, 1941.

Karlsruhe (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,650 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 2 - 3.5in A.A. (2 x 1), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes (4 x 3), 2 aircraft. Badly damaged by torpedos from H.M. Submarine *Truant* April 10, 1940. Later sunk by torpedos from German Torpedo Boat *Grief*.

Köln (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,650 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 4 - 3.5in A.A. (4 x 1), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes (4 x 3), 2 aircraft. Bombed and sunk at Wilhelmshaven April 30, 1945.

Ships Mentioned in the Text

Konigsberg (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,650 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 2 - 3.5in A.A. (2 x 1), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes (4 x 3), 2 aircraft. First major warship sunk by dive bombers when sunk by F.A.A. *Skuas* at Bergen April 10, 1940. Wreck refloated and dry docked but September 22, 1944 capsized, abandoned and later broken up.

Leopard (Torpedo Boat) Displacement: 933 tons. Speed: 33 knots. Armament: 3 - 5in (3 x 1), 4 - 20mm A.A. (4 x 1), 6 - 21in (2 x 3) Torpedo Tubes. *Wolf* Class torpedo boat. Sunk in collision with minelayer *Preussen*, Skaggerak April 30, 1940.

Lutzow (Pocket Battleship). *Panzerschiffle*/Armoured Ships commonly known as Pocket Battleships. Later reclassified as Heavy Cruisers. Displacement: 11,700 tons. Speed 26 knots. Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2) 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2) 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Refer to *Deutschland* above.

HMS *Nelson* (Battleship) Displacement: 33,300 tons. Speed: 23 knots. Armament: 9 - 16in (3 x 3), 12 - 6in (6 x 2), 6 - 4.7in A.A. (6 x 1), 2 - 24.5in (1 x 1) Torpedo Tubes. *Nelson* class Battleship. Sistership to HMS *Rodney*. Launched in 1927 and scrapped in 1948.

New York (Steamer)

Nixe (Cutter) Norwegian passenger ship seized by the Germans for the duration of the War.

Nürnberg (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,980 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 8 - 3.5in A.A. (4 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Surrendered at Copenhagen May 9, 1945. Transferred to Russian Navy as *Admiral Makarow* in 1946. Broken up 1959.

Patria (Steamer)

Prince Eugen (Heavy Cruiser) Displacement: 13,900 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 8 - 8in (4 x 2), 12 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 37mm A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 3 aircraft. Sister ship to *Seydlitz*, *Blucher* and *Admiral Hipper*. Taken over by U.S.A. at Copenhagen in May 1945. Used as target ship at Bikini Atoll atom bomb tests. Sank Kwajalein 15/11/47.

Rio de Janeiro (Steamer)

Robert Ley (KdF Ship) Displacement: 27,300 tons. Speed: 15 knots. Strength Through Joy Ship commissioned 24/3/39. Used mainly as an accommodation ship during the war. Scrapped in UK in June 1947.

Ships Mentioned in the Text

HMS *Rodney* (Battleship) Displacement: 33,300 tons. Speed: 23 knots. Armament: 9 - 16in (3 x 3), 12 - 6in (6 x 2), 6 - 4.7in A.A. (6 x 1), 2 - 24.5in (1 x 1) Torpedo Tubes. *Nelson* Class Battleship. Sister ship to HMS *Nelson*, took part in action against *Bismarck*. Completed November 10, 1927 and Scrapped March 1948.

HMS *Royal Oak* (Battleship) Displacement: 29,150 tons. Speed: 23 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 14 - 6in (14 x 1), 2 - 3in A.A. (2 x 1), 4 - 21in Torpedo Tubes. *Royal Sovereign* Class Battleship. Sunk October 14, 1939 by U.47 in Scapa Flow.

Scharnhorst (Battlecruiser) Displacement: 32,000 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 11in (3 x 3), 12 - 5.9in (6 x 2), 14 - 4.1in A.A. (7 x 2), 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2), 6 - 21in (2 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 4 aircraft. Sister ship to *Gneisenau*. Classified as Fast Battleship by Germans. Sunk in battle of North Cape by gunfire from HMS *Duke of York* and finally torpedoed by destroyers, December 26, 1943.

Scharnhorst (Passenger Liner) German luxury liner plying the Oriental service prior to Pacific War. Converted by Japan into Aircraft carrier *Shinyo*. Lost to US Submarine *Spadefish* November 17, 1944.

Schleswig-Holstein (Obsolete Battleship) Displacement: 13,050 tons. Speed: 16 knots. Armament: (1944): 4 - 11in (2 x 2), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 1), 10 - 40mm A.A. Served in High Seas Fleet in World War One. Then used as Training Ship. In action against Polish shore installations in 1939. Bombed and sunk Gdynia in shallow water, then scuttled March 21, 1945.

Tirpitz (Battleship) Displacement: 42,900 tons. Speed 30 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 12 - 5.9in (6 x 2), 16 - 4.1in A.A. (8 x 2) 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2) 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 6 aircraft. Sister ship to *Bismarck*. Bombed by RAF Lancaster bombers and capsized off Tromso November 12, 1944.

U-Boats German submarines of various classes.

Courtesy of: Paul. A. Richardson

Afterword

The work completed here does not claim to be a “definitive treatment” of the Third Reich or of Hitler. This was an investigation made only to prove that what Hitler said was, in its essential points, false. In particular, this applies to his foreign policy and his military policy. Even the most beautiful speeches cannot change the facts. And when Hitler so often declared: “Where the German soldier stands, nobody else will step,”¹ “Germany will not be conquered, either from inside or from outside!”² “The Third Reich will not turn into a butterfly that lives but a day”³—the hard reality differed from his boastful statements.

It should also be mentioned that Hitler’s rhetorical influence over the masses played a role, but by no means the decisive role, either in his rise to power or in the nature of his rule. As soon as Hitler took the reins of government into his hands, it became unessential whether the so-called people rejected him or not; he was determined to implement his ideas in either case.

Hitler’s oratorical success with certain leading persons, however, was important and decisive. The leading circles in Germany had the power either to prevent Hitler from coming to power or, after he had risen to power, to dismiss him. And he realized that he had to convince them that it was only he who would save Germany, and that all his measures served only that purpose.

It is a most remarkable fact that all Hitler’s ideas and plans concerning foreign policy were hardly ever criticized in Germany, although they could affect, and did affect, Germany herself most fatefully.

Hitler was praised for having dealt with unemployment, extending patronage to the Volkswagen, and having the Autobahns built in grand style.

Afterword

Hitler was condemned for oppressing the Jews, restricting the rights of the churches, banning all parties except his own, dissolving the trade unions, controlling the press, regulating the cultural life, and infringing individual freedom.

These negative aspects of Hitler's domestic policy were signs of a loathsome dictatorship, but they were, by no means, causes of his downfall. They would have never provoked military interference by the western forces if they had been applied only within the Reich's boundaries. These forces joined in the war against Hitler only after he had started war against Poland and Danzig in 1939. He might have started war against any other country—the decision of the western forces would have been the same.

Of course, Hitler was blamed in Germany for this reason too, namely, the war against Poland, but as was easily observable, it was just a logical consequence of Hitler's foreign-policy concept.

Hitler's foreign policy theses were based on the following statements: The world has denied to the German people its lawful rights for a "place in the sun." In 1918, Germany was forced to lay down her arms because of a trick (Wilson's Fourteen Points), and it was at that very moment when she was about to achieve a complete victory over her enemy. The Versailles Treaty was a gross injustice toward the German people; therefore it is self-evident that the world should have canceled the terms of that treaty, thus ensuring restoration of the frontier line of at least 1914, and restitution of colonies.

Germany is being threatened by all kinds of enemies from the west and from the east. Nevertheless, the German people is unconquerable while it is united. It must receive a "Lebensraum" (living space) according to the number of its population.⁴

Foreign policy was identical to domestic policy. Subsequently, the foreign enemies were the same as the domestic enemies. The English were as rigid (*verkalkt*) as the German nationalists and absolutely unable to resist the German policy of expansion. On the contrary, they would have even welcomed Germany's campaign of conquest against Poland and Russia. In other respects, the English were of "German origin"^{5, 6} and that reason alone was enough to make them Germany's friends.

Russian Bolsheviks are the same as German Communists. Bolshhevism is a doctrine of "primitivism and cowardly concession,"⁷ and the best way to exterminate it is to apply cruel force.

Afterword

Those were the main points of Hitler's foreign policy. They did not, in the least, correspond to the truth or to the real power structure in the world. Hitler's effort to put his foreign-policy ideas into reality ended in Germany's greatest political and military disaster.

Since Hitler's foreign policy was connected with his dictatorial domestic and racial policy, there was, and still is, a danger that the primary reason of the greatest German disaster of 1945, that is, Hitler's foreign policy, still remains obscure and unrecognized. It was the purpose of this publication to disclose that very foreign policy.



LXVIII Göring, Hess, Ribbentrop, and Keitel in the prisoners' dock

Photo: Publisher's archives

The Year 1941

Notes

1. See below, speech of January 1, 1941.
2. Ibid.
3. See above, June 24, 1940.
4. In view of Russia's benevolent behavior, Göring had declared in a speech in September 1939: "And yet, we do not have a war to fight on three, four, or five fronts as we did back then [1914]. Then we had to defend thirty-eight hundred kilometers, today we have only two hundred fifty to defend." See above, p. 1795, September 9, 1939.
5. See above, January 27, 1940.
6. See above, p. 2173, Raeder's statement of December 27, 1940.
7. Testimony by Field Marshal Milch before the Nuremberg tribunal on March 8, 1946: "From what Göring said on May 22, 1941, at Veldenstein it was clear that he did not like this idea of going to war at all. But even for him, in his position, it was impossible to dissuade Hitler. He stated that he had brought the two-front war dilemma to Hitler's attention. He told me, however, that there was no hope." Cf. IMT, Blue Series. Translated from the original German wording in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. IX, pp. 59 f. For his part, Göring made the following statement on March 15, 1946, in his own defense at Nuremberg: "What I told him [Hitler] was: It was a masterpiece of great ingenuity on your part to limit this war to be fought on only one front from its very beginning. This is a crucial element of success that you yourself always pointed out in your *Mein Kampf*. To clash with Russia would, the way things are now, pit a third world power against Germany in this struggle. Then we will once again stand alone to fight a two-front war against practically the entire world—the other countries on our side will not count." Ibid., p. 386.
8. Cf. Franz von Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse* (Munich, 1952), p. 529.
9. Ibid., p. 544.
10. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
11. In February 1941 Hitler proclaimed: "When Barbarossa takes off, the world will hold its breath and keep still." See below, February 3, 1941.
12. See below, October 3, 1941.
13. See below, proclamation of October 2, 1941.
14. See above, May 24, 1940.
15. See below, speech of November 8, 1941.
16. DNB text, January 1, 1941.
17. Ibid.
18. See above, 1940, note 487.
19. DNB text, January 2, 1941.
20. DNB note, January 2, 1941.
21. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 331.

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22. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1941. Fritz Wächtler, born 1891; teacher by profession; appointed successor to Hans Schemm, who had died, as head (Reichswalter) of the National Socialist Teachers' Association; Bavarian state minister; Gauleiter of the Gau Bayerische Ostmark centered in Bayreuth.
23. *The Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs* (London, 1947), reprinted in *Brassey's Naval Annual* (London, 1948), pp. 169 ff. Reports of these talks are also printed in IMT, 170-8 f. and in the war diary of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, published in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 184 f.
24. For the British strategy of inducing Napoleon and Hitler to turn against Russia instead of Britain, see above, pp. 1907 f., 2064 ff., 2092 ff. and below, June 22, 1941.
25. *Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945*, edited by Hugh R[edwald] Trevor-Roper (2nd ed., London, 1966), pp. 98 ff. Editor's note: The text of these directives was originally published in German under the title of *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung 1939-1945, Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, edited by Walther Hubatsch (Frankfurt am Main, 1962).
26. Count Ugo Cavallero, commander of Italian troops in Albania (21st Division); from December 1940, chief of the Italian supreme command.
27. *Hitler's War Directives*, op. cit., p. 96.
28. In VB, No. 13, January 13, 1941.
29. Ibid.
30. Illustrated report in VB, No. 18, January 18, 1941.
31. Cf. Helmuth Greiner, *Die Oberste Wehrmachtsführung* (Wiesbaden 1951), p. 252.
32. DNE report, January 16, 1941.
33. Report on preparations and on the talks themselves in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 333 ff.
34. Ibid., p. 338.
35. Pietro Badoglio, born 1871; duke of Addis-Ababa from 1936 to 1943; he took over the Italian government as marshal after Mussolini's overthrow; Italian prime minister until the invasion of France on June 6, 1944.
36. Reference to the events surrounding the person of Freiherr von Fritsch. He served as head of armed forces high command and commander in chief of the army. See above, August 3, 1937. See also above, February 8, 1938. See further 1938, notes 29-31.
37. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 338.
38. Cf. protocol of the meeting in IMT, 134-C.
39. DNB text, January 20, 1941.
40. Report in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1941.
41. DNB texts, January 28, 1941.
42. See above, p. 546. Hitler had effected Brückner's dismissal through a decree dated December 4, 1934.

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43. Announcement of the Reich Press Bureau on January 28, 1941. Karl Hanke, born 1903 in Lauban; miller and trade teacher; worked as personal assistant to Goebbels in 1932; ministerial counselor in the Reich propaganda ministry in 1933; he played an ominous role in the defense of the town of Breslau (Wroclaw) in 1945.
Fritz Bracht, born 1899; previously assistant Gauleiter of Breslau. The previous Gauleiter, Josef Wagner, filed a complaint with the party high court which upheld his suit. Hitler was furious with the party lawyers who refused to give formal approval to his arbitrary rule. See below, March 21, 1942.
44. DNB report, January 29, 1941.
45. On July 3, 1934, in the wake of the Röhm Purge, the then Reich Minister of Justice Gürtner had declared that “the shooting of defenseless prisoners without trial had not only been justified, but moreover constituted a ‘statesmanlike duty’.” See above, p. 481.
46. As late as August 24, 1942, Hitler appointed a new Reich minister of justice: Dr. Georg Otto Thierack; he was born 1889 in Wurzen (Saxony) and committed suicide in the prisoner-of-war camp of Eselheider (Sennelager).
47. Roland Freisler, born 1893; died 1945 in Berlin in an air raid; state secretary and president of the Volksgerichtshof.
48. Franz Schlegelberger, born 1876 in Königsberg; state secretary; repeatedly placed in charge of the Reich ministry of justice in the years 1941 to 1942.
49. DNB report, January 29, 1941.
50. DNB report, January 30, 1941.
51. DNB texts, January 30, 1941.
52. In VB, No. 31, January 31, 1941.
53. “Party-narrative”: Author’s expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
54. Allusion to the British concentration camps during the Boer War of 1899–1902 in South Africa. Such camps were customarily used to accommodate civilian populations of the enemy in wartime. They bore no resemblance to the concentration camps which Hitler contrived for the genocide of millions of foreign people and the swift elimination of political adversaries.
55. More accurately Hider’s reply should have been “Russia and America.” In order not to offend the Russians, he restricted himself to expounding the topic of America. In all Hitler’s public statements up to June 22, 1941, mention of the Soviet Union was conspicuously absent.
56. In other words, this meant “Wherever we cannot beat England (that is, on the British mainland and in its colonies), we shall not beat England!”
57. In August 1939, Hitler had not been particularly troubled by this “handshake of two men of honor” when he had offered Great Britain military assistance against his friend Mussolini. See above, August 27 and 28, 1939.
58. Quotation from the Martin Luther hymn *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*.

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59. Hitler had made no such threat in his speech on September 1, 1939. On the contrary, he had painstakingly avoided any anti-Semitic remarks in order not to complicate the situation any further as regards the war in Poland. On January 30, 1939, he had stated the following on the subject of the Jews: “. . . should the international Jewry of finance (*Finanzjudentum*) succeed, both within and beyond Europe, in plunging mankind into yet another world war, then the result will not be a Bolshevization of the earth and the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.” See above, p. 1449, speech of January 30, 1939.
60. Illustrated report in VB, No. 33, February 2, 1941.
61. Ibid.
62. DNB report, February 1, 1941.
63. Report in VB, No. 35, February 4, 1941.
64. DGFP, D, XII, pp. 11 f.
65. Cf. protocol of the conference in IMT, 872-PS.
66. Code name for the planned offensive against Greece. See above, December 13, 1940.
67. Code name for the planned occupation of southeastern France. See above, December 10, 1940.
68. Code name for the planned (though not carried out) landing of ground forces on the English mainland. See above, July 16, 1940.
69. Report in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1941. Heinrich Schnee, born 1871 in Neuhalderleben; died 1949 in Berlin; last governor of German East Africa.
70. RGBI, 1941, I, p. 73.
71. Report in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1941.
72. DGFP, D, XII, no. 23, pp. 42 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 102 ff.
73. DGFP, D, XII, no. 22, pp. 37 ff. Also published in *The Spanish Government and the Axis* (Washington, 1946), pp. 28 ff.
74. Announcement by the NSDAP Reich Press Office of February 7, 1941. The renaming of the Gau was to veil the fact that this Gau had appropriated Luxembourg.
75. DNB report, February 12, 1941.
76. DNB text, February 14, 1941.
77. In Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 199.
78. Hermann Kriebel, born 1876; retired lieutenant colonel. He had participated in the 1923 march on the Feldherrnhalle, but later distanced himself from Hitler. However, subsequent to Hitler's seizure of power, Kriebel was again to be seen at official state functions. He was named SA Obergruppenführer and later promoted to the rank of colonel. Assigned by Hitler to the foreign ministry, he served as German consul in Shanghai for some time.
79. Report in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1941.
80. Excerpts from this speech were published in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1941.

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81. The Röhm Purge constituted a textbook example of what Hitler's assurances of friendship meant. See above, pp. 456 ff., and June 30 to July 1, 1934.
82. By "March and April, 1941," German U-boats were only able to report the sinking of ever fewer enemy ships. The Royal Air Force and the British navy stepped up their surveillance of the seas, greatly reducing the opportunities for the German U-boats to strike.
83. The winter 1941-1942 would prove that after all the "German Volk," and more specifically the German army in Russia, were not in the least prepared for the winter.
84. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1941. Ferdinand von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, born 1861 in Vienna; died 1948 in Coburg; became king of Bulgaria in 1908; renounced the throne in 1918 in favor of his son Boris.
85. Report in VB, No. 60, March 1, 1941.
86. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1941. Bogdan Filov, born 1883; executed on February 1, 1945; Bulgarian prime minister from 1940 to 1942.
87. DNB text, March 2, 1941.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. March 2, 1941, was a Sunday. Hitler preferred to start his undertakings on weekends, both at home and abroad, as he believed that setting out on either a Saturday or a Sunday secured him a certain element of surprise. In addition, reactions to his measures were not to be expected until the following Monday. See above, p. 458, and 1934, note 92.
91. DNB text, March 5, 1941.
92. Report on this meeting in von Papen, p. 535.
93. There was no mention of this visit in the German news media.
94. See below, speech of May 4, 1941.
95. Hitler made the following statement in May of that year: "Beyond this, in response to a substantiated claim by its government, Yugoslavia received the assurance that, in the event of territorial readjustments in the Balkans, it would be granted sovereign access to the Aegean Sea, which, among other things, would include the city of Salonika." See below, speech of May 4, 1941.
96. In August 1939, Hitler had proposed to Great Britain: German "protection" for its empire against any potential aggressor, including Italy, Japan, and Russia. See above, August 27 and 28, 1939.
97. DGFP, D, XII, no. 125, pp. 219 f.
98. Bullock, *Hitler*, p. 349. See above, 1940, note 36.
99. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1941.
100. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1941.
101. Excerpts of the speech were published in VB, No. 73, March 14, 1941.
102. Report in VB, No. 74, March 15, 1941.
103. Ibid.
104. DNB report, March 15, 1941.

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105. Reports on the ceremonies and speech in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1941.
106. Eduard Freiherr von Bohm-Ermolli, born 1856 in Ancona; conquered Lemberg in 1915; commander in chief of the Austro-Hungarian army in the Ukraine in 1918.
107. See below, May 4, 1941.
108. In VB, No. 76, March 17, 1941. Professor W. Kreis was appointed to this post. See below, March 17, 1943.
109. DNB report, March 19, 1941.
110. Report in VB, No. 81, March 23, 1941.
111. Ibid.
112. Report in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1941.
113. Illustrated reports in VB, No. 81, March 22, 1941. The Africa corps sported khaki uniforms with sun helmets. The design of the uniform was a replica of that worn by the German Asian corps during its ill-fated campaign in the First World War. Then, too, under the guidance of General Erick von Falkenhayn, this corps was unable to score any victories of significance against the onslaught of the English.
114. Report in VB, No. 80, March 21, 1941.
115. DNB text, March 21, 1941. Ladislaus von Bardossy, born 1890 in Steinamanger; executed 1946 in Budapest; prime minister in the years 1941 and 1942.
116. Report in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1941.
117. Report on the festivities in Vienna in VB, No. 85, March 26, 1941.
118. DNB text, March 26, 1941.
119. Report in VB, No. 85, March 26, 1941.
120. Report in VB, No. 88, March 29, 1941.
121. Report in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1941.
122. See above, November 20, 1940, and Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 313, 317.
123. DGFP, D, XII, no. 217, pp. 372 ff. Cf. also: Wehrmachtsführungsstab (Supreme Military Council of the Wehrmacht), Top Secret Commando Affair, published in IMT, 1746-PS.
124. There have been speculations that the campaign against Russia was originally to have been launched on May 15, 1941. Directive No. 21 detailing the implementation of Operation Barbarossa merely provided that "preparations are to be concluded by May 15, 1941." May 15 would have been a Thursday in 1941. Since Hitler customarily launched undertakings of a similar nature on a weekend, preferably a Sunday, to take advantage of an element of surprise in the attack, May 15 most certainly would not have been his choice for Operation Barbarossa. By the same token, the earliest date he might have chosen was Sunday, May 18, or the following Sunday, May 25. This would also agree with the actual date of the attack, Sunday, June 22, given the possibility of a "postponement up to four weeks" for the assault as provided for.
125. DGFP, D, XII, no. 249, pp. 395 f. Cf. also *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 107 ff.
126. DGFP, D, XII, no. 222, pp. 386 ff. Report on the meeting of Hitler and Matsuoka on March 27, 1941, in Schmidt, pp. 539 ff.

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127. On his way to Berlin, Matsuoka stopped over in Moscow to discuss normalization of relations between Russia and Japan, according to a wish the German government had expressed in December 1939. By now, however, Hitler no longer desired to explore this possibility.
128. According to Schmidt, p. 548, Matsuoka repeatedly warned at his visits in Berlin that the Anglo-Americans had to be considered as a single block in the conflict, forming a single power grouping. This assessment was a matter of course for anyone acquainted with world history and politics, but not for the German leadership.
129. DNB report, March 27, 1941.
130. DNB report, March 28, 1941.
131. In the course of a dinner reception in honor of the Japanese foreign minister at Göring's estate, Karinhall, Matsuoka leaned over in his chair, indicated his host sitting across the table from him, and remarked in English to the interpreter Schmidt: "Did you know that abroad people say he is crazy?" He was alluding to Göring's stay at the Swedish insane asylum of Langbro in 1925. Schmidt, p. 546.
132. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 309.
133. DGFP, D, XII, no. 224, pp. 397 f. Cf. IMT, 1835-PS.
134. Report in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1941.
135. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of March 30, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
136. In the course of his testimony before the Nuremberg Court, Halder stated the following about Hitler's speech that day: "Before the attack on Russia, the Führer summoned all commanders in chief and all persons connected to the high command to a conference on the pending attack on Russia. In this conference, he said that weapons different from those used against the west were to be employed against the Russians. He said that the war between Russia and Germany was a war between races. He said that the Russians were not a party to the Geneva Convention and hence Russian prisoners of war need not be treated in accordance with the stipulations of the Geneva Convention." Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. VII, pp. 396 f.
137. RGBI, 1910, pp. 375 f.
138. See above, speech of July 13, 1934.
139. See above, p. 481.
140. On December 11, 1961, a trial of two former members of the SS took place. They were accused of killing seventy Russian commissars. In his testimony, General Walter Warlimont replied in a revealing manner to the prosecution's question why—of the two hundred fifty generals and admirals Hitler had called together that March 30, 1941—had not one protested against the order, which was obviously criminal in nature. Warlimont had served as chief of the Wehrmachtsführungsstab (Supreme Military Council of the Wehrmacht) with the OKW and was the author of Hitler's infamous so-called "Commissar Order." Before the court in Trier, Warlimont explained that a number of the high-ranking officers had been convinced by Hitler's argument that the

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- Soviet commissars were not soldiers, but instead “convicted criminals.” The remainder, including Warlimont himself, had not objected since they sincerely believed that “the man who held the highest position in the state, who was highly revered by all officers, Adolf Hitler, supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, was simply not capable of doing anything unjust.” Warlimont’s belief was founded on the “convictions an officer was born with and which he internalized in the course of his education.” DPA report, December 11, 1961.
141. Cf. IMT, 884-PS.
 142. “Dulag” was the abbreviation for *Durchgangslager* (transit camp).
 143. On April 20, 1941, Hitler appointed Rosenberg as the commissar for the central administration of the territories in eastern Europe. On September 17, 1941, Hitler promoted him to Reich minister in charge of the occupied territories.
 144. On June 21, 1941, just before launching the Russian campaign, Hitler once more lectured Mussolini that Italy had under any circumstances to postpone its projected attack on Egypt for the time being. Cf. Epstein and Carroll, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Sowjetunion 1939–1941* (Washington, 1948), pp. 392 f.
 145. The Italian governor was Amadeus, duke of Aosta, born 1898; died March 3, 1942, while in British captivity. The duke’s forces held out for some time until he finally capitulated at Amba Alagi on May 17, 1941.
 146. Report in VB, No. 96, April 6, 1941.
 147. Report in VB, No. 95, April 5, 1941.
 148. Report in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1941.
 149. DGFP, D, XII, no. 256, pp. 440 ff.
 150. Report in VB, No. 95, April 5, 1941.
 151. Report on the talk in Schmidt, p. 548.
 152. See above, March 27, 1941.
 153. This nonaggression pact, which was signed on April 13, 1941, technically remained in force until Germany’s capitulation in 1945. The inconsistent nature of Hitler’s demands on Japan was largely to blame for this development. The Japanese were not willing to antagonize the Russians for the sake of pleasing Hitler. A popular notion at the time was that the famed Russo-German master-spy Richard Sorge, operating for the Comintern from 1925 to 1929 in China and from 1933 out of Tokyo, had informed the Russians that Japan intended to remain neutral in a conflict between Germany and Russia, and that this “treason” had ultimately resulted in Germany’s defeat. Of course, this was utter nonsense.
 154. Cf. the April 28, 1941 talk between Hitler and Schulenburg in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 209.
 155. In his proclamation of June 22, 1941, Hitler maintained: “The German Volk can be told today: the Serbian *coup de main* against Germany took place not only under the English, but also and essentially under the Soviet flag.” See below, June 22, 1941.
 156. DGFP, D, XII, no. 333, p. 537.

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157. Hitler instructed his generals in the following manner prior to the attack on Poland: "Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally. The greatest harshness." See above, August 22, 1939.
158. See above, December 13, 1940.
159. See below, speech of May 4, 1941.
160. DNB text, April 6, 1941.
161. Ibid.
162. DNB text, April 12, 1941.
163. DGFP, D, XII, no. 335, pp. 538 ff.
164. Croatian nationalist movement, founded in 1929 against the Serbian hegemony; underground movement abroad after 1945. Dr. Ante Pavelich, born 1889 in Bradina/Herzegovina, died 1959 in Madrid; leader of the Ustasha movement; took over the government as "state leader" (Croat: *Poglavnik*; German: *Staatsführer*) with the help of the Axis powers on April 14, 1941; Croatian "head of state" from 1941 to 1943; emigrated to Argentina after the war; sentenced to death in his absence, the "king of Croatia" was the former duke of Spoleto, who reigned in Croatia under the name of Tomislav II from May 18, 1941, to September 12, 1943.
165. DNB text, April 15, 1941.
166. DNB text, April 18, 1941. This appeal reflected the immediacy of the campaign against Russia and the sacrifices which would then be asked of the German citizen.
167. DNB report, April 20, 1941.
168. Report in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1941.
169. DNB texts, April 20, 1941.
170. DNB text, April 22, 1941.
171. Report in VB, No. 114, April 24, 1941.
172. See above, September 6, 1938.
173. IMT, 865-PS.
174. Report in VB, No. 115, April 25, 1941.
175. DNB report, April 24, 1941.
176. DGFP, D, XII, no. 403, pp. 636 f. The code name Merkur referred to the Roman god of trade, Mercury, and, probably, to the island's importance as a trading center in antiquity.
177. Report in VB, No. 117, April 27, 1941. Illustrated report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1941.
178. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1941. Illustrated report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1941.
179. DGFP, D, XII, no. 423, pp. 666 ff.
180. See above, April 5, 1941.
181. Hitler belittled members of Germany's diplomatic staff as "miserable," "unworldly," and "starry-eyed." Cf. Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*; pp. 60 f., 86, 97 f., 106 f.
182. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of April 30, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz; see below, April 30, 1941.
183. DNB report, April 29, 1941.

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184. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1941. The speech has been preserved on phonographic records on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Le 5 EW 66 319–66 341).
185. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
186. Reference to the campaign in the Balkans from April 6 to 29, 1941.
187. Report in VB, No. 121, May 1, 1941.
188. Cf. letter to Mussolini; see above, March 28, 1941.
189. See below, February 28, 1945.
190. Editor's note: It was more than a "coincidence" that Hitler chose exactly the same day of the year, June 22, as Napoleon had chosen for his attack on Russia in 1812. The striking series of parallels in the rise of the dictators, their internal achievements, successes, expansions, and the like, continued in a fateful way. Although both warlords reached nearly the same area (Moscow or its surroundings), the campaigns against Russia proved equally disastrous for them. The war in the east brought about a turn of the tide in their series of conquests and marked the beginning of their decline. See above, pp. 1907 f., 2092 ff. and below, June 22, 1941. See below, Appendix, Index "Napoleon."
191. See below, February 28, 1945.
192. See below, third secret directive of May 9, 1941. The code name Isabella was chosen in reference to the Spanish queen, Isabella of Castile (1451–1504).
193. Verbatim reproduction of these three top-secret *Chefsachen* (affairs of the chief) in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp 212 ff. Cf. also IMT, 877-PS.
194. Report in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1941.
195. DNB text, May 4, 1941.
196. See above, speech of July 19, 1940.
197. Reference to Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk, who was, however, not as great a friend of Germany as Hitler assumed. See below, August 2, 1944.
198. Edward Wood, Lord Halifax, born 1881; British foreign minister from 1938 to 1940. From December 1940 on, Halifax was his Majesty's ambassador to Washington, in succession to Lord Lothian.
199. Reference to Churchill.
200. Further development proved clearly that "force of arms" and "time" could bend and break Germany very well.
201. Reports in VB, Nos. 128 and 131, May 8 and 11, 1941.
202. Hess's first attempted escape to Great Britain in December, 1940, had failed. After another try on January 10, 1941, Hess had returned so late to his quarters that his adjutant, Karl-Heinz Pintsch, had prematurely opened an envelope containing instructions by Hess on how to proceed in the event that he should be absent for an extended period. So Pintsch knew of Hess's intentions well before the final escape.
203. The Messerschmidt Works produced this two-engined fighter plane.
204. A number of the men had joined the military. Fritz Thyssen had fled to Switzerland on September 2, 1939. The Gestapo later arrested him, when France fell into German hands in 1940. See above, p. 59.

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205. The head of the Berlin municipal police force, SA Obergruppenführer Graf von Helldorff, became involved with the resistance movement inside Germany. Arrested in connection with the events of July 20, 1944, the Volksgerichtshof passed a death sentence after a mock trial. A most unusual, albeit revealing, verbal exchange took place during the trial between the court's infamous president and the alleged conspirator. Well-known for his lack of refinement, the notorious Roland Freisler hurled accusation upon accusation, and insult upon insult, at von Helldorff. Animated, the judge finally cried out that the count had become a traitor to the beloved Führer of the German Volk. In a courageously candid manner, von Helldorff retorted: "Why the theatrics? Every single one of us [old party comrades] must try to jump from the sinking ship somehow. And you yourself, you know this only too well!" (*Was soll das Theater? Jeder von uns muss irgendwie abzuspringen versuchen. Und du selbst, Du weisst es ganz genau!*). Stunned, Freisler was at a loss for words and refrained from further cross-examination.
206. Hess began preparing his escape in August 1940, shortly after Hitler had revealed his plans to attack Russia.
207. Wolf Rudiger Hess, called "Buz"; born on November 18, 1937. The family's home was located at Hardhauser Strasse No. 48 in the Munich suburb of Harlaching. The house was destroyed during the war, and the family later sold the property to three separate buyers.
208. Expression coined by Churchill. See above, broadcast of November 12, 1939.
209. Once Hess's escape had become public, his wife categorically denied any knowledge of her husband's plans. Having heard that he departed by plane, she initially assumed that he was going to France to confer with Pétain. Despite the ignorance she professed, this statement revealed that the couple had discussed a possible escape. Since the southern part of France was not occupied, it may have played a role in their considerations. Cf. Ilse Hess, *England-Nürnberg-Spandau: Ein Schicksal in Briefen* (Leoni am Starnberger See, 1957), p. 9.
210. Later, Hess commented on this possibility: "I might as well have taken myself into protective custody." Ilse Hess, p. 42.
211. See above, p. 458. See also above, 1934, note 92.
212. A report on the flight by Hess himself is published in Ilse Hess, pp. 31 ff. His route led him from Augsburg first to Mainz, then to Koblenz, from there to Cologne, on to Amsterdam, and finally brought him to the Channel.
213. British fighter plane.
214. The duke of Hamilton was a regular officer serving with the Royal Air Force. He had attended the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and had become acquainted with Hess on the occasion.
215. Hess landed in the vicinity of Eaglesham at a distance of approximately twelve miles from Dungavel.
216. The surname Horn was the maiden name of Hess's wife.

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217. For the original report by the duke of Hamilton on the talk with Hess on May 11, 1941. Cf. IMT, 117-M, 118-M, 119-M. For Lord Simon's report on his interview with Hess on June 9, 1941, see Ilse Hess, pp. 9 f.
218. The English were naturally cautious in their approach to Hess, wary that his escape was staged by German intelligence to gain information on Britain's air defense. In Germany, however, a deserter from the enemy's armed forces could normally expect a warm welcome, all the more so if the person was a prominent, well-known public figure. One example of this was the arrival of the son of the British secretary of state for India and Burma, Leopold Stennet Amery, who crossed the Channel allegedly wishing to fight for Germany against Britain (!). German officials totally believed this claim, enthusiastically welcomed Amery as a hero and immediately appointed him to a post in the propaganda ministry's broadcasting department.
219. In 1946, the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg found Hess guilty of the charges brought against him (counts 1 and 6): conspiracy to lead a war of aggression and crimes against peace. The court sentenced Hess to life imprisonment, a sentence which was relatively severe in comparison with the gravity of the crimes of other defendants and the sentencing in their cases. But had his third attempt to flee Germany not succeeded, Hess would undoubtedly have received a death sentence. He would have shared the fate of several of his codefendants, who were executed after the trial. More fortunate than they, however, Hess was transferred to the maximum-security military prison at Spandau, where he committed a somewhat mysterious suicide in 1987.
220. Cf. James Leasor, "Das Geheimnis des Rudolf-Hess-Fluges," in *Revue*, No. 41 (1961), p. 67.
221. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 350.
222. Report by Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," in *Revue*, Series XII (1955-56). A number of versions exist of the sequence of events at the Berghof that day, in particular of the presentation of Hess's letter to Hitler. For a recapitulation by Hitler himself, cf. Halder's diary entry, see below, 1941, note 240. For reports by other prominent persons, see the deputy Reich press chief Lorenz's summation in Picker, p. 137. For Pintsch's recollections, see *Revue*, Nos. 39 and 40 (1961). These sources were not quoted in this context, however, since they contain numerous discrepancies concerning the sequence of events and other obviously mistaken notions. To the author, Linge's description of the events appears to be the most accurate and reliable one.
223. During a speech before Kreisleiters at the Ordensburg Vogelsang on April 29, 1937, Hitler stated: "Life teaches you: anything you can talk about, you should not write down. I always get anxious when one of these gentlemen comes up to me and says: 'I have a complaint to make, I have received this letter.' When two men meet face to face something of the sort would never happen, but how easily is it done in writing! He paces the room, dictates to his stenographer, and then he

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- flares up! It's great for appearance' sake, too!" Record of the speech on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 2a/EW 67 207-67 245).
224. "In the name of the Luftwaffe, " Udet reassured Hitler that it was absolutely impossible for Hess to reach his destination. He had only minimal experience flying such a complicated plane, he had no assistance in navigation, and he was certain to crash into the sea sooner or later, having lost his orientation completely. Even if by some miracle he should make it to the British Isles and into British airspace, he would no doubt be shot down by Great Britain's antiaircraft defense. Cf. Ilse Hess, p. 130.
225. Cf. Schmidt, p. 549.
226. The script of the broadcast was subsequently published and the *Völkischer Beobachter* carried the sensationalist headline "Rudolf Hess—victim of accident." Report in VB, No. 133, May 13, 1941.
227. Cf. also Hitler's statements in the case of Strasser and after the Röhm Purge. For Strasser, see above, December 7 ff., 1932. For Röhm, see above, speech of July 13, 1934.
228. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 358.
229. See above, Vol. I, Introduction, note 101.
230. Albrecht Haushofer was initially imprisoned, then released after some time. After the events of July 20, 1944, he was again arrested. Shortly before Russian troops took Berlin in late April 1945, Haushofer was shot in prison.
231. Aside from the claim that her husband had left to see Pétain, the arguments of Hess's wife were clever. In any event, she was not arrested, although she was placed under supervision and suffered financially. With the assistance of the Swiss ambassador in London, she was able to exchange letters with her husband from January 1942 on. On the topic of Pétain, see above, note 209.
232. Report on von Ribbentrop's stay in Rome in Schmidt, p. 549. Cf. also Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 351
233. Göring had coined this phrase because of the monotony of von Ribbentrop's reiteration of Hitler's arguments. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 351.
234. Ibid.
235. Following the Röhm Purge, Hitler had proceeded in a similar manner. He himself contrived and published the most varied eyewitness accounts, proclamations, and official statements, including a NSDAP press release in order to rationalize the slayings. See above, June 30 ff., 1934.
236. In VB, No. 134, May 14, 1941.
237. The assumption, however, was that Hess had entered into relations with the English at a prior date and that he had done so without Hitler's knowledge. This is highly unlikely. As early as 1934, Hitler had explicitly forbidden his men to establish contacts with foreign statesmen, unless he was informed about it. Regardless of the contents of the talks with foreign diplomats, he threatened to shoot any man

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- observed acting in defiance of this rule, even if this man merely discussed collecting old coins or a similarly innocent subject with the foreign guest. See above, p. 472, and 1934, note 134.
238. Hitler had soon regretted having named Hess his deputy in a decree dated April 27, 1933. See above, p. 309. In an aside to his photographer, Hoffmann, Hitler summed up his feelings on the topic: "There can be no deputy for a man like me." See above, 1933, note 179.
239. NSK text, May 12, 1941. Hitler rationalized Bormann's appointment in a conversation with his photographer: "Don't misunderstand me, Hoffmann. I need Bormann to win this war. All others have failed to carry out my orders to their full extent—Bormann never!" See "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 9, in *Münchener Illustrierte*.
240. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of May 15, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. In several crucial points, Hitler's explanation did not correspond to the truth. For one, he had not received a "package with documents" and then "put it aside" on May 10, 1941. Hess's letter reached Hitler only the next day (May 11) and Hitler had immediately opened and read it. Secondly, Göring and Udet had not maintained that Hess's "arrival at destination [was] likely." Instead, they had attempted to allay Hitler's fears by insisting that it was absolutely impossible for Hess to get as far as Scotland. Only upon these reassurances, Hitler had risked disseminating the information that Hess had become the "victim of an accident" in which he had sustained fatal injuries.
241. In VB, No. 134, May 14, 1941.
242. Returning to his estate from a stay in Rome, Schmidt was greeted by his gardener with the following words: "Were you aware that we are being governed by madmen?" Cf. Schmidt, pp. 594 f. Göring scolded Professor Messerschmidt for allowing Hess to fly a Me 110: "Did you not realize that the man was obviously insane?" Messerschmidt retorted: "How was I to know that a madman could occupy such a high position in the Third Reich? It was you who should have persuaded him to step down, Herr Reichsmarschall!" Cf. Dena/Reuters interview, May 11, 1947, reproduced in Ilse Hess, pp. 14 f. Humorists in the streets had their own interpretation of the incident: "For years they have been singing: 'For we are going to England' [chorus of the popular tune *Denn wir fahren gegen Engelland*]. Now one of them has finally gone, and they declare him a madman!" See above, 1940, note 154. Others jokingly folded their thumbs inward when extending their arms in the "German salute." If someone asked them the significance of this odd behavior, the reply was invariably: "One's gone already!"
243. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 477.
244. Cf. Picker, pp. 142 f.
245. DNB note, May 13, 1941.
246. This measure was made public on May 19, 1941. Hitler's gesture was connected to the anticipated participation of a small French contingent,

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- dressed in German uniforms, in the campaign against Russia. See below, August 29, 1941.
247. DNB report, May 14, 1941.
 248. In VB, No. 136, May 16, 1941.
 249. DGFP, D, XII, no. 536, pp. 845 ff.
 250. This dilemma became apparent in the course of the British airborne operation at the city of Arnhem in 1944. See below, September 17, 1944.
 251. A casual conversation on May 8, 1942, revealed that Hitler himself realized, although only in retrospect, how senseless the entire undertaking (Crete) had been in the context of his plan for territorial conquest in the east. At a dinner that day, Hitler reflected that a German military base on the island would necessitate forming a special German fleet to patrol the Mediterranean. In all likelihood, this would provoke constant tensions with Turkey, not to mention Britain, and he thus wisely refrained from doing so. All the needless bloodshed and senseless suffering of German soldiers in taking Crete led to no more than the following sarcastic remark by Hitler: “The only means of benefiting from this foray would have been to establish a *Kraft durch Freude* resort on the island.” Cf. Picker, p. 79.
 252. Report in VB, No. 143, May 23, 1941.
 253. DGFP, D, XII, no. 543, pp. 862 ff.
 254. See above, February 1, 1939.
 255. For the revolt in Iraq and its suppression, see Herbert von Moos, *Das grosse Weltgeschehen*, Vol. II (Bern, 1941), pp 193–200. According to von Moos, German and Italian planes had arrived in Iraq as early as May 15.
 256. While Turkish and German forces succeeded in reaching the Suez Canal, British troops repelled their attack in late 1916.
 257. Henri Dentz, born 1872 in Reims; died December 13, 1945, while imprisoned at Fresnes in the vicinity of Paris; French high commissioner in the years 1940 and 1941. The French resistance’s activities in Syria were apparently carried out more for appearance’s sake and in order to prevent Hitler from claiming the unoccupied remainder of France. See below, December 10, 1940, directive on Operation Attila.
 258. The ship had been launched on April 1, 1939, and it began service in 1941. Officially it had a tonnage of 35, 000 tons, but in reality it displaced over 41, 700 tons.
 259. See above, January 27, 1940.
 260. The British battle cruiser *Hood* had a tonnage of 42, 100 tons and, when it was launched in 1918, it was the world’s biggest ship. It carried eight guns of 38.1 cm (15 inch) caliber, twelve of 14 cm, and eight of 10.2 cm.
 261. Hitler was greatly enamored of the stringent honor code of the naval officers. On April 29, 1945, he even appointed a member of the navy, Grand Admiral Dönitz, as his successor. Hitler hoped that Dönitz, like Admiral Lütjens aboard the *Bismarck*, would have all of Germany shot to pieces rather than capitulate. It is interesting to note that Lütjens was no Nazi fanatic, as he has sometimes been portrayed, as in the movie *Sink the Bismarck*, and in fact had a Jewish grandmother.

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262. The battle of the Skagerrak took place on May 31, 1916. For further “coincidental” parallels with World War I, see also below.
263. See below, 1942, note 77.
264. Report in VB, No. 149, May 29, 1941.
265. RGL, 1941, I, p. 296.
266. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
267. VB, No. 151, May 31, 1941.
268. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 359 f.
269. VB, No. 154, June 3, 1941. Report on the talk in Schmidt, p. 550. See also Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 360 f.
270. Talks between Hitler and Antonescu took place on June 12, 1941, in Munich. See below, June 12, 1941.
271. William II, born January 27, 1859 in Potsdam; German emperor and king of Prussia from 1888 until 1918; grandson of Queen Victoria of Great Britain through her eldest child, the Empress Victoria.
272. Report in VB, No. 156, June 5, 1941.
273. Report in VB, No. 161, June 10, 1941.
274. DNB text, June 6, 1941.
275. Report in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1941.
276. VB, No. 164, June 13, 1941. Report on the conversation in Schmidt, p. 550.
277. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 366 f.
278. DNB note, June 17, 1941.
279. Report in VB, No. 169, June 18, 1941.
280. Verbatim content in RGL, 1941, II, p. 261.
281. DNB text, June 19, 1941.
282. DNB note, June 20, 1941.
283. Report in VB, No. 171, June 23, 1941.
284. VB, No. 174, June 23, 1941.
285. See above, 1941, Major Events in Summary.
286. See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
287. Speaking before the General Council of the German Economy in the autumn of 1933, Hitler gave his own interpretation of Bolshevism: “This code of regression to the primitive state leads to a cowardly, anxious acquiescence and thus presents a tremendous threat to mankind.” See above, p. 359.
288. On this subject, Hitler had stated the following:
“Hence we have determined to enter into a pact which will preclude the use of force between us for all time.” See above, speech of September 1, 1939.
“Once before already, these two peoples engaged each other in war and near-fatal bloodletting. Neither of us profited from this, and now we have resolved not to do the gentlemen in London and Paris this favor a second time.” See above, speech of November 8, 1939.
“Any attempt on the part of the British and French plutocracies to raise renewed controversy between us will inevitably fail as we realize their true intentions.” See above, January 30, 1940.

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- “The hope of sparking a great war between Russia and Germany as in 1914, this hope has pitifully failed its authors. Once I set out on a path, I follow this path to the end. The hope that this might change tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, this hope is in vain!” See above, speech of February 24, 1940.
289. DNB text, June 22, 1941.
 290. See above, 1939, note 1014.
 291. Reference to the secret additional protocol. See above, August 23, 1939.
 292. Hitler failed to reveal that, in the autumn of 1939, Lithuania had already been bartered for lands stretching from eastern Poland to the Bug. See above, September 27 and 28, 1939. Even after the annexation of Lithuania, as late as July 19, 1940, Hitler had declared: “Germany has not stepped outside its sphere of interest, and neither has Russia.” See above, July 19, 1940.
 293. This rationale was a figment of Hitler’s imagination. Ever since September 3, 1939, Britain had resolved to destroy Hitler under any circumstances and not to accept any of his “proposals.”
 294. Apparently, Hitler was so bold as to insist that it had been his choice not to “radically” destroy England in September 1940. He actually claimed that his sense of responsibility and his desire to save Europe from the claws of Bolshevism had inspired this decision on his part.
 295. Hitler had not issued this guarantee “with a heavy heart,” but had done so with an eye to the occupation of Romania’s oil fields for which he needed a fairly plausible pretext.
 296. Cf. talks between Hitler and Molotov. See above, November 12 and 13, 1940. Of course, Hitler failed to point out here that, on this occasion, he himself had proposed that Molotov take part in the redistribution of the spoils from the “dissolution of the British Empire.”
 297. Apparently, Hitler once more enjoyed portraying himself as the protector and savior of European civilization and its culture.
 298. Reference to an insignificant attempted putsch against Antonescu by members of the “Iron Guard” (later called the “Romanian Legion”). Antonescu himself had come from the ranks of the Romanian army.
 299. Hitler did not reveal, however, the contents of these documents nor their whereabouts.
 300. Actually, Hitler had advised Matsuoka to promote tensions, not detente, with Russia. See above, March 21, 1941.
 301. No documentary evidence of such a “border incident” exists. It is highly probable that Hitler invented it for rhetorical purposes.
 302. Reference to General Dietl.
 303. DNB text, June 22, 1941.
 304. Cf. Aretz, pp. 383 f.
 305. The 1807 Peace of Tilsit concluded the first Napoleonic war between Russia and France, a war Napoleon called the “Polish War.”
 306. See below, Index, Napoleon.
 307. The Hungarians had also told Hitler that the offensive could start a week earlier, on June 15. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 352.

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308. Hitler had a penchant for launching his campaigns on either a Saturday or a Sunday. See above, p.458, and 1934, note 92.
309. See above, pp. 1907 f. and 2092 ff.
310. When Napoleon addressed Tsar Alexander in a letter dated July 1, 1812, in an effort to rationalize his behavior, he obviously felt that he was in the wrong although this did not prevent him from contriving a thinly disguised excuse: "Before crossing the Neman (Niemen) River, I would assuredly have sent Your Majesty word of my undertaking through my adjutant, as I always do prior to engaging in battle, had not those whom you commissioned to fight on your behalf professed such eagerness for battle, despite their past experiences. Moreover, they avowed such displeasure at the notion of sending the count of Narbonne as envoy to you that, in light of the influence they exercise, I had to fear his nonaccreditation and therefore I refrained from so doing." Aretz, pp. 387 f. For other parallels, see also above, pp. 1907 f., 2092 ff., and below, Index, "Napoleon."
311. Russian border patrols recorded nearly eighty violations of their airspace by German aircraft in the months of March and April 1941. A German reconnaissance plane had to make an emergency landing on April 15, 1941, at Rovno. It carried film equipment. Cf. note of protest by the Soviet government of April 22, 1941, in Epstein and Carroll, p. 367.
312. Report in Schmidt, p. 550.
313. According to Molotov, this occurred at 5:30 a.m. Moscow time, that is, 4:30 Central European Time.
314. See above, p. 958.
315. Description of the events in Moscow on June 21 and 22, 1941, in Epstein and Carroll, pp. 389 ff.
316. DGFP, D, XII, no. 662, pp. 1063 ff.
317. Upon his return, Schulenburg joined the resistance movement in Germany. He was apprehended in connection with the events of July 20, 1944. The Gestapo killed him on November 10, 1944.
318. In von Moos, Vol. II, p. 301.
319. DGFP, D, XII, no. 660, pp. 1066 ff.
320. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 369
321. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
322. In the course of the preceding months, Hitler had ridiculed the British for asking third powers for military support, a quest he had labeled "going begging door to door worldwide." Now he was forced to accept assistance from states he had previously scorned: the Finns, the Romanians, the Slovaks, the despised Hungarians, the Italians, the Spanish, the Danes, the Dutch, the Norwegians, and even the French.
323. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 372 f.
324. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 705. "In Europe there will be only two allies for Germany in the foreseeable future: England and Italy." See above, pp. 51 and 53.

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325. Hitler's knowledge of history was obviously not thorough enough for him to realize that comparing his ventures to the crusades of the Middle Ages was not necessarily advantageous to his cause. Most of these offensives in the east had miserably failed.
326. Hitler's rhetoric had made a great impression on the aging von Papen. On June 22, 1941, he called on the Turkish foreign minister and eagerly attempted to convince Saracoglu that the time had come to approach the British ambassador in Ankara. Von Papen sincerely believed that all disputes to this date could still be settled and that it was high time the world stood together to oppose Bolshevism. Cf. von Papen, p. 544.
327. Nearly two years earlier, Hitler had triumphantly proclaimed: "For the first time in sixty-seven years, it must be made clear that we do not have a two-front war to wage. That which has been desired since 1870, and considered as impossible of achievement, has come to pass. For the first time in history, we have to fight on only one front." See above, p. 1886, speech of November 23, 1939; see also 1939, note 1246.
328. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6428–6431.
329. Hitler had chosen not to inform the German ambassador of his intentions to attack Russia. Graf von der Schulenburg awoke to a great surprise on the morning of June 22, 1941.
330. Cf. Hitler's plans for a campaign through Afghanistan into India. See above, February 17, 1941.
331. It appears as though Churchill was familiar with Hitler's phrase: "When Barbarossa takes off, the world will hold its breath and keep still." See above, February 3, 1941. See also above, note 11.
332. Reference to the First World War.
333. On the British strategy in this context, see above, pp. 1907 f.
334. Within the embassy, von Ribbentrop and others spoke against Hitler's theory and Mrs. Mollier, the wife of the German press attaché, said that Hitler was a *Dummkopf* (blockhead). Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 379.
335. DNB text, June 22, 1941.
336. Report in VB, No. 175, June 22, 1941.
337. VB, No. 177, June 26, 1941
338. Hungary declared war officially on June 27, 1941.
339. In 1812, Britain had demanded that the Russian fleet be handed over as a guarantee that Russia would not enter into a separate peace with Napoleon once more, as it had done in the Peace of Tilsit in 1807. As a result, eighteen ships of the line and twelve frigates were moved from Kronstadt and Arkhangelsk to British harbors in 1812. Cf. Heinrich Beitzke, *Geschichte des russischen Krieges im Jahre 1812* (Leipzig, 1856–1862), p. 125.
Only after the British demand had been satisfied, did the British grant Russia three million pounds sterling in subsidies. Russia and Britain entered into a defensive alliance. There is no official record of similar British security demands in 1941. Nevertheless, Article II of the military pact entered into by Russia and Britain on July 12, 1941, stipulates:

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- “Each of the parties agrees neither to enter into direct negotiations with Germany, nor to conclude cease-fire agreements nor peace treaties without the explicit consent of the other party to this agreement.” Cf. von Moos, Vol. II, pp. 302 f.
- On August 25, 1941, Britain and Russia proceeded to occupy Iran in an effort to establish a land link between their spheres of influence.
340. Report in VB, No. 178, June 27, 1941.
341. See above, June 22, 1941.
342. On this occasion, the notorious *Russia Fanfare* was played for the first time, a tune that was actually part of a Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody*. In the course of the following years, this melody preceded radio broadcasts on actual or contrived military successes. Usually these special reports were aired on a Sunday in an effort to boost morale. The related *England Fanfare* was always played immediately before public announcements of achievements connected with the war at sea. The constant repetition of the same tune slowly but surely got on the nerves of even the most attentive listener. Soon no one took them seriously, and a popular alliteration changed the annoying *Sondermeldungen* (“special reports”) to *Sonntagsmeldungen* (“Sunday reports”).
343. Report in VB, No. 182, July 1, 1941. Illustrated report in VB, No. 184, July 3, 1941.
344. “Assessment of development of Barbarossa by Ob. d. H. [commander in chief of the army]: expected severe frontier battles, duration up to four weeks. In the further course, only weak resistance to be expected.” See above, April 30, 1941.
345. For a summary of Hitler’s statements on this topic during the months February to April, see above, February 28, 1941.
346. For Hitler’s instructions on preparing for a military campaign against India, see above, February 17, 1941.
347. Conferring with General Paulus in 1942, Hitler predicted: “If I do not get the oil fields of Maikop and Grozny, then I will have to liquidate this war.” (Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. VII, p. 290.) Although Hitler failed to secure the territory, he could no longer move himself to “liquidate this war.”
348. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
349. See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
350. Cf. Beitzke, pp. 257, 341, and 372.
351. The Russians’ extraordinary gift for the study of ballistics is also the underlying cause for the Soviet Union’s remarkable and internationally acclaimed success in launching rockets into space as evidenced in the 1957 Sputnik project and the various Lunik experiments.
352. The Führer headquarters Wolfsschanze (Wolf’s Lair) was situated in a dense pine forest at a distance of fourteen kilometers from Rastenburg. The Garlitz train station provided convenient access to the area. Numerous guard-towers and barracks, a few of them sturdy stone structures, constituted the headquarters. A cluster of eight fortified bunkers built of concrete, and with walls several meters thick, formed a

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focal point in the camp's center. Most of the offices located inside profited from daylight while the bedrooms usually were dreary and narrow with moist walls. Hitler's spacious office doubled as a conference room. The dining room had light-colored wood paneling, and in its center stood a table seating the twenty members of Hitler's entourage, who served as a captive audience for what became known as "Hitler's table talk." Occasionally this room doubled as a mess for the officers. For a detailed description of the sinister atmosphere at the site, see Picker, pp. 33 ff. See also Schmidt, pp 555 ff.

Before the Nuremberg court, Colonel General Jodl referred to the Wolfsschanze headquarters as "a cross between a cloister and a concentration camp." (Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XV, p. 283).

The Wolfsschanze and Hitler's conditions of life there reminded Goebbels too of a concentration camp. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 130. In the early days of his political activities, Hitler had chosen the code name "Wolf," a boyhood nickname derived from his Christian name Adolf signifying "big wolf," a symbol of great strength. The name *Wolfsschanze* means "wolf's lair"; the name of the Führer headquarters *Werwolf*—in Vinnitsa (the Ukraine)—means "werewolf."

353. See above, May 9, 1940.
354. In the period from July 17, 1941, to March 11, 1942, Ministerial Counselor Heim summarized these discussions in the form of a protocol written in direct speech. The civil servant Henry Picker recorded Hitler's statements in indirect speech from March 21 until August 2, 1942; cf. Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942* (Bonn, 1951); rev. ed. by Percy Ernst Schramm (Stuttgart, 1953).
355. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 85.
356. Cf. Picker, p. 80.
357. On July 22, 1942, Hitler stated in a dinner conversation: "The driving force today is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as the Communist Party of Germany was in the times of struggle; the capitalist states are playing only a peripheral role as the burgher parties did back then." Cf. Picker, pp. 187 and 300.
358. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 142, and 165.
359. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
360. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
361. *Ibid.*, pp 123–126.
362. *Ibid.*, pp. 118 f.
363. *Ibid.*, pp. 397 f.
364. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
365. For example, Picker recorded how Hitler recalled von Hindenburg's attitude during the military reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936. However, von Hindenburg was already dead by then. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
366. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
367. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
368. *Ibid.*, pp. 182 and 147.

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369. Report on the scene by Heinz Linge in “Kronzeuge Linge,” in *Revue*, Series IV (1955–1956).
370. DNB report, July 12, 1941.
371. In a proclamation in June 1940, Hitler had pronounced the battle in the Artois region (that is, the Second Battle of Sedan) in Belgium to be “the greatest battle of all time.” See above, June 5, 1940.
372. Reproduction of Directive No. 32b in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 136 ff.
373. VB, No. 198, July 17, 1941.
374. Report in VB, No. 199, July 18, 1941.
375. Report in VB, No. 200, July 19, 1941.
376. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 128, pp. 181 ff.
377. Report in VB, No. 203, July 22, 1941.
378. Report in VB, No. 208, July 27, 1941.
379. VB, No. 215, August 3, 1941.
380. Report in VB, No. 211, July 30, 1941.
381. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 164, pp. 235 ff.
382. Illustrated report in VB, No. 213, August 1, 1941.
383. Religion played a role of great importance in Russia’s defense against the onslaught of both Napoleon’s and Hitler’s troops. In 1812, military chaplains had celebrated the Orthodox liturgy prior to military engagements and had greatly boosted morale among the fighting men (cf. Beitzke, pp. 123 and 364). In the years 1942 to 1945, military chaplains served in the Red Army also, providing bibles and crosses to the troops, and on occasion celebrating the liturgy prior to battle. Cf. series of articles on the “Suvorov Pause” in *Neue Zeitung, Amerikanische Zeitung für Deutschland* (1946). In 1812, the Moscow Metropolitan Platoon proclaimed: “If this odious Goliath approaches, then the Russian David’s sling—faith—shall shatter his overbearing, blood-drenched visage.”
The Metropolitan Anany used a similar wording in his sermons a hundred thirty years later.
384. DNB text and illustrated reports, August 6, 1941.
385. DNB text, August 6, 1941.
386. Cf. Schmidt, p. 557.
387. DNB note, August 10, 1941.
388. Report in VB, No. 225, August 13, 1941.
389. Supplement to Directive No. 34, *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 148 ff.
390. The text of the Atlantic Charter read:
The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.
First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;
Second, they desire to seek no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned;

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Third, they respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic adjustment and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving people the crushing burden of armaments.

391. Cf. Führer Directive of August 21, 1941, in Halder's diary, entry of August 22, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
392. Report on this meeting in Schmidt, pp 557 ff. Also published in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1941. Cf. further Baur, pp. 207 ff.
393. Shah Reza Khan Pahlavi, born 1877; died 1944 on Saint Helena; as an army officer, he seized power in 1921 and was proclaimed Shah of Iran in 1925; during World War II, Britain and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were nervous about his German sympathies and occupied Iran from 1941 to 1946; this compelled him to abdicate the throne on September 15, 1941, in favor of his son. Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (born 1919 in Teheran, died 1980 in Cairo); he took power in 1956 with United States support and was deposed in the Islamic revolution of 1979.
394. Cf. DNB wording, August 30, 1941.
395. DNB text, August 29, 1941.
396. Ciano was afflicted with a throat disorder during the months of July to September 1941.
397. VB, No. 243, August 31, 1941.
398. Report in VB, No. 245, September 1, 1941.
399. Report in VB, No. 247, September 2, 1941.

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400. Report in VB, No. 247, September 4, 1941.
401. Ibid.
402. Report in VB, No. 248, September 5, 1941.
403. Report in VB, No. 250, September 7, 1941.
404. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 238, pp. 456 ff.
405. DNB text, September 11, 1941.
406. DNB note, September 11, 1941. Count Mayalde had served as Franco's chief of police in 1940.
407. VB, No. 256, September 13, 1941.
408. Ibid.
409. Report in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1941.
410. See above, speech of June 22, 1941.
411. Hitler repeatedly used this expression. See below, speech of October 3, 1941. See also below, speech of November 8, 1941.
412. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 349, pp. 549 ff. Cf. also article "Die Kämpfe im hohen Norden" in von Moos, Vol. II, pp 350 ff.
413. Report in VB, No. 267, September 24, 1941. Colonel General Ritter von Schobert, born 1881 in Würzburg; commander in chief of the forces stationed in southern Bavaria from 1938 to 1939. A headquarters' report, dated September 14, 1941, claimed he had been killed in action, "fighting on the eastern front." However, the war-correspondent A. Hass rendered a different account of his death (cf. DNB text, September 23, 1941). According to the information he obtained, Ritter von Schobert was the victim of a "plane crash" in which his pilot, Corporal Suwalek, also died. Propaganda claimed that Soviet parachutists had murdered Ritter von Schobert along with several members of his staff. Cf. von Moos, Vol. II, p. 315.
414. VB, No. 267, September 24, 1941. In a proclamation, dated June 5, 1940, and addressed "to the German Volk," Hitler had called the battle in Artois "the greatest battle of all time." In a subsequent proclamation issued to the soldiers serving along the western front, he referred to the clash of forces there as "the greatest battle in world history." See above, proclamations of June 5, 1940.
A July 10, 1941, report by headquarters termed the battle surrounding Belostok (Bialystok) and Minsk "the greatest battle in world history as far as material investment and scope are concerned." See above, July 10, 1941.
415. See above, Directive No. 35 of September 6, 1941.
416. Report on this conference in Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Zurich, 1946), pp. 60 f.
417. See below, proclamation of October 2, 1941.
418. In 1938, it had been Hitler's original intention to launch the offensive against Czechoslovakia on October 2, that is, on the same date. See above, October 3, 1938.
Remarkably, Napoleon's generals had also opposed opening a campaign against Moscow just before the onset of winter. Quietly, they had hoped that the conquest of Smolensk would appease the emperor

sufficiently and that he would become reasonable, postpone further operations until the spring, and allow the troops to set up winter quarters. Frustrated by the immense losses suffered in a battle along the Stragan creek east of Smolensk, Napoleon became ever more insistent upon pushing onward to Moscow. General Rapp allowed himself to point out that troop movements on this scale represented a most dangerous undertaking in the eyes of the army's leadership. Napoleon retorted: "The wine has been poured out; now it must be drunk!" Cf. Beitzke, p. 189.

Over a century later, Hitler would follow Napoleon's path to disaster. Like the German dictator, Napoleon believed his forces at Smolensk strong enough to take Moscow. Both thought that the conquest of Moscow would be easy and that it would allow them to maintain large standing armies in the north along the Dvina River, and in the south around Volhynia. Hitler's speech at the temporary German headquarters at Borisov allowed for many historical parallels to his predecessor. Borisov had played a role in Napoleon's ignominious retreat when a few kilometers to the north, around Studienka, Napoleon's campaign had ended in disaster. With a timely escape across the Brezina River, Napoleon saved his own life and those of his entourage while leaving behind large contingents of his army to face chaos, confusion, and death. For the other parallels between Hitler and Napoleon, see also below, Appendix, Indices "Napoleon" and "coincidences."

419. VB, No. 271, September 28, 1941.
420. RGBl, 1941, I, p. 591.
421. Born 1883 in Würzburg, Gottfried Feder had published a "Manifest zur Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft" (Manifesto on Liberation from Interest-Payment Slavery). Later, he had edited the NSDAP party program. While he had been a close friend of Gregor Strasser, he always remained loyal to Hitler. In return, he had been assigned a post as state secretary in the Reich ministry of economics in 1933, where he maintained a low profile. He was given a professional chair in 1936 and from this time on taught at the Technical University in Charlottenburg.
422. On the topic of Hitler's penchant for pin-on medals, see above, 1939, notes 411 f. This German Cross consisted of an eight-spike cross of a dark gray color with silver lining. It had a diameter of 65 mm and bore either a silver or gold laurel wreath, depending on the award class. A black swastika with a silver frame was set against a light gray background. The medal was to be worn on the right side of the chest. Ordinance dated September 28, 1941, in RGBl, 1941, I, p. 593. The establishment of this award was connected with the imminent "final offensive" against Moscow. At the same time, Hitler founded the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds, while he prohibited the simultaneous award of the War Service Medal of both classes, that is, with or without swords. RGBl, 1941, I, p. 613.

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423. Despite the repeated claims of headquarters that Leningrad was surrounded, the German army never entirely succeeded in isolating the city or cutting its rail connections to the east for any significant length of time. In the winter months of late 1941 and early 1942, Red Army engineers constructed a railroad track across the frozen Ladoga Lake. Moreover, the vastly superior Soviet fleet prevented German reinforcements from landing at the Kronstadt harbor. Cf. chapter entitled “Die Kämpfe im Leningrader Sektor” in von Moos, Vol. II, pp. 330 ff.
- The wife of a physician in Leningrad, Vera Inber gave a compelling eyewitness account of the suffering and heroism of the civil population in the besieged city prior to its liberation in January 1944. Cf. Vera Inber, *Fast drei Jahre*, (Berlin, 1947).
424. War diary of the fleet.
425. See below, speech of November 8, 1941.
426. In September 1942, Hitler stated publicly:
“ . . . when we rush on Stalingrad and will take it—you can be assured of that!—then this amounts to nothing in their [the Englishmen’s] eyes.”
See below, September 30, 1942.
- As significant advances of the military had still not materialized over two months later, Hitler publicly contradicted himself: “There are only a few small pockets left. Now the others say: “then, why do they not fight more quickly?”—Because I do not want a second Verdun. I prefer to do it with very small assault parties. Time makes no difference here.”
See below, November 8, 1942.
427. VB, No. 283, October 10, 1941. Napoleon issued a strikingly similar proclamation to be read to his soldiers on September 1, 1812, on the eve of what was to become one of the bloodiest combats in history, the Battle at Borodino. The French emperor realized the critical nature of this battle in his quest to free a passage to Moscow: “Soldiers! Before you lies the battle for which you have yearned so long! Victory depends on you alone. You yourselves need this victory. It will grant you abundance, good winter quarters, and a speedy return to the Fatherland. Act as you did at Austerlitz, Friedland, Vitebsk, and Smolensk, and posterity shall remember this day. They will speak of you as the one who took part in the great battle before the walls of Moscow!” (Beitzke, p. 228.) Incidentally, the cadence of the Nazi *Heil Hitler!* greeting bears striking resemblance to the Napoleonic cry *Vive l’Empereur!*
428. Up to now, Hitler had claimed that the Wehrmacht was the “most gigantic instrument of war of all time.” See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
429. Here Hitler for once made allowances that, up to this point, not everything had gone according to plan and preparations had been insufficient in some instances. By October 3, his vanity had recovered and he proclaimed: “On the morning of June 22, this greatest struggle in the history of the world began. Since then, three and a half months

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- have passed. Today, I can state: everything since has gone according to plan." See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
430. Posters with a reprint of the proclamation were put up along the entire eastern front. A few weeks later, special commandos had to take down the posters, since it had become all too evident how mistaken Hitler's prophesies had been.
 431. VB, No. 278, October 5, 1941. On the topic of *Nullen* ("zeroes"), see above, preface, note 19. See also below, January 30 and September 30, 1942.
 432. Operations had begun thirty-six hours before and not forty-eight hours, as Hitler claimed.
 433. "Sympathy" on the part of the Hungarians was a strange affair; see above, January 16, 1939. Also, as far as the Scandinavian or "Nordic" countries were concerned, Hitler had repeatedly complained about their lack of friendly feelings for the Third Reich. See above, October 16, 1939.
 434. Hitler had not been serious about these so-called proposals. They served as a pretext. See above, August 30, 1939.
 435. Usually Hitler was not this modest and he generally claimed that the decision in question would determine the future for "the next one thousand years." See above, proclamation of May 10, 1940. See also below, speech of November 8, 1941.
 436. Hitler had not in the least remained silent "as the small Finnish people were strangled." On the contrary, he had spoken out on the occasion, displaying great appreciation of their plight which served them well, in his eyes, after Finland had maintained its distance from National Socialist Germany in the past years. See above, September 16 and December 8, 1939. See also above, March 4, 1940.
 437. On two occasions in 1939, Hitler himself had referred to the Baltic states as situated within the Soviet Union's sphere of interest. See above, August 24 and September 28, 1939.
 438. This entire passage was omitted in the pamphlet version of the speech published by Eher-Verlag, although the speech in its entirety had already been published in the German press earlier (on October 4, 1941). By the time the Eher pamphlet was published, these premature and obviously false prophesies had become an embarrassment to the supposedly omniscient Führer.
 439. This claim was obviously dishonest, as any man involved in the military and political preparations for Barbarossa could ascertain for himself.
 440. Minutes earlier, Hitler had proclaimed: "There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, to the effect that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously." Now, Hitler admitted by himself that he had "no idea," despite his later claim (see below, speech of October 3, 1941) that "everything has gone according to plan."
 441. Apparently this was a reference to two reports of headquarters, dated September 19 and 22, 1941, respectively. The earlier one had claimed

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- the loss of seven hundred twenty-five Luftwaffe planes in the campaign against Russia. This figure did not correspond to the number of casualties published simultaneously by the air force, so that Hitler was forced to publish a special “explanation” of this fact three days later.
442. The remainder of this sentence was unintelligible.
443. This addition was apparently meant to recompense Germany’s farmers for missing out on the usual Thanksgiving celebrations at this time of year because of the war. Strangely enough, Hitler forgot to include “the best soldiers” in his list of Germany’s most deserving citizens.
444. DNB note, October 4, 1941.
445. VB, No. 281, October 8, 1941.
446. Report in VB, No. 285, October 12, 1941.
447. DNB note, October 9, 1941. Marshal Semën K. Timoshenko; born in 1895 as the son of a farmer in Fumanovka in Bessarabia [in Russia]; people’s commissar for defense in 1940; marshal and commander in chief of the Army Group, Center (Moscow) in 1941; he was transferred to the southern sector (the Ukraine and Sea of Azov) in October 1941; Timoshenko had originally distinguished himself in battles at Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad) in 1918, and in Poland in 1920.
448. The double battle for Belostok (Bialystok) and Minsk constituted, according to Hitler, “the greatest battle of matériel and encirclement (*Material- und Umfassungsschlacht*) in world history.” See above, July 10, 1941. The fighting at Kiev he called “the greatest battle of annihilation (*Vernichtungsschlacht*) of all time.” See above, September 24, 1941.
449. See above, proclamation of June 24, 1940.
450. Exchange of telegrams in VB, No. 286, October 13, 1941.
451. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 395, pp. 634 ff.
452. In VB, No. 287, October 14, 1941.
453. In September of 1812, Kazan was selected as a refuge from the threatened city of Moscow. Government archives, the University, and foreigners were evacuated to Kazan.
454. DNB text, October 21, 1941.
455. In VB, No. 298, October 25, 1941.
456. DNB text, October 25, 1941.
457. Cf. Ciano’s letter dated October 26, 1941, in *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, pp. 455 ff.
458. DNB texts, October 26, 1941.
459. Report in VB, No. 303, October 30, 1941.
460. Hitler thought of horses as “primeval dinosaurs.” Cf. Baur, p. 161. In 1938 and 1939, Hungarian soldiers became the unwitting butt of Hitler’s ridicule when they appeared ready for the occupation of southern Slovakia and the Carpatho-Ukraine, with horses and oxen drawing their carts and with soldiers mounted on horseback. Now the German military had to fall back upon the horse as a means of transportation, albeit a primitive one. However, this did not resolve its transportation difficulties in the winter of 1941–1942. In his diary entry of March 8, 1942, Goebbels plaintively pointed out that one corps had

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reported “eighteen thousand horse casualties in February” and of these seven hundred ninety-five had simply starved. When a similar complaint was brought to the attention of Napoleon in 1812, he explained the problem as follows: “This is because horses lack patriotism. Our soldiers continue to fight well even if they do not have bread, but our horses do not perform without oats!” For further parallels with Napoleon, see below, Appendix, Indices “Napoleon” and “coincidences.”

461. According to experts, the winter of 1941 did not set in any earlier than normal, but came rather late (cf. von Moos, Vol. III, p. 165). This particular winter was no harsher than the previous one. The worst winter had been that of 1939. In December of 1939, temperatures of minus 25 degrees Celsius and below were measured for days on end in the usually mild climate of the Hunsrück and the Eifel Mountains and the temperate regions of western Germany. While snow first fell as early as October 6 and October 7, 1941, and hampered the advance on Moscow, according to the recollections of Colonel General Guderian, the month of October two years earlier had witnessed intense snowfall on the heights of the Palatinate Forest, which at the time had been the western front. Cf. Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* (Heidelberg, 1951), p. 223.
462. Marshal Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov (1896–1974); born in Strelkovka, served in the cavalry in the Civil War of 1918–1920; in 1941, Zhukov was promoted to the rank of general and became deputy people’s commissar for defense; stopped German advances along the middle sector of the front after the German attack on Russia; in October of 1941, he succeeded Timoshenko as commander in chief of the central sector of the front, where he decisively defeated the German Army Group von Bock in December in front of the gates of Moscow; successfully defended Moscow in 1941–1942; counterattacked at Stalingrad in 1942; in 1943, he organized the relief of Leningrad and took over the southern sector of the front along the Don River; Zhukov was placed in command of the Ukrainian front in the spring of 1944; in July of the same year, he assumed command of the first Belorussian front and succeeded in breaking through the German lines along the Don; he led his troops in a slow but steady advance to Berlin, subsequently occupying Berlin in 1945; commander of the Soviet occupation forces in Germany; from 1945 to 1946, Zhukov served as the people’s high commissar in Germany; in 1953, he became minister of defense [of the Soviet Union]; member of the Politburo in 1956.
463. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 402.
464. Anna Maria Bismarck was the wife of Count Otto von Bismarck, who was then serving as embassy counselor with the German embassy in Rome.
465. The envoy Filippo Anfuso also functioned as Ciano’s deputy.
466. General Rintelen was the German military attaché in Rome.
467. Napoleon used this phrase in August 1812. See above, 1941, note 418.

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468. The Bürgerbräukeller damaged by the bomb explosion of 1939 was still awaiting repairs.
469. Hitler stated: “ would not like to forget the point. . . that if the Jews should succeed in plunging the rest of the world into a world war, then the entire Jewish race will have played out its role in Europe.” See above, January 30, 1941.
470. DNB text, November 8, 1941.
471. See above, speech of September 19, 1939.
472. Reference to a coalition of parties in the Weimar Republic. Black was the color of the Center Party, red the color of the Social Democrats, and gold stood for the financial interests of the Democratic Party. Once more Hitler expounded his theory on the identical nature of politics at home and abroad.
473. Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich, born 1893 in Gomel; of Jewish descent; one of Stalin’s closest collaborators; deputy prime minister and member of the Politburo in 1953.
474. Hitler was the only one who had failed to comprehend Churchill’s motives. He had continued to hope that England would resign itself to collaboration with the Third Reich after France had fallen. Ever since September 3, 1939, however, Great Britain had resolved to accept nothing less than the unconditional surrender of Germany.
475. These famed “twenty-four hours earlier” were to have played a role, according to Hitler, in the case of Norway and in the offensive to the west. See above, speech of July 19, 1940.
476. These deliveries would soon be stopped.
477. The further course of the war proved that the Red Army was capable of “recovering.”
478. Hitler had frequently employed this phrase. In one speech, he expounded as follows:
“Politically, it is especially important that the blow against Yugoslavia be carried out with inexorable severity and that the military destruction be carried out in a lightning operation (*Blitzunternehmen*).” See above, speech of March 26, 1941.
479. Once before, Hitler had made similar predictions. In a December 5, 1932, remark, he argued: “The only thing that matters in this fight is who leads the last battalion on the battlefield.” See above, p. 196. This applied no more to foreign affairs than it did to domestic politics. After all, as the Wehrmacht’s last forces were being used up in the closing days of the war, the enemy still commanded several intact armies. The German people were not in the least pleased with such announcements; fighting the war down to the Wehrmacht’s “last battalion” signified a long struggle and implied the death of many family members.
480. On September 11, 1941, President Roosevelt cautioned Italy and Germany not to attack United States ships and threatened “active resistance” should this occur.

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481. The official version of the text contained an insertion “in certain areas” in order to preserve the ludicrous nature of Hitler’s claim to omniscience.
482. Wendell Lewis Willkie, born in Elwood, Indiana, in 1892; died in New York in 1944; Republican candidate for the presidency in 1940.
483. This “last gigantic blow, ” which had succeeded “beyond all measure, ” would trouble Hitler for some time.
484. On May 10, 1940, Hitler announced “The battle beginning on this day [in the west] will determine the fate of the German nation for the next one thousand years.” See above, proclamation of May 10, 1940. A year later, he claimed the same importance for the front in the east, albeit for a shorter period: “I came to the conviction that we must fight for a clear decision here [in the east], a decision with an impact on world history for the next one hundred years.” See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
485. In VB, No. 317, November 13, 1941.
486. Report in VB, No. 319, November 15, 1941.
487. Reproduced verbatim in RGBI, 1941, I, pp. 717 f. There were numerous candidates for the chairmanship of this “German Academy, ” amongst them Reichsleiter Bouhler and the head of the United Steel Workers of Düsseldorf, Privy Counselor Vögler. In 1943, Seyss-Inquart was entrusted with the post.
488. See above, decree of April 20, 1941.
489. DNB text, November 17, 1941.
490. Alfred Meyer, born in 1891; Gauleiter of Westphalia (Münster); Reich governor in Lippe (Detmold) and Schaumburg-Lippe.
491. Hinrich Lohse, born in 1896; Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of Schleswig-Holstein (Kiel).
492. Erich Koch, born in 1896; Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of East Prussia.
493. Hitler assigned Gauleiter Bürckel from the Palatinate to a post in Austria; Dr. Frank from Munich was sent to Poland; Gauleiter Terboven from Essen was placed in Norway; and the Austrian Seyss-Inquart assumed a post in the Netherlands.
494. There were plans to create a “Reichskommissariat Kaukasus” and a “Reichskommissariat Moskau.”
495. Report in VB, No. 323, November 19, 1941.
496. Cf. Halder’s diary, entry of November 19, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
497. In VB, No. 325, November 21, 1941.
498. Report in VB, No. 326, November 22, 1941.
499. DNB wording, November 22, 1941. Mölders had been a practicing Catholic. Among Catholic clerics in Germany, a letter allegedly authored by Mölders was circulated after his death. It contained strong language directed against the National Socialist regime. In this context, the Gestapo conducted a series of investigations and interrogations. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp 110 ff. Goebbels noted that the existence of this

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- letter was also the subject of much debate in officers' clubs, largely due to General von Mackensen's intervention.
500. Report in VB, No. 328, November 24, 1941. Born in 1861, Professor August Bier was a well-known surgeon and scholar.
501. In VB, No. 330, November 26, 1941.
502. Ibid. Professor Schmidt was the University's president.
503. Hitler ordered the German press to publish the letters under this awkward title.
504. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 411: "The Danish representative was like a fish out of water—a little old man in a morning coat who wondered why he was there but who, on the whole, was glad that he was there because things might have gone worse." Indeed, civil unrest soon erupted in Copenhagen and protest demonstrations made plain how uncomfortable the Danes were with the Anti-Comintern Pact.
505. DNB report, November 11, 1941.
506. Report in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1941.
507. DNB text, November 27, 1941.
508. Mihai Antonescu was not a relative of Marshal Ion Antonescu.
509. Report in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1941. Born in 1907, Gustav Adolf Scheel had been Reichsstudentenführer since 1932. This appointment was the third in a series aiming to introduce younger Gauleiters. The appointments of Schirach and Lauterbacher had preceded Scheel's (see above, August 7, 1940). Born in 1903, Friedrich Rainer succeeded Gauleiter Hubert Klausner, who had died.
510. Report in VB, No. 333, November 29, 1941.
511. Ibid.
512. Relevant entries in Halder's diary (on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz) for the period November 18 to December 1, 1941.
513. Cf. von Rundstedt's testimony before the court at Nuremberg in Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West* (London, 1947, and New York, 1948), p. 68.
514. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
515. See above, p. 2150, speech of December 10, 1940.
516. See above, p. 1072, speech of March 25, 1938.
517. See above, p. 1077, speech of March 29, 1938.
518. The majority of the atrocities took place in the areas from which the army was withdrawing without Hitler's knowledge. The regions around Rostock and the Sea of Azov are textbook examples of this. In Napoleon's day also, the abandoned territories were the site of equally horrible excesses, although the deeds of the Grande Armée never reached the scale of those which Hitler's men perpetrated. In the course of its retreat from Russia in 1812, for example, those prisoners of war who had become a liability to the transport units were simply shot, in all likelihood on direct orders from Napoleon himself. Cf. Beitzke, p. 355.
519. See above, speech of November 8, 1941: "The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the battlefield will be a German one!"

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520. Halder's diary, entry of November 30, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
521. Cf. Shulman, pp. 68 f. In an entry dated December 1, 1941, Halder noted the following:
"Receipt of three telegrams from Führer at 4:00 a.m.:
1. Rundstedt dismissed as commander of the army group.
2. Reichenau appointed to command army group with the mission of halting the retreat of the First Panzer Army, implementing measures necessary in support of the Panzer Army, and moving to attack Voroshilovgrad as soon as possible from positions of XLIX Ger. Corps and IV. AK.
3. Immediately forward to B.d.E. [commander of the reserve units] to the 13th, 14th and 16th Pz.Div [Panzer Divisions] up to 40 Panzers [type] III and 12 Panzers [type] IV, move up [to the Front] as far as possible." Halder's diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
522. Ibid., entry of December 1, 1941.
523. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 535, pp. 938 f.
524. Report on this flight in Baur, pp. 212 f. Report by Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," series III, in *Revue* (1956).
525. Peter the Great (1672–1725), Tsar of Russia from 1682, attempted to reorganize the country on western lines; on the Baltic coast, where he had conquered territory from Sweden, he built his new capital, Saint Petersburg.
526. *Mein Kampf*, p. 73. "A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung because he has recognized it to be false acts decently only if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final conclusion. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time." See above, p. 28.
527. Cf. Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," series III, in *Revue* (1956). There was no foundation for Hitler's paranoid fear of Obergruppenführers. With the exception of Hess as SS Obergruppenführer and Todt as SA Obergruppenführer, Count von Helldorff was the only Obergruppenführer who posed a real threat to Hitler. As SA Obergruppenführer, von Helldorff challenged Hitler's rule though his involvement in the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt. He was apprehended, tried, and executed as a result.
528. Ibid.
529. See above, 1941, note 461. Soldiers participating in Napoleon's ill-fated campaign faced heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures at a much earlier date. On October 27, 1812, it was already minus five degrees Celsius. The thermometer dropped even lower to minus ten degrees by the last day of that month. Heavy snowfall encumbered the movements of troops from November 4 to 6. Within two days after November 10, temperatures went from minus nineteen to minus twenty-three. Thaw and some rain brought temporary relief in the period November 18 to

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23. However, November 25 again witnessed a thermometer reading of minus ten. The winter became much harsher in the month of December 1812. It was minus twenty degrees on December 3, and minus twenty-five was registered the following day. By December 6, temperatures fell to minus thirty for the first time and were to remain in this range for some time. For December 8, 1812, an incredible reading of minus thirty-eight degrees Celsius was recorded. Cf. Beitzke, pp 351–419.
530. See above, proclamation of October 2, 1941.
531. See above, October 3, 1941.
532. DNB report, December 4, 1941.
533. DNB report, December 5, 1941. Hangö was a peninsula protruding into the Gulf of Finland. The 1940 peace accords had awarded it to Russia as a naval base.
534. In VB, No. 341, December 7, 1941.
535. DNB note, December 6, 1941.
536. Perpetrators of these crimes were to be shipped to Germany “between dusk and dawn.” Cf. IMT, 090-1. Keitel made the decree public on December 12, 1941.
537. For details on Zhukov’s army, see von Moos, Vol. III, pp 165 ff.
538. Cf. Walter Grölitz, *Der deutsche Generalstab* (Frankfurt am Main, 1950), p. 574.
539. See above, November 23, 1939.
540. For Hitler’s reaction to the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor, see Picker, p. 75.
541. See above, September 27, 1940.
542. Correspondence between von Ribbentrop and Ott, the then German ambassador to Tokyo, in IMT, 2896/2897-PS.
543. Von Ribbentrop’s testimony before the Nuremberg court in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, p. 337.
544. Cf. Picker, p. 88. See also above, proclamation of December 19, 1941.
545. The envoy Schmidt, p. 554, described his own perception of the issue in the following words: “Ribbentrop’s remarks back then gave me the impression that, driven by an egotistical concern for prestige, Hitler wanted to beat Roosevelt by declaring war first, as the Führer was certain Roosevelt would declare war in any event.” Hitler was troubling himself in vain, however, since Roosevelt had the luxury of waiting until Hitler became bold and foolish enough to declare war on the United States first.
546. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 564, pp. 984 ff.
547. Winter 1941 had by no means “come early.” See above, 1941, note 461.
548. Reports in VB, No. 344, December 10, 1941.
549. DNB text, December 9, 1941. At this time, the German public was also informed that yet another dubious character was making his way to Germany: the deposed former Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al Kailani, who was already living in exile. He called on Hitler on July 1, 1942. See below, July 15, 1942.

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550. With great ardor, Napoleon also attempted to transform the disastrous 1812 campaign against Russia into a great victory in many lengthy speeches and proclamations. Like Hitler, the French dictator juggled all sorts of figures. He declared that the Grande Armée had maintained the upper hand in every encounter with the Russians, who had been beaten badly by the French forces: “Not one ill man had to be picked up off the ground in this campaign, not a single man, not one courier, not one delivery. We marched out of Moscow with three hundred fifty pounds for each of the cannons.” Like Hitler, Napoleon insisted that everything had gone according to plan: “We had plenty of everything in Vilna; four million [kilograms of] flour; three million six hundred thousand rations of meat; nine hundred thousand liters of wine and brandy. Nevertheless, they allowed themselves to be frightened by a couple of cossacks!” Had he, Napoleon, not been unexpectedly forced to return to Paris in a hurry, had he been with the troops, all would have been well. Cf. Aretz, pp. 394–401.
- Hitler and Napoleon shared many traits of character: their arithmomania, their inability to admit mistakes, and their dishonesty when accounting for their deeds. Both would abandon their troops when in need and let others suffer the bloody consequences of their own ineptitude. They were garrulous to an extreme; in several instances, Napoleon spent from ten to fourteen hours dictating to his secretaries until they literally broke down. For other parallels, see below, Appendix, Indices “Napoleon” and “coincidences.”
551. DNB text, December 11, 1941.
552. Hitler himself had been indifferent to the fate of the Baltic states and Finland. See above, October 16 and December 8, 1939. See also above, March 4, 1940.
553. Hitler earlier had declared: “I have never used the word Blitzkrieg because it is a really stupid word.” See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
554. Plain near Troyes, France; scene of the defeat of Attila the Hun (called the “Scourge of God”) by the Romans and Goths in 451.
555. Hitler did not specify the type of “material” he was referring to.
556. With the exception of the First Crusade, all the crusades had failed.
557. These figures cannot be correct. A report of the Wehrmacht headquarters, dated September 19, 1941, listed a total of 106, 195 men killed or missing in action for the period between June 22 and August 31, 1941.
558. Hitler’s obsessive desire to minimize Germany’s losses in the east led him to the strangest excesses. On October 2, 1941, he maintained that these losses were less than 5 percent of those Germany had suffered in the First World War (see above, October 2, 1941). He then proceeded to juggle figures for the Battle at the Somme.
559. Hitler also preferred to give speeches or state-of-the-war addresses indoors where it was warm, while Germany’s soldiers fought both snow and ice, and a war.

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560. This remark was also intended to play down casualty figures along the eastern front.
561. Once more Hitler proved that he was unaware of the natural solidarity of the Anglo-American powers. Once England had entered the war against Germany, it was merely a question of time until the United States did likewise.
562. Purim: Jewish festival on the 14th of Adar (in the months of February and March) in celebration of Esther's and Mordechai's rescue of the Jews of Persia.
563. Reference to the recall of the American ambassador in protest at "Crystal Night" [Kristallnacht, the "Night of Broken Glass," when the National Socialists smashed windows of Jewish synagogues, stores, and homes]. See above, November 9, 1938.
564. See above, April 15, 1939.
565. Reference to Eleanor Roosevelt, born 1884, died 1962.
566. Frank Knox, born in 1874; died in Washington in 1944. Hitler chose the phrase "order to fire" because this particular term had been central to the declaration of war [against Germany] by the United States in 1917, in response to the unrestricted nature of German submarine warfare.
567. Reference to an American radio broadcast of September 11, 1941. Roosevelt had issued warnings to Italy and Germany and declared that the hour of "active resistance" had come.
568. The actual note presented to the American chargé d'affaires read:
Mr. Chargé d'Affaires:
The government of the United States of America, having violated in the most flagrant manner and in ever increasing measure all rules of neutrality in favor of the adversaries of Germany and having continually been guilty of the most severe provocations toward Germany ever since the outbreak of the European War, provoked by the British declaration of September 3, 1939, has finally resorted to open military acts of aggression.
On September 11, 1941, the president of the United States of America publicly declared that he had ordered the American navy and air force to fire on sight at any German warship. In his speech of October 27, 1941, he once more expressly affirmed that this order was in force. Acting on this order, vessels of the American navy, since early September 1941, have systematically attacked German naval forces. Thus, American destroyers, for instance the *Greer*, the *Kearney*, and the *Reuben James*, have opened fire on German submarines according to plan. The secretary of the American navy, Mr. Knox, himself confirmed that American destroyers have attacked German submarines. Furthermore, the naval forces of the United States of America on the orders of their government and contrary to international law have treated and seized German merchant vessels on the high seas as enemy ships.
The German government therefore declares the following: Although Germany on her part has strictly adhered to the rules of international

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law in her relations with the United States of America during every period of the present war, the government of the United States of America from initial violations of neutrality has finally proceeded to open acts of war against Germany. It has thereby virtually created a state of war.

The government of the Reich consequently discontinues diplomatic relations with the United States of America and declares that, in these circumstances brought about by President Roosevelt, Germany, too, as from today, considers herself as being in a state of war with the United States of America.

DGFP, D, XIII, no. 572, pp. 999 f.

569. For reactions by the deputies in August and September 1939, see above, speech of August 27, 1939, and speech of September 1, 1939.
570. DNB texts, December 11, 1941.
571. DNB note, December 13, 1941. Mussert had founded a branch of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands.
572. *The Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs*, pp. 244 ff.
573. DNB report, December 13, 1941.
574. DNB report, December 15, 1941.
575. DNB report, December 14, 1941.
576. Report in VB, No. 350, December 16, 1941. Per Evind von Svinhufvud, born in 1861; died in 1944.
577. Report in VB, No. 351, December 17, 1941.
578. Those generals who ordered retreats without Hitler's explicit approval were either stripped of their rank, as in the case of General Erich Hoepfner, or sentenced to death, as, for example, was the fate of General Hans Graf von Sponeck. Hoepfner was also executed at a later date, in connection with the events of July 20, 1944.
579. Cf. Halder, p. 45.
580. For Hitler, education "in the spirit of National Socialism" meant blind obedience to his orders.
581. DNB text, December 20, 1941.
582. Von Blomberg's refusal to support Hitler's aggression was the actual reason for this transfer of power. See above, February 4, 1938.
583. In reference to the supposed "logically correct nature" of his actions, Hitler ought to have mentioned the events of August 1, 1934, in addition to those of February 4, 1938. In 1934, he had appropriated the position of commander in chief of the Reichswehr, in violation of the constitution, the day before von Hindenburg's death. See above, p. 507.
584. In reality, the winter battles of the Second World War were far bloodier than those of the First World War.
585. Since Hitler had not been in Russia during the First World War, he could not rightly claim "not to be a stranger" to these sufferings.
586. DNB text, December 20, 1941. There is great irony in the fact that Brauchitsch owed his post to the Führer's dismissal of Fritsch, and that he himself was relieved of his post by the Führer, who appropriated command of the army. Despite this inconsiderate treatment,

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- Brauchitsch remained loyal to his Führer and hence, unlike Fritsch, was not subject to any persecution.
587. DNB report, December 21, 1941. The appeal was broadcast by Goebbels on December 20, 1941.
588. Even in a like pitiful appeal, Hitler could not resist employing the superlative.
589. See above, October 2, 1941.
590. DNB text, December 23, 1941.
591. This order was published in a circular handed to the troops. Text taken from the author's archives.
592. For Hitler's derisive comments on Brauchitsch, see below, March 20, 1942.
593. See above, September 1, 1939.

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1. See above, January 1, 1940.
2. See above, January 1, 1941.
3. See below, January 1, 1942.
4. For example, General Kurt von Tippelskirch, *Geschichte des 2. Weltkrieges* (Bonn, 1951).
5. In April 1942, Hitler proclaimed somewhat prematurely: “We have mastered a fate that brought another man [Napoleon] to his knees a hundred thirty years ago.” See below, speech of April 26, 1942.
6. Goebbels recorded the following casualty figures in his diary under March 6, 1942: “Our losses in the east for the period of June 22, 1941, to February 20, 1942, were 199, 448 dead (including 7, 879 officers), 708, 351 wounded (including 20, 992 officers), 44, 342 missing (including 710 officers)—a total of 952, 141 (including 29, 572 officers).” Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 112.
7. Napoleon sought refuge with the Grande Armée for as long as he needed its protection in face of the Russian advances. During the retreat, he was clad in a pea-green fur coat with a fur hood along with felt-lined boots. Enjoying the luxury of bearskin hats, Napoleon himself and his guards received triple the rations that ordinary soldiers did. At the Berezina River, Napoleon sent a small advance guard ahead to secure the bridges, which the great warlord then crossed with his entourage. The remainder of the French Grand Armée was left behind. It faced chaos and confusion. Reaching safe ground near Smorgon on December 6, Napoleon disappeared from amongst his troops. In the company of Caulaincourt and two generals (in Vilnius, a third general joined them), he rushed to a much warmer and more pleasant place, namely, the French capital! Late at night on December 19, 1812, their comfortable sleighs carried the four men through the gates of Paris, and they celebrated Christmas at home.
8. Carl Gustaf Emil Baron of Mannerheim, born 1867 at Louhisaari estate, died 1951 in Lausanne; Finnish general and statesman; Russian cavalry general in World War I; leader of the Finnish conservative forces in the civil war 1917–1918; regent 1918–1919; field marshal from 1933; commander in chief of the Finnish army 1939–1944; state president 1944–1946.
9. “. . . if the Jews should succeed in plunging the rest of the world into a world war, then the entire Jewish race will have played out its role in Europe.” See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
10. “. . . this war will not end the way the Jews would have it, namely with the extermination of all European and Aryan people, but the result of this war will be the annihilation of the Jewish race.” See below, speech of January 30, 1942.

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11. “My prophecy will be fulfilled that this war will not destroy the Aryan, but instead, it will exterminate the Jew.” See below, “message” of February 24, 1942.
12. Churchill’s speech of June 22, 1941, in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, Vol. 6, p. 2430.
13. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
14. Bernard Law Montgomery, born 1887 in Kennington; the most influential British general; commander in chief of the British Eighth Army in North Africa and Italy; led the British Twenty-First Army in its advance from northern France to Germany in 1944–1945; British High Commissioner for Germany in 1945; created Viscount Montgomery of Alamein and Hindhead in 1946.
15. Dwight David Eisenhower, born 1890 in Denison, Texas; from 1942 to 1943 commander in chief of the United States armed forces in North Africa and Italy; from 1943 on, supreme commander of the Allied expeditionary force; appointed American high commissioner for Germany in 1945; president of the United States of America from 1953 to 1961.
16. VB, No. 1, January 1, 1942.
17. This is another example of the rhetoric of Hitler recalling that of Napoleon, who also liked to claim that others “forced” him to go to war, while he himself would “much rather” have been doing something else.
18. VB, No. 1, January 1, 1942. The order of the day was dated December 31, 1941.
19. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 431.
20. Report in VB, No. 3, January 3, 1942. Report on Hitler’s January 3 meeting with Ambassador Oshima in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 253 ff.
21. VB, No. 1, January 1, 1942.
22. DNB report, January 8, 1942.
23. Report in VB, No. 11, January 11, 1942.
24. VB, No. 24, January 24, 1942.
25. DNB report, January 17, 1942. The funeral in Berlin did not take place until January 23, 1942.
26. DNB text, January 18, 1942.
27. DNB note, January 18, 1942.
28. Field Marshal von Kluge had already replaced Bock on December 18, 1941.
29. DNB text, January 20, 1942.
30. DNB report, January 22, 1942.
31. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1942.
32. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 59 f.
33. DNB text, January 30, 1942.
34. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 60 f. Hitler further mentioned this particular delegation when speaking at the Sportpalast. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.

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35. DNB text, January 30, 1942.
36. In a speech before the Reichstag on July 13, 1934, for example, Hitler had said the following: "Acting on behalf of the Reich government, the president of the Reichstag, Hermann Göring, has called you together today in order to give me an opportunity to enlighten the Volk before this body, the highest appointed forum of the nation, concerning events. . . ." See above, p. 486.
37. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
38. Parody of a Nietzsche quotation.
39. By calling Churchill a "Herostratus character," Hitler referred to Herostratus, who, in 356 B.C., set fire to the temple of the goddess Artemis at Ephesus in order to become famous.
40. Cf. earlier complaints by Hitler that he was faced with opponents not worthy of him whom he frequently belittled as *Nullen* ("zeroes"). See above, October 3, 1941, and below, speeches of January 30, 1942, and September 30, 1942.
41. Neither is there any mention of a possible alliance with Japan in *Mein Kampf*, nor did Hitler ever refer to Japan as a potential ally in any of his public statements. Indeed, at the time, Hitler evidently regarded only England and Italy as potential partners.
42. Archibald Percival Wavell (1883–1950), 1st Earl Wavell of Cyrenaica and of Winchester; British field marshal; commander in chief Middle East 1939–1941, in command of the first British Cyrenaica offensive launched in 1941–1942; commander in chief India July 1941–1943, viceroy of India 1943–1947.
43. Hitler had not made this statement on September 1, 1939, but instead on January 30, 1939. See above, 1939, note 119.
44. Reference is to the Italian delegation consisting of leaders of the Fascist movement. See above, January 30, 1942.
45. Hitler never accounted for his conduct of state affairs nor did he assume any responsibility for the outcome of this conduct, despite all the glorious proclamations to the contrary. See above, p. 33.
46. Up to this point, Hitler had been maintaining that he had dealt this blow to his adversaries "twenty-four hours earlier" than planned. See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
47. This statement was in truly bad taste, as the disastrously ill-equipped soldiers did not even possess proper clothing to battle winter in the east.
48. Reference is to the fall of Benghazi. See above, January 29, 1942.
49. These citations were not based upon historical facts. They were apparently the product of their author's vivid imagination. Moreover, his claim that so-called "warmongers" caused Germany's defeat cannot be substantiated.
50. This greatest of all "front-line soldiers" usually sat in a heated room and contemplated the historic importance of his person, his speeches, and his monologues.
51. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 62.

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52. From January 7 to January 9, 1942, von Ribbentrop stayed in Budapest, while Keitel visited the city on January 20, 1942.
53. Antonescu accepted the invitation. See below, February 11, 1942.
54. Report in VB, No. 33, February 2, 1942.
55. Report in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1942.
56. Report in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1942.
57. DNB text, February 8, 1942. German papers carried the news on February 9.
58. As a specialist in investigating crashes, Hitler's chief pilot, Baur, speculated in his 1956 memoirs that Todt's plane had been ripped apart by an explosion. In his opinion, Todt had perhaps accidentally activated a "self-destruction" device built in beneath the pilot's seat in a number of aircraft. Once activated, the device causes the airplane to explode within three minutes. However, this seems unlikely in the circumstances. Cf. Hans Baur, *Ich flog Mächtige der Erde*, (Kempten, 1956), pp. 214 ff.
59. After the war, a special committee handling Todt's estate investigated the crash. Some evidence surfaced concerning the existence of a mysterious suitcase, possibly containing the explosive device that had allegedly been introduced into the aircraft before takeoff.
60. Todt had been SA Obergruppenführer and one of the men whom Hitler regarded with an irrational fear. On this topic, see above, December 3, 1941. See also above, 1941, note 527.
61. See below, speech of February 12, 1942.
62. DNB text, February 9, 1942. Speer assumed Todt's responsibilities in the party (main technical office) and for the Four Year Plan (plenipotentiary for construction business).
63. NSK note, February 12, 1942.
64. "I have no experts at all. For me, my head is always good enough! I do not need a brain trust to assist me." See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
65. See above, December 2, 1941.
66. Cf. report on this visit in Schmidt, pp. 560 ff.
67. Baur, pp. 220 f. Baur is mistaken in his belief that the plane was heading for Berchtesgaden.
68. Schmidt, p. 561. Cf. also Heiber, *Hitler's Lagebesprechungen*, p. 13.
69. Antonescu did not receive the award in gold, however—a privilege granted to Ciano and to Oshima.
70. DNB text, February 16, 1942.
71. DNB report, February 13, 1942. The acclaim was a bit premature, as the British on Singapore did not capitulate until March 15, 1942. The Japanese emperor was more careful and waited with his response to Hitler's telegram until March 16, 1942.
72. See above, speech of March 6, 1934.
73. DNB report, February 13, 1942. See also the notes in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 79 f., erroneously under the date of February 11, 1942 (the speech took place the day after).

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74. DNB text, February 12, 1942.
75. All this emphatic acclaim for Todt appears out of place. For details on the new award and Hitler's comments on it, cf. Picker, pp. 152 f.
76. Cf. DNB report, February 14, 1942, and Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 83.
77. The battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, along with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, withdrew from the French harbor Brest on February 12. Not having encountering any interference by the British, they took refuge in German ports along the English Channel and the Baltic Sea, and hence achieved this highly questionable "breakthrough." German papers were instructed to celebrate the speedy retreat as the "most daring feat in naval history," although this actually signaled the defeat of Germany's naval forces by the British fleet and an admission of Britain's superiority at sea. The *Scharnhorst*, a vessel with an official tonnage of 25, 000 tons but which actually displaced around 31, 800 tons, was to venture on to Norway. From there, it set sail for the North, where it encountered vastly superior British naval contingents and was sunk on December 26, 1943. The similarly equipped *Gneisenau* sustained serious damage in the course of an air raid on Kiel, where it had anchored. The ship was decommissioned on July 1, 1942, and towed to the Gdynia dock. There an attempt to blow up the ship took place on March 28, 1945. In the years 1947–1951, the vessel was finally scrapped. The 14, 800 ton *Prinz Eugen* was surrendered to American forces in 1945. It was used in an atomic-bomb experiment close to Bikini Island. The ship sank on November 15, 1947, near Kwajalein. Cf. Erich Gröner, *Die Schiffe der deutschen Kriegsmarine und Luftwaffe 1939/1945 und ihr Verbleib* (Munich, 1954).
78. Report in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1942.
79. Cf. the remarks of Goebbels on the Führer's high hopes in Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 83.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
81. Cf. report on the February 14, 1942, conversation, *ibid.* pp. 87 f.
82. Report in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1942. A phonographic record of the entire speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz (Le 6 EW 68 553–68 575). Hitler spoke before a number of officers. This is the speech which Louis P. Lochner could not locate before publishing the Goebbels *Diaries*. Cf. Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1942–43*, ed. by Louis P. Lochner (Zurich, 1948), p. 88. For the typical content of Hitler's addresses to officer candidates, see above, speeches of May 5 and December 18, 1940, which are quoted in full.
83. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
84. These sentimental reminiscences once more prove how Hitler perceived events only in relation to himself, how they affected his well-being. Another example of this is found in his plaintive remarks lamenting the "deprived" nature of his youth when all he could do was to dream of a "great time" to come. See above, p. 15.
85. Speech of September 12, 1936.
86. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 88 and 95.

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87. Ibid., p. 102.
88. Examples of his various excursions: speech at Todt's funeral on February 12, 1942; speech before officer candidates at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 15, 1942; speech on Heroes' Memorial Day on March 15, 1942; and the Reichstag speech of April 26, 1942.
89. See above, 1941, note 527.
90. Report in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1942.
91. In this regard, Napoleon exaggerated a bit less than Hitler. The Frenchman claimed that the winter of 1812 had been the coldest witnessed in over "twenty years." Cf. Aretz, p. 399.
In 1942, Hitler maintained on April 26 that the preceding winter had been the worst in over "140 years," even though almost everyone in the audience vividly recalled the winter of 1939–1940, when temperatures had fallen considerably lower than in 1942. See below, speech of April 26, 1942. In May, Hitler again attributed the shortcomings of the campaign to the unexpectedly harsh winter. Temperatures seemed to have fallen lower in retrospect, as he pronounced the winter to have been the coldest in "150 years." See below, speech of May 29, 1942.
92. Hermann Esser read another "message" from the Führer to those assembled in the cellar on February 24, 1943. This was repeated one last time on February 24, 1944. The festivities were canceled in 1945.
93. Report in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1942.
94. VB, No. 58, February 27, 1942.
95. DNB report, February 28, 1942. While Drexler had been one of the founding members of the NSDAP, he played a role of little importance from 1925. Nevertheless, he was awarded the *Blutorden* (Blood Order) in 1934.
96. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1942.
97. IMT, 149-PS.
98. See above, speeches of January 30, 1941, and of January 30, 1942, as well as "message" of February 24, 1942.
99. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 115 f.
100. Ibid, p. 138.
101. Ibid., pp. 147 f.
102. This meant German-occupied Poland.
103. The former Gauleiter of Vienna to whom Goebbels referred was Odilo Globotschnigg.
104. See above, pp. 1448 f., Reichstag speech of January 30, 1939.
105. See above, August 2, 1934.
106. Cf. Linge, Series II.
107. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 147 ff.
108. In a public address on October 3, 1941, Hitler had proclaimed: "... [our soldiers on the eastern front are facing] an opponent, who, I must say this here, consists not of human beings, but of animals—beasts." See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
109. At the Berghof on April 17, 1943, the following was revealed to the Hungarian regent, von Horthy, according to a protocol drawn up by

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- the envoy Schmidt: “Should the Jews not want to work there, they will be shot. Should they not be able to work, they will rot. They should be treated like a tuberculosis bacillus, which might infect a healthy organism. This was not cruel in fact, if one considered that even such innocent natural creatures as rabbits and deer had to be shot in order to prevent harm. Why should beasts, which want to bring us Bolshevism, be spared?” IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, pp. 463 f.
110. Hitler was exceptionally fond of dogs. During his last years, one bitch by the name of “Blondi” had particularly endeared herself to him. Moreover, he was always quick to defend “innocent rabbits and deer” and, on occasion, he would verbally assault passionate hunters such as Göring. Hitler also refused to eat meat.
 111. Cf. Himmler’s speech of October 4, 1943 in Posen. IMT, 1919-PS.
 112. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 86.
 113. Saint John’s Gospel, Chapter 16, verses 1–2.
 114. *Mein Kampf*, p. 70. See also above, Introduction, pp. 39 f., and below, September 30, 1942.
 115. Decree of March 13, 1942. Cf. VB, No. 91, April 1, 1942.
 116. VB, No. 62, March 3, 1942.
 117. Report, *ibid*.
 118. Report in VB, No. 64, March 5, 1942. The duke of Aosta, the former viceroy of Italian East Africa and son of Victor Emmanuel III, had been taken prisoner by the British in 1941, following the conquest of Abyssinia. He died of tuberculosis.
 119. Report in VB, No. 64, March 5, 1942.
 120. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1942. Fritz Erich von Manstein (full name: von Lewinsky genannt von Manstein), born 1887 in Berlin; promoted to field marshal on July 1, 1942.
 121. Illustrated report, *ibid*.
 122. Report in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1942.
 123. DNB text, March 15, 1942.
 124. Reference is to the show trial of Daladier, General Gamelin, and Léon Blum, which was opened by the Pétain government under pressure from the Germans. The trial was supposed to determine war guilt. It dragged on for a few weeks before it was abandoned.
 125. Napoleon also liked to recall the Grande Armée’s “unique glorious deeds” when reminiscing about his ill-fated venture to the east: “The Russian campaign was the most difficult, the most famous, and the most honorable ever undertaken by the Gauls in ancient or modern history. You fearless heroes—Murat, Ney, Poniatowsky— yours is the glory! Of what glorious deeds will the books of history speak! They will have to tell of how these unshakable cuirassiers overcame the redoubts and stabbed the cannoneers still at the cannons. They will have to tell of how our artillery achieved the impossible, how without cover the men of the artillery battled numerous well-protected enemy batteries. And of how in times of great danger, instead of turning to the generals for encouragement, the fearless men of the infantry shouted

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- encouragement to the officers: 'Be calm! All your soldiers have pledged themselves today either to win or to die!' Will fragments of this great a glory ever reach posterity, or will lies, defamation, and apathy keep an upper hand instead?" Cf. Aretz, p. 393.
126. Reports in VB, Nos. 75 and 76, March 16 and 17, 1942.
127. Report in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1942.
128. Report in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1942.
129. Reports in VB, Nos. 80 and 81, March 21 and 22, 1942.
130. DNB report, March 18, 1942.
131. Report in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1942. Ever since Hitler assumed the title of "warlord," he seemed to avoid Hoffmann's company. Perhaps he feared the photographer's blunt criticisms. Bormann, who could not stand Hoffmann, derided him as a "producer of typhoid-infected excrement," which sufficed to instill in Hitler a repugnance and an irrational fear of contamination. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 13.
132. Goebbels refers to the talks in his diary and dates them March 20, 1942. Sometimes the events took place either a day earlier or a day later. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 130 ff.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
134. Joseph Goebbels, *Michael: Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (Munich, 1929), quoted from the 6th edition (Munich, 1936), pp. 101 ff.
135. Goebbels wrote: "It is truly touching to hear him complain about the winter that has caused him such terrible worries and difficulties. I noted that he has already become quite gray." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 135.—Ciano also noted in his diary under April 29, 1942: "Hitler looks tired. [—] The winter months in Russia have borne heavily upon him. I see for the first time that he has many gray hairs." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 477. On the other hand, Hitler was fifty-three years old at the time. Having a few white hairs at that age is truly nothing exceptional. For those who saw in him a type of god, however, such observations could indeed have been troubling.
136. Brauchitsch had proposed implementing his own strategy in directing certain formations of his troops. Hitler had immediately intervened and prohibited him from taking any steps on his own. See above, May 24, 1940.
137. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 179.
138. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 165.
139. Gürtner served as Reich minister of justice from 1932 until 1941. See above, p. 481. Bumke was president of the Reichsgericht (Reich Court of Justice) from 1932 to 1945. Although Gürtner had truly done everything in his power to please Hitler, the Führer accorded him little respect. At one point, Hitler remarked that Gürtner had had a very hard time divorcing himself from legal considerations and had only hesitantly become "reasonable," a term which meant that he unquestioningly submitted himself to the Führer's whims. Cf. Picker, p. 211.

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140. Ibid., p. 240.
141. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 264.
142. RGBl, 1942, I, pp. 139 f.
143. For details on the significance of the term “supreme commander,” see below, April 26, 1942.
144. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 173 f. As one of his last deeds, Hitler ordered Josef Wagner’s execution in April 1945.
145. See also *ibid.*, pp. 133 f., and above, March 20, 1942.
146. Cf. Picker, pp. 202 f.
147. *Ibid.*, pp. 211 ff.
148. Cf. conversation of March 29, 1942, *ibid.*, p. 211.
149. For documentation of the case and a detailed investigation, see the article by Gerhard Hermann Mostar, *Stern*, 30 (1954).
150. Cf. § 246 STGB (Strafgesetzbuch, Criminal Code).
151. For example, by the president of the Oldenburg Oberlandesgericht (high court of a land); see below, May 2, 1942. The Oldenburg Reich governor was of the same opinion. For the consequences, see below, *ibid.*, and May 15, 1942.
152. Freisler was appointed president of the Volksgerichtshof a few months later. In this capacity, he was responsible for the conduct of the infamous “trials” of the activists in the attempted coup of July 20, 1944.
153. Although Freisler strove to satisfy every whim of the Führer and even though he was an old party comrade, Hitler nonetheless pretended that Freisler was a Bolshevik. Cf. Picker, p. 212.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 206, entry of March 22, 1943.
155. DNB report, March 22, 1942. Hitler had appointed von Rundstedt as commander in chief of the armies in the west, but he wished this to remain a secret.
156. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 171 ff.
157. See above, January 30, 1941.
158. Special British elite troops whose mission was to land their armored flatboats along certain sections of the French and Norwegian coasts. They were to carry out sporadic attacks on German radio stations, advance units, or strategic installations. The main purpose of these undertakings was to disquiet the German troops. Until late 1941, Rear Admiral Sir Roger Keyes was in charge of the British commandos. He was succeeded by a cousin of the king of Great Britain, the forty-one-year-old Lord Louis Mountbatten, who became one of the leading figures of the Second World War. Cf. details on the forays in von Moos, Vol. III, pp. 215 ff.
159. See below, October 18, 1942.
160. DNB text, March 26, 1942.
161. Cf. remarks made on March 31, 1942, in Picker, p. 59.
162. After his stay at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, King Boris also called on Göring and Goebbels. The latter in particular was quite smitten with his royal guest, who praised German propaganda: “Boris is an impassioned devotee of Hitler’s genius as a leader; he really looks upon

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- him as a sort of emissary of God.” Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 151. This reflected a complete reversal of the attitude of Goebbels toward King Boris. Only two months earlier, he had called him a “sly, crafty fellow.” *Ibid.*, p. 47.
163. Report in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1942.
164. See above, speech of September 4, 1940.
165. For details on Allied air raids against German population centers with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, see Max Domarus, *Der Untergang des alten Würzburg und seine Vorgeschichte* (7th edition Gerolzhofen, 1995).
166. On the night of November 14 to 15, 1942, the Luftwaffe carried out a damaging air raid on the city of Coventry, home to two hundred fifty-eight thousand citizens and an ancient bishopric.
167. Popular humor had it that Hitler had lost the “eraser” and the British had obviously picked it up.
168. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 186 ff.
169. Report in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1942.
170. See above, March 19, 1942.
171. See above, 1932, note 306.
172. The following official announcement notified the public of Schlitt’s demise: “The twenty-nine-year-old Ewald Schlitt, resident of Wilhelmshaven, was executed on April 2, 1942. On March 31, 1942, the special criminal division (*Besonderer Strafsenat*) at the Reichsgericht had sentenced him to death as a dangerous criminal. Schlitt was guilty of cruelly abusing his wife for many years, until she became mentally ill and died. The senior public prosecutor at the Reichsgericht.”
173. *Speeches*, April 26, 1942, cf. p. 1874 f.
174. DNB report, April 1, 1942.
175. The author’s notes. The circular to the troops was headed “Berlin, ” although it should have read “Führer Headquarters.”
176. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 178 ff.
177. Report in VB, No. 87, April 7, 1942.
178. DNB note, April 6, 1942.
179. DNB text, April 10, 1942.
180. Report in VB, No. 103, April 13, 1942.
181. DNB report, April 15, 1942.
182. DNB report, April 16, 1942.
183. Twelve aircraft were involved in the attack. Four of the Lancaster bombers were downed during their approach over French territory, three over the city of Augsburg, and one crashed on the return flight. Only four of the planes returned safely to base. It is possible that they followed the same route which Rudolf Hess had chosen for his own escape a year earlier.
184. Report in VB, No. 110, April 20, 1942. Johann Wilhelm Rangell, born 1894; prime minister from 1941 to 1943.
185. DNB text, April 20, 1942.
186. Report in VB, No. 112, April 22, 1942.

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187. DNB text, April 21 and 22, 1942.
188. DNB text, April 22, 1942.
189. Ibid.
190. Formerly the seat of the prince-archbishops of Salzburg, the baroque palace had been renovated and converted into a comfortable residence, where the Reich government put up its guests.
191. Report in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 475 f.
192. Goebbels entered the following into his diary on April 24, 1942: "The Führer phoned me from general headquarters. He has now at last decided to deliver a speech, already planned for some time, before the Reichstag concerning the situation and all the conclusions which he must draw from it. We deliberated as to which day would be most suitable for this session of the Reichstag and agreed that it is to be called for 3.00 p.m. next Sunday." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 183.
193. Ibid., April 26, pp. 186 ff. See also entries for April 25, 1942, in Picker, pp. 78 and 331 f.
194. Henri Honoré Giraud was born in 1879; it is curious to note that he had already escaped from German custody twice before in the course of the First World War. In late May 1940, as a general with the French armed forces, he was taken captive once again and brought to the Königstein fortress in Saxony. His wife was allowed to furnish him with gift packages, in which she concealed civilian clothing for her husband and rope for mountain climbing. On April 17, 1942, he fled down the mountain and escaped his captors. This initiated a large-scale manhunt throughout southern Germany. For days, all major transportation routes were closely patrolled—to little avail, however, since Giraud managed to reach the Alsace region aboard an ordinary passenger train. Before continuing on to Switzerland, he even met up with several German officers and conversed with them. After American forces had landed in North Africa, Giraud crossed the Mediterranean to take command of the Free French volunteer units there, which he led from 1942 to 1944.
195. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 189 f.
196. DNB text, April 26, 1942.
197. Parody of a quotation from Nietzsche.
198. Benjamin Disraeli, born 1804 in London; died 1881; in 1876 was created [1st] earl of Beaconsfield; served as British prime minister in 1868 and again from 1874 to 1880.
199. This statement by Hitler proved the accuracy of Churchill's sarcastic version of history subsequent to the First World War as seen through the eyes of a National Socialist: "After four years of war by land and sea, when Germany was about to win an overwhelming victory, the Jews got at them again, this time from the rear. Armed With President Wilson's Fourteen Points they stabbed, we are told, the German armies in the back, and induced them to ask for an armistice, and even persuaded them, in an unguarded moment, to sign a paper saying that it was they and not the Belgians who had been the ones to begin the War.

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- Such is history as it is taught in topsy-turvydom.” See above, 1939 Major Events in Summary.
200. Hitler always desired to “remain steadfast in face of the impossible, ” and he stubbornly did so, until he finally realized in April 1945 that it made no sense.
201. Allusion to the British special commandos. See above, March 23, 1942. See also below, October 18, 1942.
202. This was an obvious lie, as in the winter of 1939–1940 temperatures had dropped considerably lower. Neither was there any truth to his statement in March that the past winter had been the worst in “over a hundred years.” See above, March 15, 1942. By May of that year, the winter had apparently gotten even colder in retrospect, as Hitler claimed that in the past “hundred fifty years, ” no winter had been as severe. See below, May 29, 1942.
203. Just as Hitler relished comparing himself favorably with Napoleon, the French emperor had greatly enjoyed comparing himself with Charles XII. Napoleon would always end by praising his own performance: “It was Charles XII who traveled two hundred miles deep into enemy territory only to lose his line of operation one day after setting out from Smolensk. He remained without a word from Stockholm for an entire year. Nor did he have any reserve units to relieve him. It was Napoleon who penetrated five hundred and fifty miles deep into enemy territory without ever losing his line of operation. He always maintained close contact with France. And it was Napoleon who received steady reinforcements from there and who positioned three quarters of his army along the Vistula River as reserves. And, finally, Charles XII commanded only forty thousand men, and Napoleon commanded a force of four hundred thousand men. Both operations stand in striking contrast to each other. While the one [Napoleon’s campaign] was well thought out and complied with the exigencies of the art of war, subordinating means to ends, the other [Charles’s campaign] defied any such consideration and was neither well-thought out nor the product of any particular strategy.” Cf. Aretz, p. 396. See also below, Appendix, Indices “Napoleon” and “coincidences.”
204. The source for these figures was Hitler’s imagination. The lowest temperature registered in December 1812 was minus 38 degrees Celsius. See above, 1941, note 507. Referring to the preceding winter in a speech in January 1942, Hitler had claimed that temperatures had fallen to “minus 38, minus 40, minus 41, and, in some instances, to minus 45 degrees [Celsius].” See above, speech of January 30, 1942.
205. Reference is to Napoleon.
206. This remark indicated that Hitler was indeed contemplating another winter campaign.
207. Hitler had enjoyed his, supposedly only, infamous “three-day holiday” aboard the *Robert Ley*, cruising the North Sea from April 2 to April 4, 1939. See above, April 2, 1939. A stay in Wiesbaden from March 20 to March 23 four years earlier had, however, also been explicitly referred

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- to as a “vacation” at the time. See above, March 20, 1935. As he praised his own modest means and diligent work by repeatedly referring to this “three-day holiday,” Hitler consistently failed to mention his numerous visits to the Berghof retreat with his mistress Eva Braun. Hitler was one of those few blessed individuals who can afford to do as they please, engage exclusively in work they greatly enjoy, and are always on vacation for all practical purposes.
208. Reference is to the case of Ewald Schlitt. See above, March 19, 1942, and below, May 2, 1942.
 209. This was a considerable step back from Hitler’s assurances in May 1941 that any strike against Germany would elicit a retaliation a hundred times more severe than the original strike: “My promise to pay him back for every bomb one hundred times from a certain point on, if necessary, has not even once moved this man to think about the criminal nature of his actions.” See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
 210. Reference is to Churchill and Roosevelt.
 211. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 247.
 212. On Hitler’s paranoid fear of Obergruppenführers, see above, 1941, note 527.
 213. See above, p. 498.
 214. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 191 f.
 215. See *ibid.*, p. 194, and below, April 29, 1942.
 216. See above, speech of April 26, 1942, and 1942, note 207.
 217. Entry of April 27, 1942; Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 192.
 218. Report on the evening in Picker, pp. 392 ff.
 219. *Ibid.*, p. 147. Hitler had been a regular at the Osteria Restaurant for decades (the restaurant “Osteria Bavaria” at 62 Schellingstraße is now called “Osteria Italiana”).
 220. See above, June 28, 1940.
 221. On the impression the speech had created in Italy, Ciano observed the following: “The tone [of the speech] is not very optimistic. More than anything else, he looks to the past, how and why the Russian winter was so severe and how they were yet able to overcome it. But there is not a hint of what all are waiting for—the ending of the war. On the contrary, he declared that he is making every preparation to face the eventuality of another winter on the Russian front with more adequate forces. Then he asked for full power over the German people. He already exercises complete power, but by appealing for it in this way he arouses the feeling that the internal situation in Germany needs a still more rigid control. In general, the speech has had a depressing effect in Italy, while Mussolini has judged it to be ‘an excellent and strong speech’.” Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 476.
 222. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 195 f.
 223. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1942.
 224. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 477.
 225. DNB report, April 30, 1942. See also DNB rendition of the communiqué’s text.

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226. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 477 ff. Cf. also the report in Schmidt, pp. 562 f.
227. *Ibid.*, p. 477, noted: "But the ice of Russia has been conquered by the genius of Hitler. This is the strong dish that is served up to me."
228. *Ibid.*
229. Count Ugo Cavallero, chief of the Italian general staff, committed suicide in September 1943.
230. Cf. Picker, pp. 394 ff.
231. *Ibid.*, p. 397.
232. The holiday had been postponed for a day, because May 1 was a Friday, which led Mussolini to the assumption that the delay was due to superstition on Hitler's part. This was not the case. May 2 was chosen because there would be no loss of production on a Saturday.
233. DNB text, May 2, 1942.
234. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 202.
235. DNB text, May 2, 1942.
236. Account by Gerhart Hermann Mostar in his article "Der Fall Schlitt," in *Der Stern* (Hamburg, 1954.)
237. Whenever Freisler was not present, Hitler referred to him as "the Bolshevik," because Freisler had once been a member of the Communist Party. See above, March 21, 1942.
238. See below, May 15, 1942. Like heart attack, stroke, accident, and plane crash, "pneumonia" was among the favorite illnesses which the Reich government cited as the cause of death in many highly suspicious instances. Even in the case of Bürckel's suicide, the official cause of death was given as pneumonia." See below, September 29, 1944.
239. Report in VB, No. 126, May 6, 1942. Thoewald Stauning, born 1873; Danish head of government in 1924 and again from 1929 to 1942.
240. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 198.
241. RGBI, 1942, I, pp. 293 f.
242. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
243. Report in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1942.
244. DNB report, May 12, 1942.
245. Illustrated report in VB, No. 136/137, May 16/17, 1942. Italo Gariboldi had previously served as governor general and commander in chief of the forces in Libya.
246. Report in VB, *ibid.*
247. Report in VB, No. 138, May 18, 1942. The state funeral took place on May 21, 1942, in Lübeck.
248. *Ibid.* See above, 1942, note 238.
249. Cf. Picker, pp. 154 f.
250. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
251. Report in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1942.
252. Illustrated report in VB, No. 146, May 26 1942.
253. Cf. Picker, pp. 244 f.
254. DNB report, May 22, 1942.
255. In both world wars, German propaganda alleged that Allied politicians and military men had originated the popular quip "a good German is a

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- dead German.” It was in fact an adaptation of the American General Philip Sheridan’s sardonic observation that “the only good Indian is a dead one.”
256. DNB texts, May 22, 1942.
257. DNB text, May 25, 1942. Herbert Backe, born 1896 in Tiflis (Tbilisi, Georgia, Russian Empire); committed suicide 1947 in Nuremberg; charged with the conduct of affairs until 1944; appointed minister on April 6, 1944.
258. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 228 f.
259. Cf. Picker, p. 156. Reference is to Sunday, May 24, 1942.
260. Illustrated report in VB, No. 148, May 28, 1942.
261. RGBI, 1942, I, pp. 375 f. The man in the street referred to this award as the “frozen-meat medal.”
262. Report in VB, No. 148, May 28, 1942.
263. The successful attempt on Heydrich’s life took place in Holeshovits, one of Prague’s suburbs. As Heydrich passed by in an open car, his assassins fired on him with machine guns and detonated an explosive device. The two exiled Czechs who carried out the assassination had been trained in England before parachuting from British aircraft into their native land. Cf. Alan Burgess, *Seven Men at Daybreak* (London, 1960).
264. DNB note, May 31, 1942.
265. DNB report, May 28, 1942. Eva Chamberlain, born 1867; daughter of Richard Wagner; wife of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the so-called “Prophet of the Third Reich” (*Seher des Dritten Reiches*).
266. Cf. Picker, pp. 157, 311, 399, and 434.
267. Goebbels made use of Bose in the propaganda department “Center for a Free India” and insisted that Bose’s whereabouts be kept secret. Cf. frequent references to Bose in Goebbels’s *Diaries* (Index). Information on Bose’s visit to Italy on May 4, 1942, in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 481 f. See also above, Preface.
268. *Mein Kampf*, p. 746.
269. DNB text, May 29, 1942. According to the DNB, the conversation had taken place at the Führer headquarters, since Bose’s continued presence in Berlin was to remain confidential.
270. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 184 ff.
271. Report in VB, No. 152, June 1, 1942. A near complete phonographic record is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Le 7 EW 68 953–68 976 (Record No. 68 969 is missing). See also above, pp. 1879 f.
272. See above, Vol III, speeches of May 3 and December 18, 1940, which are quoted in full, for the typical content of those addresses.
273. Author’s expression, cf. Vol I, p. 49.
274. Reference is to Clausewitz, although the statement was made by Heraclitus of Ephesus.
275. The general whom Hitler abused here was the future field marshal, Sir Harold Alexander, who was an Englishman and not an American as Hitler insisted. Facing a desolate situation in Burma, Sir Harold

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- Alexander had his seven thousand men head for India. Hitler also spoke derisively of General MacArthur, who had initially mounted a brave defense of the Philippines at Corregidor. Realizing the hopeless nature of the enterprise, and on orders from President Roosevelt, he set out for Australia in a submarine and led the struggle against the Japanese from there. The future showed that there was much more to General MacArthur than empty phrases, as Hitler would have it.
276. The Russians encircled and cut off the city of Kholm from January to May 1942, while Major General Theodor Scherer and his men tried to hold out.
277. Unwittingly, Hitler was quoting himself and not any ancient wisdom. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 755. The phrase he used was a parody of Christ's words to his Apostles as quoted by Matthew: "And he [Christ] took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" Saint Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26, verses 27–28.
278. Cf. Picker, p. 435.
279. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1942.
280. Carl Gustaf Emil Freiherr von Mannerheim, born 1867; died 1951 in Lausanne; president of Finland from 1944 to 1946.
281. Cf. Baur, pp. 235 f.
282. Reports on the events at Micheli in DNB report, June 4, 1942. Heinz Hüniger reported on the events in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, June 6/7, 1942. Cf. Baur, pp. 240 ff., and Picker, p. 91. While Baur specifies the location as the airfield of Micheli, there is no mention of it in any of the official publications.
283. Hitler had by contrast derided Finland in 1939. He had been particularly irked by the Finnish refusal to enter into a nonaggression pact with Germany. See above, October 16, 1939. Had the Olympic Games taken place in Helsinki two years earlier, Hitler most certainly would not have graced them with his presence.
284. On December 5, 1941, Great Britain had declared war on Finland. The United States had maintained its reserve up to this point because of its close, historic ties to Finland.
285. Cf. Picker, p. 246.
286. Reports in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1942.
287. Report in VB, No. 160, June 9, 1942. Nikolaus Kállay von Nagy-Kállo, born 1887; Hungarian prime minister from 1942 to 1944.
288. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1942.
289. Cf. Picker, pp. 93 f.
290. Reports in VB, No. 160, June 9, 1942.
291. Picker, p. 163.
292. Ibid.
293. DNB text, June 9, 1942.
294. See above, February 12, 1942.

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295. Report in VB, No. 163, June 12, 1942. After a dinner on the evening of July 4, Hitler recalled how he had made it clear to Háchá that, in no circumstances, could he tolerate “further serious infringements upon the interests of the Reich in the protectorate” and that, if necessary, a forced repatriation of the Czech people was within the realm of the possible. Dr. Meissner expanded upon these ideas at a later point. In any event, the threat produced the desired result, and the administration in the protectorate now displayed obviously pro-German leanings. Cf. Picker, pp. 176 f.
296. See above, May 3, 1942.
297. Picker, p. 369.
298. VB, No. 167, June 16, 1942.
299. Report, *ibid.* After Hitler proclaimed both Austria and Russia the new German “Ostmark,” a change of name was certainly appropriate.
300. VB, No. 170, June 19, 1942.
301. DNB text, June 16, 1942. See also above, 1939, note 270.
302. Hitler made these statements on June 22, 1942. Cf. Picker, p. 166.
303. DNB report, June 21, 1942.
304. Report in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, June 22, 1942. See also DNB report, June 21, 1942.
305. *Ibid.* Wagner had suffered a stroke on June 14, 1942.
306. Announcement by the NSDAP’s Reich press office in VB, No. 178/179, June 27/28, 1942. Paul Giesler, born 1895 in Siegen; committed suicide in early May 1945 in Berchtesgaden; appointed Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia in 1941.
307. Picker, p. 166.
308. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 475, 477, 484 f., 499 f. Raeder also approved of the operation with the code name Herkules.
309. DNB text, June 22, 1942. While the telegram was headed the “Führer Headquarters,” it was sent from Berlin, where Hitler was at the time.
310. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 500. Earlier, Rommel’s ambitions were more limited. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 486 f.
311. General Kress von Kressenstein had been in charge of the venture, which had ended with his ignominious defeat by the British General Allenby, who had led the offensive out of Egypt in 1916.
312. A headquarters report dated July 2, 1942, prematurely announced a “breakthrough” at El Alamein, coupled with a British retreat “back into the Nile delta.” As late as July 9, 1942, Hitler also assessed the situation optimistically. Cf. Picker, pp. 109 f.
313. NSKK note, June 23, 1942. Erwin Kraus, born 1894 in Karlsruhe; expert on motorized vehicles by profession; up to this point, inspector with the NSKK technical training and maintenance department.
314. Picker, pp. 167 ff.
315. VB, No. 176, June 25, 1942.
316. Picker, p. 312.
317. Baur, p. 233.
318. DNB report, July 27, 1942.

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319. In a conspicuous move shortly thereafter, von Mannerheim commissioned the Finnish general Talvela to present Brauchitsch with the Grand Cross of the Finnish Liberty Cross. Cf. report in VB, No. 201, July 20, 1942.
320. See above, June 22, 1941.
321. According to the testimony of Paulus before the International Military Tribunal. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, VII, p. 290.
322. The decree was circulated among all troop contingents: the author's notes.
323. Report in VB, No. 182, July 1, 1942.
324. In 1784, as a favorite of Catherine the Great, Potemkin had planned the fortress of Sevastopol to serve primarily as a naval installation. It was not until the Crimean War of 1854–1855 that the brilliant Russian engineer general Totleben accorded the fortress its strategic importance in land warfare. The allied British-French-Turkish army had come ashore at Eupatoria in an attempt to take the fortress by land. The ensuing siege cut off the fortress for eleven consecutive months and took a heavy toll among the troops: 70, 000 of the allied forces and 128, 000 Russians supposedly died as a result. It was not until the fortifications were leveled that the siege proved successful. In the Second World War, too, it took eight months to take the fortress. This was only possible because of a deployment of ground forces consisting mostly of infantry, supported by heavy artillery fire and aerial bombardment.
325. DNB text, July 1, 1942.
326. Ordinance signed by Hitler on July 1, 1942. Cf. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 455. The award was to be accorded to all soldiers who had served under General Scherer in the defense of Kholm. See above, 1942, note 276. The Order of the Crimean Shield was not established until later that month. See below, July 25, 1942.
327. Backe issued a corresponding ordinance on July 5, 1942 (RGBL, 1942, I, p. 443). Cf. also Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 435
328. Report in VB, No. 187, July 6, 1942.
329. Report in VB, Nos. 192/193, July 11/12, 1942.
330. Report in VB, No. 191, July 10, 1942.
331. Report in VB, Nos. 192/193, July 11/12, 1942.
332. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 187 ff. As Hitler intended to cross the highway leading to Kerch in the same manner as Blücher had crossed the Rhine, he chose the code name Blücher for the operation.
333. See above, speech of May 30, 1942.
334. Report in VB, No. 194, July 13, 1942.
335. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1942. Gerede's recall was in all likelihood due to the formation of a new government by Sukru Sartacoglu on July 10, 1942. Gerede's abilities had always greatly impressed Hitler. Cf. Picker, pp. 104 f.
336. Report in VB, No. 196, July 15, 1942.
337. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 463

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338. See above, December 9, 1941. See also above, May 29, 1942.
339. DNB text, July 16, 1942. The communiqué referred to Gailani as the “Iraqi prime minister” as though he were still in office.
340. The Werewolf headquarters was situated in a small forest about fifteen kilometers to the north of Vinnitsa on the Bug River. The German name “Werewolf” (English: werewolf) once more recalled Hitler’s nickname and code name “Wolf” assumed in the early days of the movement. The Werewolf complex comprised a number of log cabins and two bunkers, the only fortifications at the site. Furnishings resembled those at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia but, by contrast, the Werewolf headquarters made a much more favorable impression on the onlooker, according to contemporary reports. Cf. Picker, pp. 37 f. Also cf. Schmidt, p. 564.
341. Cf. report on this reception in Ferdinand Sauerbruch, *Das war mein Leben* (Bad Wörishofen, 1951), pp. 545 f. Born in 1892, Numan Menemencioglu served as Turkish foreign minister from August 13, 1942, until June 15, 1944. Hitler had made his acquaintance in Munich before the war. While the Führer had high hopes that Menemencioglu’s appointment would benefit Germany, he was, however, to be disappointed. Sauerbruch operated on the Turkish statesman twice in September 1942. In the course of this stay in Turkey, Sauerbruch also spoke before the Turkish Physicians’ Association. DNB report, October 10, 1942.
342. Cf. Picker, p. 181.
343. Actually, this particular system was not so very different from the German one, as Hitler apparently assumed. In the days of the German empire, township signs also revealed which defense district and headquarters a village belonged to.
344. Report in VB, No. 201, July 20, 1942.
345. Report in VB, No. 202, July 21, 1942.
346. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 191 ff.
347. Report in VB, No. 204, July 23, 1942.
348. Report in VB, No. 206, July 25, 1942.
349. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 193 ff. Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony (1142–1180) and of Bavaria (1156–1180); House of Braunschweig (English: Brunswick)–Lüneburg.
350. Hitler was probably referring to the conquest of Rostov on the Don River. Another objective had been city of Voronezh. However, this attempt had failed, and so Hitler preferred not to mention this similarly “essential” issue.
351. On July 31, 1942, the code name Feuerzauber (Fire Magic) was changed to Nordlicht (Northern Lights).
352. Critics such as Halder and Tippelskirch objected to the linkage of the two targets. Hitler’s dual move toward the Caucasus and the city of Stalingrad was a serious strategic mistake. By no means, however, did these two particular enterprises represent Hitler’s only shortcomings as a warlord. Practically all his military ventures from September 3, 1939,

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- on were based on faulty strategies. The “victorious” campaigns against Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece could not change anything. The outcome of the war had long been determined before Hitler undertook these moves. The foray of September 3, 1939, allowed for only one outcome, cost the lives of millions of Germans, and laid waste all of Germany.
353. Cf. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 487. This particular pin was similar to the Shield of Kholm and the Narvik Shield. Like these, it was worn on the left sleeve. Hitler either designed these awards himself or gave detailed instructions for their production. On July 1, 1942, Hitler had already announced the issuing of an award connected to the Crimean campaign. See above, July 1, 1941. A relief of the Crimean Peninsula adorned the center of the medal topped by the sovereign symbol and the date 1941–1942.
354. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 481.
355. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 488.
356. RGBI, 1942, I, pp. 515 ff. Cf. also DNB announcement, August 26, 1942.
357. DNB texts, July 29 and 30, 1942.
358. DNB report, August 2, 1942.
359. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 512.
360. Report in VB, No. 221, August 9, 1942. It was Colonel General Wiese who placed the “Führer’s wreath” at the state ceremony in the Reich ministry for aviation on August 10, 1942.
361. Reports in VB, No. 228, August 16, 1942. Cf. also Schmidt, p. 566. Saffet Arikian, born 1888 in Anatolia; died in 1947; minister of education from 1937 to 1938; minister of defense from 1940 to 1941.
362. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 197 ff.
363. See above, May 4, 1942.
364. Report in VB, No. 226, August 14, 1942. The *Völkischer Beobachter* first mentioned this development in its August 14, 1942, issue, claiming that the American soldiers felt “lonely and isolated” in England.
365. See above, 1942, note 158.
366. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 566 ff.
367. Final OKW report of August 29, 1942, on the situation at Dieppe. Report in VB, No. 242, August 30, 1942.
368. Cf. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 535.
369. In accordance with the resolution adopted by the Greater German Reichstag on April 26, 1942. See above, April 26, 1942.
370. DNB texts, August 24, 1942. Otto Georg Thierack, born 1889 in Wurzen, (Saxony); suicide in 1946 at the Eselheide camp (Sennelager); Reich minister of justice from 1942 to 1945. Franz Schlegelberger, born 1876 in Königsberg. Senator Rothenberger, born 1896 in Cuxhaven.
371. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 535.
372. Report in VB, No. 244, September 1 1942.
373. Frank had angered Hitler by declaring at a lawyers’ convention in Munich that mercy also constituted a legal remedy.

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374. After the dissolution of various smaller institutions, six concentration camps were already in operation before the war: Dachau (Bavaria), Sachsenhausen (Hesse), Ravensbrück (Mecklenburg), Buchenwald (near Weimar), Mauthausen (near Linz), and Flossenbürg (Upper Palatinate). It was at these locations that Hitler herded together his domestic opponents—Jews, Freemasons, Marxists, Catholic and Lutheran clergymen, and biblical scholars—in order to imprison, torture, and kill them. Additional sites (like Bergen-Belsen, Maidanek, and Narzweiler) were constructed during the war. Now Jews and patriots from the occupied countries were brought there, forced to do hard labor, abused in medical experiments, starved, and literally worked to death. For Thierack and the September 18, 1942, decree, cf. IMT, 654-PS.
375. DNB text, August 20, 1942.
376. Report in VB, No. 234, August 22, 1942. Stephan von Horthy, born 1904 in Poland; died 1942; engineer by profession; worked with the Ford Company; highly unpopular with the Axis powers because of his pro-Jewish stance. In February 1942, Goebbels had noted: “Horthy’s son is a pronounced Jew-lover, an Anglophile to the bones. . . in short, a personality with whom, if he were regent of Hungary, we would have some difficulties to iron out.” Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 95.
377. Cf. Baur, p. 224.
378. See above, April 12, 1938.
379. Report in VB, No. 238, August 26, 1942.
380. Report in VB, No. 240, August 28, 1942.
381. Report in VB, No. 244, September 1, 1942.
382. DNB text, September 1, 1942.
383. Report in VB, No. 249, September 6, 1942. Count Julius Karolyi had been married to Paulette von Horthy who had died in 1940.
384. Stalingrad was first mentioned in an OKW report dated August 28, 1942. In the weeks and months to come, Stalingrad made daily appearances in the reports. The words used to describe the situation became ever more grotesque.
385. Cf. Helmuth Greiner, *Die Oberste Wehrmachtsführung 1939–1943* (Wiesbaden, 1951), p. 407.
386. See above, August 20, 1942.
387. Cf. account on the situation in Heinz Linge, Sequence No. IV.
388. Henry Picker had already left the Werewolf headquarters in August. The last account he gives of Hitler’s table talk is dated July 31, 1942.
389. Helmut Heiber’s research convincingly argues that Hitler had already been contemplating the installation of a stenographer’s office at the Werewolf headquarters in early July 1942. Cf. Heiber, *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen*, p. 14.
390. *Ibid.*, p. 18. In the years 1942 to 1945, these earlier papers were referred to about a dozen times in the daily briefings, according to Heiber. The object of these referrals is not known, however. Nevertheless, it appears beyond reasonable doubt that none of the participants would question Hitler’s word outright and demand consultation of the protocols of

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- earlier meetings. Hitler himself looked at them only once in order to check some insignificant matter.
391. See above, speech of September 4, 1940.
 392. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
 393. See above, order of the day, January 1, 1941.
 394. See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
 395. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 52.
 396. DNB text, September 11, 1942.
 397. Reports in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1942.
 398. VB, No. 260, September 17, 1942.
 399. Report in VB, No. 262, September 19, 1942. Juan Antonio Rios Morales, born 1888; died 1946; state president from 1942 to 1946.
 400. DNB note, September 26, 1942. Rama VIII Mahidol, born 1925; king of Thailand from 1935 to 1946.
 401. Report in VB, No. 264, September 21, 1942.
 402. Report in VB, No. 268, September 25, 1942.
 403. DNB text, September 25, 1942.
 404. *Ibid.*
 405. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 265. Hitler was so outraged by Jodl's behavior on September 7, 1942, that for many months he refused to shake the general's hand. Secretly he was scheming to replace the unruly military man with General Paulus. This proved impossible because Paulus was taken prisoner at Stalingrad. Moreover, Hitler always felt ill at ease when new faces appeared in his entourage. Apparently, he felt that Jodl's continued presence was the lesser of two evils.
 406. Cf. Halder, p. 14. See also above, August 26, 1938.
 407. Cf. Halder's war diary on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. The Wehrmacht issued Halder a dishonorable discharge on January 28, 1945. He was imprisoned at a number of concentration camps, such as Dachau. On April 28, 1945, American troops liberated him.
 408. In Hitler's eyes, "the zealous belief in an idea" meant unquestioning obedience to him.
 409. Kurt Zeitzler, born 1895; chief of staff of the First Panzer Division in the winter months of 1941–1942; promoted by Hitler to the rank of major general in February 1942; chief of the general staff to von Rundstedt in France from April 1942 on.
 410. Reports in VB, No. 269, September 26, 1942.
 411. DNB texts, September 27, 1942.
 412. DNB text, September 29, 1942. Elly Ney, born September 27, 1882, in Düsseldorf; famous pianist.
 413. DNB text, September 28, 1942.
 414. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
 415. DNB text, September 30, 1942.
 416. Allusion to Churchill. He had visited Washington in June, journeyed first to Cairo, and then to Moscow in August. Hitler was greatly annoyed that he was not in a position to undertake similar voyages and

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- that circumstances allowed him no more than flying around the Ukraine.
417. Allusion to a slogan contained in the Atlantic Charter.
 418. Allusion to the Commando raid at Dieppe. See above, August 19, 1942.
 419. Reference is to a retaliatory foray, which was launched in an attempt to hinder the Russian breakthrough in the area around Leningrad.
 420. This marked emphasis (see also below, speech of November 8, 1942) reveals that Hitler was apparently not as indifferent to this fact as he pretended. It is one of the often mentioned strange “coincidences” that the lost battle for Stalingrad was to mark the turning point of the war and the beginning of Hitler’s downfall. See also below, note 460; October 29, 1942.
 421. Every time Hitler declared that time would tell if something was a mistake, time proved it so. See above, 1939, note 452.
 422. GPU or OGPU = abbreviation of Obedinyonnoye Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye (Unified State Political Administration) former (1922–1923) name for KGB, Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti, the Committee of State Security, that is, the Soviet Security Police.
 423. Hitler was referring to the experiences which he claimed to have had with the Russians in 1939. At the time, he had only too willingly entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union.
 424. Allied radar equipment managed to overcome the danger posed by German U-boats, despite German countermeasures, like the Metox instrument *Schnorchel* (snorkel).
 425. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
 426. See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
 427. In his speech of September 1, 1939, Hitler had avoided making any derogatory statements about the Jews. The threat, which he claimed to have made then, actually dated from an earlier speech on January 30, 1939. See above, speech of September 1, 1939; Vol. III, p. 1449. See also above, 1939, note 119.
 428. In a statement after the war, Rudolf Höss, the commander of Auschwitz, admitted killing more than two-and-a-half million people there. IMT, 3668-PS. Cf. also Martin Broszat, *Kommandant in Auschwitz, Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen von Rudolf Höss* (Stuttgart, 1958).
 429. Applause drowned out Hitler’s subsequent remarks.
 430. In 1938, Hitler had repeatedly proclaimed that, either by a plebiscite or by the election of a Greater German Reichstag, the German Volk would undoubtedly bestow its blessings on what he called the “birth certificate of the Greater German Reich.” See above, March 12, 1938. See also above, December 2, 1938.
 431. Illustrated report in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1942.
 432. DNB text, October 3, 1942.
 433. Living in Würzburg at the time, Fritz Bayerlein had initially served as chief of staff with the German Africa Corps. From June 1942 on, he had

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- occupied a similar position with the German-Italian joint tank forces and was later promoted to the rank of lieutenant general. In cooperation with Rommel's widow, Bayerlein published a book written by her late husband. *Erwin Rommel, Krieg ohne Haß*, Fritz Bayerlein and Lucie-Maria Rommel, editors. (Bad Wörishofen, 1951). *English Translation Rommel Papers*, ed. Liddell-Hart.
434. DNB text, October 2, 1942.
435. Report in VB, No. 276, October 3, 1942.
436. Report in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1942.
437. DNB text, October 4, 1942.
438. DNB report, October 6, 1942.
439. A small commando attack on the Island of Sark in the English Channel had taken place on October 4, 1942.
440. Hitler could not maintain this challenge, because German prisoners of war in British hands greatly outnumbered the British troops whom the Wehrmacht had succeeded in capturing. This was particularly the case after Montgomery's offensive at El Alamein where he took a considerable number of new captives. Thus Hitler was forced to rescind this measure by May and labored to do so in the least conspicuous manner possible, as noted by Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 382. See below, May 13, 1943. See also below, 1943, note 213.
441. The so-called *Kommandobefehl* to implement this provision was issued later that month. See below, October 18, 1942.
442. VB, No. 281, October 8, 1942. A former member of a university militia unit, Aldo Vidussoni had risen to this post through connections. Old Fascists greatly disliked him, as is evident in Ciano's diary.
443. Report in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1942. Von Stauss had entered the Reichstag in the early 1930s and remained a member.
444. Report in VB, No. 283, October 10, 1942.
445. Report in VB, No. 287, October 14, 1942.
446. Report in VB, No. 289, October 16, 1942.
447. DNB text, October 25, 1942.
448. Army Report (A. 919), November 7, 1942.
449. *Ibid.*, No. 932.
450. The only convention this might have applied to was the Hague Convention on land warfare. Hitler could afford to make such an obviously incorrect claim only because the majority of Germany's military men were not familiar with the international conventions on the conduct of war and the laws covering these. For Hitler's claim that the Soviet Union was not a party to the Geneva Convention, see above, March 30, 1941.
451. IMT, 498-PS.
452. See above, 1941, note 136.
453. Cf. RGBl, 1942, I, p. 631. The insignia worn on the left forearm. consisted of a metal wheel with spikes surrounded by a laurel wreath set on a background which was made from a piece of cloth.
454. Cf. Rommel, p. 482.

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455. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 536.
456. DNB texts, October 28, 1942.
457. DNB text, October 29, 1942.
458. See above, speech of September 30, 1942.
459. Born in 1895 in Fumanovka (Bessarabia), Marshal Semën Konstantinovich Timoshenko was one example of this. He had led a successful cavalry charge against the city. Another well-known military man, whose fame was closely connected to the site was the then chief of the Tsaritsyn garrison, Marshal Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov (born in 1881 in the Don region).
460. A similar strange “coincidence” was the circumstance that Hitler chose June 22 for his attack on Russia, unaware of the fact that his predecessor Napoleon had chosen exactly this date for the beginning of his disastrous campaign against Russia. See above, June 22, 1942. Another conspicuous example was the halfhearted plans of both dictators for an invasion of England, including their choice of the same ports for the crossing of the Channel and of nearly the same number of flat barges, which were completely unsuitable for such an undertaking. See above, pp. 2093 f., September 15, 1940, and below, Appendix, Index “Napoleon” (for example, 1941, note 550; 1942, notes 125, 203).
461. For Halder’s recollections on this topic, see above, September 8, 1942.
462. Reports in VB, Nos. 308 and 309, November 4 and 5, 1942. The state funeral took place on November 7, 1942. Hitler did not attend, even though he was free at the time. He preferred to send Epp in his stead to lay the “Führer’s wreath.”
463. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
464. The telegram reached Rommel at 1:30 p.m. on November 3, 1942. The German public was not informed of this telegram. Its text was not published until much later. Cf. Rommel, p. 268.
465. High command of the Italian armed forces.
466. Three special reports, which detailed German submarine advances in the waters between the North Pole and Madagascar, were aired on Sunday, November 1, 1942. These supposed victories were only propaganda to encourage the German people. In the period between November 8, 1942, and January 8, 1943, nine hundred seventy-one Allied vessels docked in North Africa with a total tonnage of 7.6 million tons. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 80.
467. November 7, 1942, entry into the *War Diary of the Wehrmachtsführungsstab* (Supreme Council of the Wehrmacht).
468. See above, May 29, 1942.
469. See above, December 10, 1940.
470. Official title of all participants at the meeting; cf. DNB text, November 8, 1942.
471. See above, 1942, note 207.
472. November 8, 1942, entry into the *War Diary of the Wehrmachtsführungsstab*.

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473. The Bürgerbräukeller had not yet reopened because of the damage caused by the explosion three years earlier.
474. See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
475. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
476. VB, No. 314, November 10, 1942.
477. In 1932, the movement had at least eleven and a half million members, possibly even thirteen million. Hitler was evidently confusing the time ten years before with the years 1919 and 1920.
478. Hitler failed, however, to detail precisely what “lost wars” he had in mind.
479. According to Hitler, the Greater German Reich in 1939 did not yet constitute a “real state” in accordance with National Socialist doctrine.
480. Hitler was slowly beginning to admit more realistic casualty figures. This time, he claimed that a total of “not even three hundred fifty thousand men” had died up to this point.
481. See above, notes 420 and 460.
482. Every time Hitler asserted that time would tell if something was a mistake, time proved it so. See above, 1939, note 452.
483. These figures were once again based on Hitler’s vivid imagination and nothing else.
484. Before releasing the speech, Hitler inserted “in Europe” into the published version. After all, recent developments in Africa had undermined his claim. This insert proved that Hitler himself was beginning to realize the gravity of the situation. Soon thereafter, he would have also had to strike “in Europe” from the text.
485. See above, note 43.
486. See above, 1941, note 44. See also above, 1941, note 529. Further see above, 1942, note 202.
487. Roosevelt had indeed opened his Statement Concerning American Military Operations in French North Africa of November 7, 1942, with the following words:
“In order to forestall an invasion of Africa by Germany and Italy, which, if successful, would constitute a direct threat to America across the comparatively narrow sea from western Africa, a powerful American force equipped with adequate weapons of modern warfare and under American command is today landing on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of the French colonies in Africa.
“The landing of this American army is being assisted by the British navy and air forces and it will, in the immediate future, be reinforced by a considerable number of divisions of the British army.
“This combined allied force, under American command, in conjunction with the British campaign in Egypt, is designed to prevent an occupation by the Axis armies of any part of northern or western Africa and to deny the aggressor nations a starting point from which to launch an attack against the Atlantic coast of the Americas.” AFR, Vol. V, pp. 547 ff.

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488. This remark clearly shows that Hitler indeed suffered from a guilty conscience for having once more permitted himself to indulge in a vacation at the Berghof.
489. Hitler was referring to the rockets, the so-called V weapons. In the end, they proved incapable of influencing the course of history, just like all other “secret weapons,” like magnetic mines, automatic machine guns and thousand-ton panzers, to name only a few.
490. Report on this conference in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 541 ff., and Schmidt, pp. 576 f.
491. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 541 f.
492. Although German troops were still there, the Allies successfully landed in 1944. See below, August 15, 1944.
493. DNB text, November 11, 1942.
494. Ibid.
495. As Toulon was quite far from the line of demarcation, the French fleet could easily have fled on word of the Italo-German invasion. This was the reason that Hitler used a trick; cf. OKW report of November 13, 1942.
496. During and after the First World War, Giraud had served for many years under Marshal Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (1854–1934) in Africa and had become an expert on the area. As early as November 3, he was taken aboard an American submarine and later flown to General Eisenhower’s headquarters. Admiral Darlan was still in Africa on November 8, 1942, but ordered his troops to cease resisting the advances of the Allies.
497. DNB text, November 11, 1942.
498. DNB note, November 16, 1942.
499. Ibid. For the V weapons see below, 1944, May 16 and June 16 ff.
500. Illustrated report in VB, No. 323, November 19, 1942.
501. Cf. chapter “Stalingrad” in Kurt Zeitzler, *The Fatal Decisions* (New York, 1956). Cf. also chapter “Die Schlacht um Stalingrad” in Walter Görlitz, *Entscheidungsschlachten des 2. Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt, 1959). See further “Das Drama von Stalingrad” in von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 128 ff., and H. Doerr, *Der Feldzug nach Stalingrad* (Darmstadt, 1955).
502. At the time, kings always addressed other kings and emperors as “brother.” Charles XII defeated the Russians in the Battle of Narva on November 20, 1700.
503. Cf. Doerr, p. 74.
504. In the winter of 1941–1942, Major General Scherer had been encircled in the city of Kholm, where he had faced off the enemy for over three months. He had been supplied by airlifts until other German troops came to his rescue. See above, May 30, 1942. However, the men surrounded in Kholm had numbered only two thousand in contrast to the three hundred thousand soldiers isolated in Stalingrad (!).
505. See above, 1939, note 771.
506. Report in VB, No. 329, November 25, 1942.

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507. See above, speech of April 29, 1937. The speech before a Kreisleiter gathering at the Vogelsang Ordensburg is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
508. Cf. chapter “Die Selbstversenkung der französischen Flotte in Toulon” in von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 105 ff.
509. *Mein Kampf*, p. 754.
510. DNB text, November 27, 1942.
511. These numbers once more were figments of Hitler’s imagination and had no basis in reality. Although some captured enemy soldiers were released, as in the case of the loyalty displayed by the inhabitants of the Dieppe region in face of a British commando assault, there was no release of prisoners of war on the scale indicated by Hitler.
512. Report in VB, No. 333, November 29, 1942.
513. Cf. Rommel, pp. 314 f.
514. Report in VB, No. 337, December 3, 1942.
515. Cf. Heiber, pp. 50 ff.
516. VB, No. 338, December 4, 1942.
517. Report in VB, No. 339, December 5, 1942.
518. Reports in VB, Nos. 341 and 343, December 7 and 9, 1942.
519. Report in VB, No. 342, December 8, 1942.
520. Report in VB, No. 344, December 10, 1942.
521. Report in VB, No. 347, December 13, 1942.
522. Report in VB, No. 345, December 11, 1942.
523. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 705.
524. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 725.
525. See above, April 26, 1942.
526. RGBL, 1942, I, pp. 733 ff.
527. This provision made the party a “corporation under public law,” whose statutes would be laid down by the Führer. See above, January 30, 1934. Hitler had attempted to block this move out of fear that he would have to give up part of his absolute control over the party.
528. Cf. Heiber, pp. 84 ff.
529. See above, speech of March 25, 1938.
530. Hitler made it sound as though the summer offensive had been stopped at Voronezh for such a long time because of negligence. This was not true, since the reason for the delay had been the strength of the defense mounted by the Russian troops and the resulting inability of the German units to take and hold this strategic location. This delay was one of the reasons for the Stalingrad tragedy. See above, July 23, 1942.
531. In the years from 1939 to 1943, Hitler’s speeches before officer candidates were characterized by an unjustified exuberance. See above, January 24, 1940. For the typical content of these appeals, see above, speeches of May 3 and December 18, 1940.
532. Göring spoke instead of Hitler on December 10, 1942. DNB report, December 18, 1942. Goebbels remarked that, according to Colonel Martin, “the speech was not a very happy one. Delivery was poor, and

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- some remarks about death on the battlefield were in rather poor taste.”
Goebbels *Diaries*, p. 250.
533. Cf. Heiber, pp. 85 f.
534. Mussolini was suffering from a stomach ulcer at the time.
535. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 556. Reports on the talks also in Schmidt, pp. 577 f.
536. *Ibid.* 557.
537. DNB text, December 20, 1942.
538. Cf. Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege* (Bonn, 1955).
539. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 204 ff.
540. This appendix is not printed: *ibid.* The plenipotentiary for Greece, appointed on April 28, 1941, represented the political, economic, and cultural interests of Germany in Greece.
541. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
542. Cf. Greiner, p. 431.

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Notes

1. See above, January 1, 1940.
2. See above, January 1, 1941.
3. See above, January 1, 1942.
4. See below, January 1, 1943.
5. According to the testimony of Paulus before the International Military Tribunal (IMT, *Blaue Serie*, VII, p. 290), Hitler had declared before the summer offensive of 1942: "If I don't get the oil from Maikop and Grozny, then I'll just have to liquidate this war." See above, July 1, 1942.
6. See above, speech of November 8, 1941: "The last battalion on the field will be a German one!"
7. See above, January 30, 1939.
8. See above, January 30, 1939
9. On the law concerning the term of the Reichstag, see below, law of January 25, 1943. On the decree concerning governmental legislation, see below, decree of May 10, 1943.
10. See above, April 26, 1943.
11. See below, July 25, 1943.
12. Goebbels noted: "For example, Manstein, as Göring told me, on one occasion was even prevailed upon to suggest to the Führer that he lay down the supreme command. This didn't actually happen, as he was told off before he could carry out this intention, but the Führer got to know of it anyway and has drawn the necessary conclusion about Manstein." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p, 265
13. In the course of 1943, Hitler's constant defamation of Göring and Schirach increasingly influenced Goebbels, as is evident in his diary entries from this period. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 295, 297, 307 f., 337, 364, 478 regarding Göring and pp. 309, 319, 342, and 362 f. regarding Schirach.
14. See above, August 7, 1940.
15. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 362 f.
16. Before the Nuremberg Court on April 1, 1946, von Ribbentrop testified regarding a related conversation between Hitler and Himmler in 1943: "I am not aware of any details in this case. I just know that, in my presence, Himmler suggested that Hitler should haul Schirach before the Volksgericht for one reason or another and put him on trial." IMT, *Blaue Serie*, X, p. 365.
17. Hitler always insisted that the British praised Rommel in an attempt to explain their defeat at Cyrenaica in 1942. Only reluctantly did Hitler admit to the extraordinary gifts of his general. Nevertheless, he insisted that Rommel's success stemmed from Hitler's earlier realization of the potential of motorized vehicles and, therefore, the Führer actually deserved the credit for these advances. Cf. Picker, p. 164.

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18. See above, speech of April 26, 1942. "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give his blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible."
19. Cf. A. Vagts, "Unconditional surrender—vor und nach 1943, " in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 7 (Munich, 1959), pp. 280 ff.; Hermann Mau and Helmut Krausnick, *Deutsche Geschichte der jüngsten Vergangenheit 1933–1945* (Tübingen, 1956), p. 157.; Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1955), pp. 323 ff.; Bernd Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende* (Zurich, 1948), Vol. II, p. 258.; Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat* (Munich, 1969); Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (New York, 1948–1953), Vol. IV; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), Vol. II, pp. 1570 ff.
20. See above, p. 1136.
21. See above, 1939 Major Events in Summary.
22. See above, October 3, 1939.
23. Ibid.
24. See above, June 22, 1941.
25. Von Moos, Vol. III, p. 69; *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 10, p. 532.
26. *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 10, p. 515.
27. R. E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt und Hopkins* (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 565 ff. The British ministry of information published an official communiqué on the Casablanca Conference on January 27, 1943. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 94; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1948, revised edition, 1950, pp. 696–697.
28. See above, May 28, 1940.
29. See above, June 22, 1940.
30. Christoph Probst, Hans Scholl, and his sister Sophia were students at the University of Munich and together they published the "*Blätter der weissen Rose*." These fliers strongly criticized Hitler's regime and its abuses of power. They received support from many other students. The philosophy professor Hans Huber encouraged them greatly. On February 18, 1943, they distributed fliers by secretly dropping them from above into the Lichthof court of the University of Munich. The following quotation perhaps best illustrates their determined stand against those in power at the time: "Profoundly shaken, our Volk faces the tragic end of our men at Stalingrad. The 'ingenious strategy' of an irresponsible World War private first class has senselessly driven three hundred thousand Germans to death and ruin. Are we willing to sacrifice what remains of Germany's youth to the base lust for power of this party clique? The day of judgment has come, Germany's youth passes judgment on the most despicable tyranny ever to befall the German Volk." Tragically, the three students were seen dropping the fliers and arrested. Freisler sentenced them to death on February 21, 1943, after they fearlessly acknowledged their actions and bluntly told

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- him their opinion of him. Sophia Scholl told him: “You know just as well as we do that this war is lost. Why do you behave in such a cowardly way and why can you not simply face it?” Further readings on the subject: Inge Scholl, *Die weisse Rose* (Frankfurt, 1952); Ricarda Huch, “Die Aktion Münchner Studenten gegen Hitler” in *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, September/October issue (Zurich, 1948); John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power* (New York, 1953).
31. DNB text, January 1, 1943.
 32. Author’s expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
 33. What Hitler alleged that the Allies had done was simply what he had done to the nations which he had subjugated.
 34. Reference is to Roosevelt.
 35. DNB text, January 1, 1943.
 36. Hitler usually claimed these decisions would determine the fate of the German people for the next one thousand years. See above, May 9, 1940. See above, November 8, 1941.
 37. Here Hitler acted as though he would have been willing to “make compromises” with the enemy after September 9, 1939.
 38. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 565.
 39. Report in VB, No. 2, January 2, 1943.
 40. Report in VB, No. 3, January 3, 1943.
 41. Thomsen served as attaché at the Washington embassy until 1941.
 42. DNB text, January 1, 1943.
 43. Cf. Sauckel’s notes on Speer’s call from the Führer headquarters on January 4, 1943. IMT, 556 (13)-PS.
 44. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1943.
 45. DNB text, January 7, 1943. Hitler feared a Turkish intervention, along with a move by the Allies. This concern was not unfounded, as a meeting at Adana between Churchill and Ismet İnönü showed on January 31, 1943.
 46. Von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 132.
 47. As mentioned earlier, the excellence of the Russian artillery forces played a decisive role in Russia’s struggle both against Napoleon and against Hitler. See above, June 30, 1941.
 48. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 568.
 49. Cf. Schmidt, p. 561.
 50. DNB text, January 13, 1943.
 51. Up to this point, the title had always been “head of state.”
 52. Report in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1943.
 53. DNB note, January 12, 1943. Franz Hueber, born 1894 in Gründberg (Upper Austria); served as Austrian minister of justice in 1930 and in 1938.
 54. Propaganda and the German media made ample use of this occasion: big headlines were placed above retouched photographs of Paulus with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross.
 55. The units in question were the Army Corps IV, VIII, XI, and LI. The following contingents from the XIV Panzer Corps and XLVIII Panzer

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- Corps also participated: Infantry Divisions 44, 71, 76, 113, 295, 297, 350, 371, 376, 384, and 389; the 100th Light Division; Motorized Divisions 3, 29, and 60; Panzer Divisions 14, 16, and 24; one anti-aircraft division; the 1st Romanian Cavalry Division; the 20th Romanian Infantry Division; and one Croatian regiment.
56. Report in VB, No. 20, January 20, 1943.
 57. DNB text, January 21, 1943.
 58. DNB notes, January 21, 1943.
 59. Cf. Heinz Schröter, *Stalingrad—bis zur letzten Patrone* (Lengerich, 1953). See also the testimony of Paulus at Nuremberg; IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. VII, p. 320.
 60. Text published in von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 133.
 61. See above, speech of February 15, 1942.
 62. Hitler accorded little importance to the title “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” which would have been more appropriate in the context of passing laws and issuing decrees. He was partial to the simplicity of “Der Führer, ” although in official statements addressed to foreign countries he was also referred to as “Der Deutsche Reichskanzler.” Hitler signed as “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” for the last time when he placed his signature beneath a relatively unimportant law on aviation. RGBl, 1943, I, p. 69. In view of his powers, he apparently felt that the title of “Reichskanzler” was unimportant and, therefore, he did without afterwards.
 63. RGBl, 1943, I, p. 65.
 64. RGBl, 1943, I, pp. 67 f.
 65. Cf. Bullock, p. 690. The Battle of Thermopylae took place in central Greece in 480 BC.
 66. See above, Göring’s speech of September 9, 1939.
 67. VB, No. 30, January 30, 1943.
 68. VB, No. 34, February 2, 1943.
 69. In the German original, Göring used the verb *kämpfen* (to fight) instead of the more appropriate term *liegen* (to lie) in the context of this parody. He feared that this might not produce the desired propagandist effect. The original quotation ran as follows: “*Wanderer, kommst du nach Sparta, so berichte, du habest uns liegen gesehen, wie das Gesetz es befahl.*” (If you come to Sparta, wanderer, then tell of us, tell that you saw us lying [dead], as the law commanded.) Leonidas, king of Sparta, defended the Pass of Thermopylae to the death against a much greater force of Persians.
 70. See above, speech of May 30; 1942.
 71. DNB text, January 30, 1943.
 72. Author’s expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
 73. This statement was a blatant lie, as the reason for this development had been the German attack on Danzig and Poland. Hitler had repeatedly been warned about the possible consequences of this move.

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74. DNB report, January 30, 1943. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, born 1903 in Ried (Upper Austria); hanged in Nuremberg in 1946; state secretary for security from 1938 on.
75. DNB text, January 30, 1943. While, in one order of the day, Raeder maintained that he had requested retirement “in consideration of his [poor] state of health, ” it was obvious that the previous differences of opinion between Hitler and himself had played a decisive role in this development.
76. Report in VB, No. 32, February 2, 1943. Ernst von Kleist, born in 1881 in Braunfels; died in 1945 in Russia. Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs, born in 1881 in Dessau; died in 1954 at the Roesberg fortress outside Cologne. Ernst Busch, born in 1885 in Essen-Steele; died in 1945 in England.
77. DNB report, January 30, 1943.
78. VB, No. 32, February 1, 1943. This issue also features the telegrams sent to Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini.
79. Report, *ibid.*
80. DNB text, January 31, 1943. The first mention of the Sixth Army as the unit which had been encircled was in an OKW report dated January 25, 1943.
81. Walter Heitz, born in 1878 in Berlin; died in February 1944 in Russia.
82. Hitler gave Rommel the choice either of judgment by the notorious Volksgerichtshof and a dishonorable discharge from the Wehrmacht or of committing suicide, thereby preserving his pension in favor of his family. Rommel chose suicide.
83. Among those taken prisoner by the Soviet forces were the following military leaders: Colonel General Walter Heitz (VIII Army Corps); Infantry General Strecker (XI Army Corps); Lieutenant General Arthur Schmidt (chief of staff); Lieutenant General Helmut Schloemer (XIV Panzer Corps); Lieutenant General Walter von Seydlitz-Kurtzbach (LI Army Corps); Major General Pfeffer (297th Infantry Division); Lieutenant General Edler von Daniels (376th Infantry Division); Major General Arno von Lenski (24th Panzer Division); Major General Martin Lattmann (14th Panzer Division); Major General Roske (71st Infantry Division); Major General Wolf (head of the artillery); Major General Moritz von Drebber; Major General Dr. Korfes; Major General (Medical) Dr. Renoldi; and the Romanian Brigadier General Homilu Dimitriu.
84. On May 26, 1941, Admiral Lütjens sent the following radio message on the situation of the *Bismarck*: “Ship unmaneuverable. We will fight to the last shell. Long live the Führer! Fleet Commander.” In view of the hopelessness of the situation, Lütjens ordered the ship sunk with the crew of two thousand men aboard. See above, May 26, 1941.
85. The commander of the 371st Infantry Division, Major General Stempel, shot himself on January 26, 1943. Major General Alexander von Hartmann, commander of the 71st Infantry Division, died that same

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day. Without cover, he stood on a railway dam and shot at the advancing Russian troops himself.

86. General Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma was a perfect example of this. The commander of the German Africa Corps gave himself up on November 4, 1942, following the British breakthrough at EI Alamein. He then went on to dine with Montgomery.
87. Along with the generals, about ninety-one thousand German soldiers were taken prisoner in Stalingrad, the majority of whom were half-starved, frostbitten, and at the end of their strength. According to official statistics compiled in the Federal Republic of Germany, only five thousand of these men returned to Germany after the war. Following the ordeal in Stalingrad, most of them were too weak to survive the rigors of Russian prisoner-of-war camps. Large numbers of them are said to have died already in the winter of 1943, victims of a typhoid epidemic. Although it is hard to believe, these men were far luckier than those millions of German soldiers who were captured later and many of whom remained in captivity until 1955. However, any army fighting the Red Army had to realize that its prisoners of war would not be treated any better than the Red Army treats its own men. International conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war simply demand that they be treated like the captor's own troops. In the case of Russia, the conditions of war captivity are naturally difficult for the foreigner, who is not used to the harsh climate and the persistent malnutrition.

In the Second World War, the situation was further complicated by the fact that, in the years 1941 and 1942, Russian prisoners of war were kept by the German side in conditions that constituted an obvious breach of all international conventions on war captivity. Hundreds of thousands of Russians were either liquidated or died as a result of starvation and cold, without any documentation of their fate.

In this connection, the presidential council of the German Red Cross published statistics on February 1, 1963, concerning the fate of captives both in Germany and in Russia. The German Red Cross reported that of the hundred twenty-four thousand three hundred fifty searches requested from 1957 on by German relatives of soldiers on the eastern front, the Moscow Red Cross had processed a hundred seven thousand two hundred thirty-eight replies. Some 32.4% of these inquiries were successful in determining the fate of the missing soldiers. This amounts to thirty-five thousand cases documented by a country which in return was furnished with a mere eight thousand five hundred accounts for hundreds of thousands of its citizens who vanished in the German sphere of influence at the time. Cf. publication "Suchdienstzeitung" of February 1, 1963, printed in *Fränkisches Volksblatt*, February 2, 1963.

88. Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, *Tagebuch der Versuchung* (Stuttgart, 1950), p. 42. Cf. also report by an American journalist allowed to interview the surviving generals of Stalingrad on February 4, 1943 in Edgar Snow, *People on Our Side* (1944).

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89. Only after his court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann had asserted the veracity of the pictures in question did Hitler finally realize that the news was not merely a fabrication. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 12.
90. Picker, pp. 124 ff.
91. This was not true, as Hitler promoted Freiherr von Richthofen field marshal only three weeks later, on February 16, 1943. Model was promoted to this rank in 1944, and the nominations of Schörner and Greim followed in 1945.
92. Reference is apparently to the Lubyanka KGB prison in Moscow.
93. In August 1949, the author [Max Domarus] visited a certain Gustav Zimmermann in Frankfurt am Main, who claimed to have transmitted, as a German secret agent, detailed instructions from Hitler to Paulus in February 1943, concerning the future behavior expected of Paulus by the Führer. Fluent in Russian, Zimmermann claimed to have served repeatedly as a secret agent of the OKW and to have operated largely behind enemy lines. He presented the author with numerous documents and photographs that appeared to substantiate his claim of the following events:

After receiving the instructions from Hitler, Zimmermann was dressed up as a regular first lieutenant of the Red Army and provided with the necessary papers. Having penetrated Soviet airspace, he parachuted from a German plane in the vicinity of Moscow. In the city, he requisitioned a vehicle and a chauffeur at a local military compound. From there, Zimmermann had himself driven to the villa at which Paulus was being held in a suburb of Moscow. He reached it in the early morning hours, during which there was little likelihood of Russian officers being at the site or other incidents occurring. By insisting on seeing Paulus, Zimmermann managed to have the guards on duty let him pass through the villa's gates. Paulus was brought to him. While Zimmermann identified himself, Paulus remained highly suspicious of him, since he did not recall having met the secret agent previously. However, once Zimmermann related facts known only to Paulus, he was convinced that Zimmermann came on behalf of the Führer and listened to the following message:

The Führer ordered that under no circumstances was Paulus to make any public statements directed against Germany and its present regime. Should he dare to give in to Russian pressure to denounce the Reich in any form, he would have to face a court-martial after the war.

After Zimmermann had ended, Paulus signified without further comment that he had taken note of the Führer's order.

Zimmermann recalled to the author that he had encountered no adversities in leaving the villa where Paulus was imprisoned and returning to the center of the city where he dismissed both chauffeur and car. He then joined a troop transport to the front. This was relatively easy to do, as the military police routinely searched only homecoming contingents for foreign agents. Once at the border,

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Zimmermann searched for gaps in the frontline with the help of a shortwave transmitting radio and escaped.

Zimmermann's story offers an explanation of why Paulus was so reluctant to commit himself on the issue during his captivity in Russia. It was not until August 22, 1944, that is, after the invasion of France by the Allies, that Paulus signed an anti-Fascist appeal propagated by the "National Committee for a Free Germany" and thereby joined this association of German emigrés and officers who were prisoners of war. Taken from the author's notes, Domarus archives.

94. DNB special report, February 3, 1943.
95. Hitler had invented these figures, possibly by analogy with "the Sixth Army fighting off six armies of the enemy." A citation in *Das grosse Weltgeschehen* indicates the involvement of a total of fifteen Soviet armies; cf. von Moos, p. 135.
96. See above, speeches of September 30, 1942, and November 8, 1942.
97. See below, Appendix, Hitler's Victories and Defeats in the Second World War.
98. Report in VB, No. 35, February 4, 1943.
99. Report in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1943.
100. Report in VB, No. 37, February 6, 1943.
101. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 265.
102. For example, Field Marshal von Kluge received two hundred fifty thousand Reichsmarks on his sixtieth birthday. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 71. On various other occasions, generals such as Keitel received two hundred fifty thousand Reichsmarks, while Milch got double that amount. See above, 1935, note 232a.
103. For a report on this discussion, see Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege* (Bonn, 1955), pp. 395 and 437.
104. See above, p. 35.
105. The following speakers participated in the conference: Bormann, Goebbels, Speer, Sauckel, Funk, Backe, Ley, and state secretary Ganzenmüller. General von Unruh—in the framework of "total war"—was responsible for searching the rear areas of the front and the heartland for able men, a mission that earned him the nickname "Heldenklau" ("thief of heroes"). For General von Unruh's earlier involvement with the *Soldatenbund*, see above, 1937, note 1.
106. DNB text, February 8, 1943.
107. It was common belief among the Allies that German pressure had led to Ciano's removal from the office of foreign minister because of his frequent, at times outspoken, anti-German stand. In Germany, politicians suspected that Italy was attempting to enter into peace negotiations through the Vatican and that Ciano's new mission, as chief of the Italian delegation there, reflected a change in Mussolini's loyalties. For his own part, Ciano speculated that this reassignment was intended to punish him for his consultations with Farinacci and other Fascists, who were plotting against the Duce for a number of reasons. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 570.

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108. Report in VB, No. 41, February 10, 1943.
109. DNB text, February 8, 1943.
110. DNB text, February 16, 1943.
111. See above, statement of February 1, 1943. Report on von Richthofen's appointment in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1943. For a biographical sketch of von Richthofen see above, 1939, note 565.
112. Reports on Hitler's stay at the headquarters are given in Manstein, pp. 454 ff. Cf. also Baur, pp. 231 ff. Cf. further illustrated reports in VB, Nos. 79–83, March 20–24, 1943.
113. The retired director of the domain Major Erhard Krause of Würzburg was so kind as to provide the author with the text of this proclamation.
114. The "reasons" were actually not well known, unless you considered Hitler to have been responsible. These various allusions were meant to create the impression with the soldiers that the allied troops had been responsible for the disaster at Stalingrad.
115. Ever since the days of General von Ludendorff and his popular book *Der totale Krieg*, the term had been much bandied about. It became the central slogan once war had begun. Compared with the general currency which the catchword had acquired since then, Goebbels's speech was far from the most notorious proclamation. For instance, at a rally in Dortmund on March 18, 1943, Sauckel had declared: "Total war [means] a short war!" Report in VB, No. 49, March 20, 1943. Total war was theatrically proclaimed one last time on July 20, 1944, but aside from the closing of several theaters and cinemas nothing much came of it.
116. In the 18th century, the "Kasper" was derived from the character of "Hanswurst." The Kasper, a key figure like the Harlequin in the *commedia dell'arte*, became the protagonist of the German "Kasperletheater," a puppet theater for children. At the beginning of the play, he rhetorically asks: "*Seid ihr alle da?*" ("Are you all here?") The children reply by shouting: "*Jaaah!*" This questioning resembles the rituals often celebrated at the Punch and Judy shows or at gospel services. It had been Hitler, however, who had first used this puppet-show approach: see above, p. 792, speech of March 16, 1936, and 1936, note 87.
117. DNB pronouncement from the Führer headquarters, February 21, 1943. Colonel General Heinz Guderian had led a panzer army to the gates of Moscow before Hitler had relieved him of his command.
118. DNB text, February 24, 1943.
119. See above, 1943, note 114.
120. Reference is to all territories occupied by German troops.
121. Order directed to AOK 16 and AOK 18. Original on file at the state archives, Göttingen.
122. This was the same tactic Hitler had earlier used to protect the party's leadership from any "legal consequences" which their actions might have entailed.

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123. *Les Lettres secrètes échangées par Hitler et Mussoline* (Paris, 1946), pp. 143 ff.
124. On Hitler's conception of the workings of Vorsehung, see above, p. 40.
125. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1943.
126. VB, No. 62, March 3, 1943.
127. *Allgemeine Heeres-Mitteilungen* (342), April 21, 1943, p. 233.
128. DNB text, March 4, 1943.
129. Cf. Heiber, pp. 143 ff.
130. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 279 ff.
131. Program to release laborers for deployment along the eastern front.
132. Reports on these talks in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 280 ff.
133. *Ibid.*
134. General Karl Bodenschatz served as Göring's adjutant and as his contact with the Führer headquarters. At the time, Field Marshal Sperrle was the Luftwaffe fleet commander in France.
135. Reference is made to the speech of Goebbels on total war; see above, February 18, 1943.
136. For details on this air raid, see OKW report of March 9, 1943.
137. Reports on Hitler's visit are found in Manstein, pp. 467 and 482.
138. This statement is along the lines of an earlier claim: "If I don't get the oil from Maikop and Grozny, then I'll just have to liquidate this war." See above, July 1, 1942, and 1943, note 5. The city of Nikopol was lost in the early days of February 1944. Despite the defeat, Hitler was no more willing to end the war effort than he had been after the loss of the Caucasus.
139. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 294.
140. Allusion to Manstein's intention to advise Hitler to lay down command of the armed forces. See above, February 6, 1943.
141. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 294.
142. Report on the meetings between Rommel and Hitler on March 10 and 11, 1943, in Rommel, p. 372.
143. See above, 1943, Major Events in Summary.
144. A connected communiqué was not published until two months later; see below, May 11, 1943.
145. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 295. Cf. also Rommel, pp. 373 ff.
146. RGl, 1943, I, p. 137.
147. For related remarks, see below, speech of March 21, 1943.
148. Cf. Schlabrendorff, pp. 93 ff. This headquarters was located in a forest west of Smolensk.
149. See above, Introduction, note 29.
150. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 300.
151. Report in VB, No. 73 [74 ?], March 15, 1943.
152. DNB text, March 16, 1943.
153. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1943.
154. Report on the talk in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 313 ff.
155. Illustrated report in VB, No. 93, April 4, 1943.

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156. This was the heading of a six-column reproduction of the speech. Report in VB, No. 81, March 22, 1943. This quotation is in accordance with the text published by the DNB; see above, 1943, note 152.
157. Reference is to two headquarters: Wolfsschanze in East Prussia and Werewolf in the Ukraine.
158. This generosity of Hitler was apparently to placate his guilty conscience as he set out for yet another vacation with Eva Braun at the Berghof.
159. Hitler seemed to have long forgotten a solemn avowal which he had made in 1935. Should war break out, he would never send "even a single woman to the front." Such a hideous deed would besmirch his honor as a German man, as he had still maintained back then. See above, speech of September 9, 1935.
160. Although these figures fail to convey an accurate picture of the enormous numbers of casualties suffered, Hitler no longer felt he had to step back from admitting to over a half million men dead.
161. Cf. Rudolf Pechel, *Deutscher Widerstand* (Zurich, 1947), p. 162. Cf. also Sclabrendorff, p. 99.
162. The claim that Hitler ordered a last-minute change in the schedule cannot be substantiated. Hitler could not remain at the exhibition any longer, as his presence was required at the laying of the wreath at Unter den Linden and the following parade. Hitler's tour of the annual exhibition reflected more a requirement of protocol than any actual interest on his part, as it bridged the time between the crowd leaving the Zeughaus of the Lichthof and proceeding to the Unter den Linden memorial to continue the festivities. In earlier years, the exhibition had been dedicated to a variety of subjects. In 1940, trophies from the campaign against Poland were on display there. Souvenirs and objects of art confiscated in the move against France constituted the 1941 collection. Material gathered during the advances in the Soviet Union was exhibited in 1942.
163. A protocol of the discussion of the situation that day has the heading: "Report on the situation at noon on March 21, 1943, at the Berghof. Start: 12:16." Cf. Heiber, p. 198. As Heiber himself observed, this citation has to be a mistake, since Hitler was attending the *Heldengedenktage* (Heroes' Memorial Day) festivities in Berlin.
164. Reports in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1943. In accordance with Hitler's specifications, the urn of the cremated Reichssportführer was placed in the Langenmarckhalle on the Berlin Reichssportfeld. Cf. VB, No. 124, May 4, 1943.
165. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 563 ff.
166. DNB text, April 2, 1943. It is noteworthy that the term "quarters," (that is, the Berghof) and not "headquarters" was used.
167. Report in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1943.
168. DNB text, April 7, 1943.
169. Report on the conversation in Schmidt, p. 563.
170. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 352, entry of May 7, 1943.
171. DNB text, April 11, 1943.

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172. DNB report, April 10, 1943.
173. DNB text, April 14, 1943.
174. For many years, a fierce verbal battle raged whether the German or the Russian military was responsible for the massacre of Katyn. The exiled Polish government in London became very outspoken on the topic, and the bickering continued even before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. [There is now more evidence that Katyn was a Soviet atrocity.]
175. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 332.
176. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
178. For the envoy Schmidt's protocol of the April 17, 1943, discussion, cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, pp. 463 f.
179. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 352.
180. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
181. DNB text, April 18, 1943.
182. Allusion to the reign of Béla Kun in 1919.
183. DNB report, April 18, 1943.
184. DNB text, April 20, 1943.
185. *Ibid.*
186. VB, No. 112/113, April 22/23, 1943.
187. DNB text, April 22, 1943.
188. Cf. Speer's report in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 341 ff.
189. DNB text, April 23, 1943.
190. Report in VB, No. 115/116, April 25/26, 1943.
191. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 369. From January 8, 1942, until April 21, 1942, an army corps under the command of Infantry General Graf Brockdorff-Ahlefeld was encircled in the Demyansk area and isolated. An airlift kept them supplied much as with General Scherer's troops at Kholm. Despite this valiant effort, the area had to be evacuated on February 26, 1943, and left to the advancing Russian troops. General Graf Brockdorff-Ahlefeld suddenly died on May 9, 1943. Hitler ordered a "state funeral" in honor of the general. Field Marshal Busch placed the Führer's wreath during the commemorative service at the Berlin Zeughaus on May 13, 1943.
192. Report in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1943.
193. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 348.
194. VB, Nos. 121/122, May 1/2, 1943.
195. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1943.
196. DNB text, April 30, 1943.
197. VB, No. 123, May 3, 1943.
198. DNB report, May 1, 1943.
199. Report on this discussion is found in Manstein, pp. 488 ff.
200. Report in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1943.
201. Information published regarding Lutze's death stated that he had been the victim of a car accident while traveling on official business. From Hitler's eulogy, however, it is evident that Lutze's crash took place

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- while he was on a family trip, as one of his children was also killed, and two of his surviving sons sustained injuries.
202. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 351 ff.
203. VB, No. 128, May 8, 1943.
204. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 355. See above, October 15, 1942.
205. Report of Hitler's words in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 354 ff.
206. Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky (1893–1937), commander in the Russian Civil War and leader of the Russian offensive in the Russo-Polish War (1919–1920); on contrived evidence smuggled into the country by German agents, Marshal Tukhachevsky was put on trial with numerous other generals in Russia in 1936; the following year, he was sentenced to death for treason and executed.
207. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 354 f.
208. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745. "At the time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk (*Gerümpel*) destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition." See above, p. 57.
209. Hitler slipped up here, admitting that the German government bore responsibility for the Stalingrad disaster, although, only a few minutes earlier, he had put all the blame on Germany's allies.
210. Reports on these talks in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 353 ff.
211. RGLB, 1943, I, p. 295.
212. DNB text, May 10, 1943.
213. Report in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1943.
214. See above, November 3, 1942. See also above, January 24, 1943.
215. DNB text, May 13, 1943.
216. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 352.
217. DNB text, May 11, 1943.
218. DNB text, May 13/14, 1943.
219. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 379.
220. Cf. Heiber, p. 207.
221. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 382.
222. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
223. *Ibid.*, p. 386. According to Hitler's ambitious designs, Burgundy was to be annexed to the Reich as an ancient historic "Reichsland."
224. *Ibid.*
225. DNB report, May 19, 1943.
226. Cf. Heiber, pp. 205 ff. The result of this conversation was a drafted directive dated May 19, 1943, which excluded Italian troops from the defense of the Balkans: "The development of the situation has made it necessary to conduct the defense of the Balkans solely with German and Bulgarian troops." Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 217 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, p. 210.
227. See above, May 7, 1943.
228. Verbatim reproduction in Heiber, pp. 220 ff. The Sonderführer in question was Constantin Alexander Freiherr von Neurath, the only son of the former Reich foreign minister.

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229. Cf. statement made by Hitler at a conference on May 19, 1943, as recorded in Heiber, p. 207.
230. The Oberpräsident of Hesse-Nassau, SS Obergruppenführer Prince Philip of Hesse (see also above, Vol. I, 1938, note 128), was married to Princess Mafalda, a daughter of Victor Emmanuel III.
231. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 392.
232. While there is no date indicated on the only surviving report, a shorthand transcript of the meeting, it can be deduced from the contents of the conversation that it took place either on May 20 or on May 21, 1943. Cf. Heiber, pp. 238 ff.
233. VB, No. 143, May 23, 1943.
234. Report in VB, No. 146, May 26, 1943.
235. DNB text, May 27, 1943. Following the American victory at Guadalcanal, Admiral Yamamoto, who had been commander in chief of the Japanese Fleet in the Pacific, allegedly committed ritual suicide in the old seppuku [hara-kiri] tradition in April 1943. News of this was not made public until May 21, when he was declared to have died a "heroic death." According to other Japanese sources, however, Yamamoto had been killed in a plane crash. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 190. (Allegedly, Admiral Yamamoto was killed when his plane was shot down at the direction of the American Chiefs of Staff using decrypted information. Martin Gilbert *Second World War*, New York, 1989, p. 419-420.)
236. Report in VB, No. 149, May 29, 1943.
237. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1943. The original Infantry Regiment No. 134 had belonged to the Forty-Fourth Infantry Division, which had been destroyed at Stalingrad. The regiment had been the reformation of the former Austro-Hungarian Infantry Regiment *K. u. K. Infanterieregiment Hoch-und Deutschmeister No. 4*.
238. Report, *ibid*.
239. Verbatim reproduction in Heiber, pp. 252 ff.
240. DNB report, June 10, 1943.
241. Cf. Weizsäcker, pp. 354 and 366.
242. Report in VB, Nos. 168 and 170, June 17 and 19, 1943.
243. DNB text, June 20, 1943.
244. See above, March 4, 1943.
245. Copy of the decree on file at the Domarus archives.
246. Report in VB, No. 175, June 24, 1943. Rahn had been embassy counselor in Italy and had served as ambassador to Mussolini's "republican" government.
247. NSK note, June 23, 1943.
248. Report in VB, No. 178, June 29, 1943.
249. DNB note, June 29, 1943.
250. DNB text, June 30, 1943.
251. Cf. Manstein, pp. 495 f.
252. Manstein probably would not have made this remark had he known that Hitler had told Goebbels to wait and see "if the Bolsheviks will not try to beat us to it." See above, May 6, 1943.

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253. Report in VB, No. 186, July 5, 1943. Cf. also Manstein, p. 497.
254. von Moos, Vol. V, p. 80.
255. Report in VB, No. 191, July 18, 1943.
256. DNB report, July 14, 1943.
257. DNB report, July 18, 1943.
258. Hitler traveled to the meeting by plane; cf. Baur, pp. 245 f. Cf. reports on the talks in Schmidt, p. 580. Cf. also von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 283 ff. Cf. further Bullock, pp. 708 f., and *Hitler e Mussolini—Lettere e documenti* (Milan, 1946), pp. 165 ff.
259. DNB text, July 20, 1943.
260. For details on the convention, cf. report of the *Schweizerische Depeschagentur*, dated September 7, 1943; reproduced in von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 287 ff. See further report by Willy Sperco, originally published in the *Revue de Paris*, reproduced in *Neue Zeitung (Amerikanische Zeitung für Deutschland)*, October 11, 1946.
261. Among those who voted against Mussolini were many highly respected Fascists, such as Grandi and the two surviving members of the 1922 *Quadrumvirate*, Marshal de Bono and Count de Vecchi. The others who voted against Mussolini were the following: Ciano; his successor in the foreign ministry, Bastianini; and Ambassador Alfieri; also, Federzoni, de Marsico, Acerbo, Pareschi, Bottai, Marinelli, Cianetti, Balella, Gottardi, Bignardi, de Stefani, Rossoni, and Albini. Only eight voted in favor of Mussolini: Scorza, Farinacci, Biggini, Polverelli, Tringali-Casanova, Frattari, Buffarini-Guldi, and Galbiati. Suardo abstained.
262. Pietro Badoglio, born 1871 in Grazzano; created marshal and “duke of Addis Ababa” in 1936; prime minister from 1943 until June 6, 1944.
263. Mussolini’s letter was published in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* (89), 1944. In March 1944, Mussolini acknowledged the authenticity of this correspondence in a statement. This is evidence that he had no qualms about the legality of his removal from office.
264. Heiber, pp. 269 ff.
265. Surviving records of the briefing of July 25/26, 1943, are in Heiber, pp. 304 ff. Cf. also reports in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 403 ff.
266. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
267. DNB text, July 30, 1943.
268. Report on the meeting is in Schmidt, pp. 580 f. Raffaele Guariglia, born 1889 in Naples.
269. Illustrated report on Rommel’s visit to Salonika in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1943.
270. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 218 ff.
271. Supplemental decrees issued on August 3 and 7, 1943, on the German assumption of previously Italian administrative powers in Greece expanded upon these provisions. Cf. details on operation code name Achse (axis), *ibid.*, pp. 223 ff.
272. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 210 ff. Hubatsch’s publication also contains specifications of Directive No. 49. Code names for the numerous

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- ventures were the following: Eiche (Oak Tree) for the attempt to free Mussolini; Student for a swift occupation of Rome; Schwarz (Black) or Achse (axis) for an occupation of Italy and either the appropriation of the Italian fleet or its destruction.
273. DNB report, August 2, 1943.
 274. DNB text, August 3, 1943. Hamburg had become the target of recurring severe air raids, first on July 24, 1943, and in the following days.
 275. Manstein, p. 513. Cf. also Heiber, pp. 373 ff.
 276. Report in Baur, pp. 246 f.
 277. Princess Giovanna, born 1907 in Rome. She was a sister of Princess Mafalda and the sister-in-law of Prince Philip of Hesse.
 278. DNB reports, August 21 and 22, 1943.
 279. See above, November 17, 1941.
 280. Report in VB, No. 232, August 20, 1943. Schepmann finally secured his appointment as chief of staff in November. Report in VB, No. 313, November 9, 1943.
 281. The DNB announced these changes in personnel only after August 24, 1943. Cf. also VB, No. 237, August 25, 1943.
 282. Goebbels; *Diaries*, p. 472. Cf. also Hitler's derogatory remarks regarding Frick at various dinners; cf. Picker, pp. 212 f. For further derisive comments on Frick, see Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 361, 365, 367, and 376.
 283. A decree of August 20, 1943, determined the following: "Henceforth, the state secretary with the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia shall bear the official title of 'German minister of state for Bohemia and Moravia.'" RGBl, 1943, I, p. 527. Karl Hermann Frank, born 1898 in Karlsbad; publicly executed 1946 in Prague.
 284. RGBl, 1943, I, p. 495.
 285. Report in VB, No. 233, August 24, 1943.
 286. Illustrated report in VB, No. 236, August 25, 1943.
 287. DNB text, August 25, 1943.
 288. Manstein, pp. 522 f.
 289. *Ibid.*, p. 523.
 290. This report of the last days of King Boris is based on the death certificate from the Bulgarian ministry of justice and the official report by the Bulgarian prime minister Filov, as published in the newspaper *Bote vom Steigerwald* (206), September 3, 1943.
 291. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 433, 442. On the events in Sofia, cf. also Heiber, "Der Tod des Zaren Boris" in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (Munich, 1961), pp. 384 ff.
 292. DNB texts, August 28 and 29, 1943.
 293. Report in VB, No. 242, August 30, 1943.
 294. *Ibid.*
 295. Report in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1943.
 296. *Ibid.*
 297. Cf. Manstein, pp. 523 f.
 298. RGBl, 1943, I, pp. 529 f.

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299. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 530.
300. Report on this talk is in Manstein, p. 525.
301. VB, No. 248, September 5, 1943.
302. IMT, USSR-115. The code name for Operation Krimhildbewegung (Krimhild movement) had been chosen because of its resemblance to Krim, the German name for the Crimean Peninsula. Retreating troops were to assemble there. Evacuation procedures from the Kuban bridgehead were concluded by October 7, 1943.
303. See above, speech of March 25, 1938.
304. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
305. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 533. Hitler's decree of September 5, 1943, expanded the scope of an earlier decree dated July 28, 1942. One of its provisions determined that "this will apply also to the sphere of all medical science and research, and organizational facilities." See above, decree of July 28, 1942.
306. Report on talk is found in Manstein, pp. 526 f.
307. Von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 310.
308. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 427.
309. DNB text, September 9, 1943. Cf. also Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 431.
310. Hitler's emphatic insistence on such mystical allusions never failed to impress Goebbels. Actually, neither had Hitler cut short his stay in Zaporozh'ye nor was his visit distinguished in any manner. The mystic presentiment, which he later claimed to have been troubled by, in all likelihood never occurred to him except in retrospect. After the narrow escape at Poltava in 1941, Hitler never again stayed overnight at any location but the Berghof, the Chancellery, or one of the military headquarters. For further details on the discussions on September 9 and 10, 1943, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 427 ff.
311. The attitude which Hitler displayed explains much of the odd lack of resistance by the German troops to the Allied advances on Corsica and Sardinia.
312. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 438.
313. *Ibid.* p. 440.
314. *Ibid.* p. 441. The Mother's Cross was awarded in the Third Reich to mothers with more than three children; its three categories were Bronze, Silver, and Gold.
315. *Ibid.*, p. 445. Prince Philip of Hesse was carted off to a concentration camp despite his credentials as an SA Obergruppenführer and Oberpräsident of Hesse-Kassel. His wife, Princess Mafalda, a daughter of the Italian king, was incarcerated at the Buchenwald concentration camp, where she died on August 27, 1944, from the injuries she had sustained.
316. DNB text, September 10, 1943.
317. In August 1939, Hitler had even entertained thoughts of sacrificing Italy and Mussolini to a possible alliance with Great Britain. See above, August 27 and 28, 1939.

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318. Even in retrospect, Hitler simply ignored Badoglio's official note of September 8 on the new Italian government's foreign-policy stance. See above, September 8, 1943.
319. These steps had concerned police surveillance of all Reichstag deputies and the Wehrmacht's dismissal of German aristocrats. See above, July 25, 1943, and September 10, 1943.
320. The events of July 20, 1944, clearly demonstrated that the persons named were not as loyal to their Führer as Hitler would have liked to believe.
321. Allusion to the coup in Belgrade. See above, March 27, 1941.
322. DNB text, September 10, 1943.
323. *Mein Kampf*, p. 754.
324. DNB text, September 15, 1943. On the mission itself, cf. Otto Skorzeny, *Geheimkommando Skorzeny* (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 135 ff.
325. Cf. Linge, No. 3.
326. Speaking before the House of Commons, Churchill also made several inconclusive remarks on the precise nature of the role Badoglio had played in these events: "As far as Mussolini's dismissal is concerned, I do not believe it resulted from either a breach of loyalty or some other reprehensible conduct on the part of either Badoglio or his Government. The guards had orders to fire upon Mussolini should he attempt to flee or anyone who should attempt to assist him therein. The guards failed to carry out their orders in face of the numeric superiority of the German troops landing." Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 316.
327. DNB text, September 12, 1943.
328. DNB text, September 15, 1943.
329. Most of these defunct orders were no longer than one or two sentences regarding a restoration of a "Republican-Fascist" party and militia.
330. DNB text, September 15, 1943.
331. Report in Manstein, pp. 529 f.
332. DNB text, September 20, 1943. General Milutin Nedic, born 1882; suicide in 1946; Yugoslav minister of war at the time of Hitler's invasion; agreed to collaborate and became Serbian prime minister during the German occupation.
333. For a report on the subject of these talks, see Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 468 ff.
334. *Ibid.*, p. 466.
335. Having given up his post as ambassador to the Vatican on July 31, 1943, Ciano's decision to have German troops "liberate" him along with other members of Mussolini's immediate family proved not to have been too wise. Mussolini finally gave in to Hitler's pressures and had Ciano executed in Verona on January 11, 1944.
336. Clara Petacci, a physician's daughter from Rome, was shot alongside Mussolini on April 28, 1945. See above, 1945, note 225.
337. DNB report from Tokyo, September 24, 1943.
338. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 661.
339. DNB report, September 20, 1943.

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340. Report on this conversation in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 464 ff.
341. According to conflicting reports, German diplomats had sought reconciliation with Russia through the good offices of the Soviet embassy in Stockholm in 1943 and had attempted to determine the Soviet stance on a peace agreement. Similar claims were made before the Nuremberg War Criminal Trials. Following the war, Dr. Paul Schwarz, who was a civil servant of the German foreign ministry, published information to this effect in the June 1947 issue of *Liberty*, an American journal in occupied Germany. The former Soviet ambassador to Stockholm, Aleksandra Kollontay, denied any such approaches during her service in Sweden. Moreover, the experiences of the Russians with Hitler from 1939 until 1941 make it seem highly unlikely that they would have entered into negotiations with him in 1943.
342. DNB text, September 27, 1943.
343. DNB report, September 27, 1943. Wilhelm Kube, born 1887; Gauleiter of Brandenburg until 1939; well-known as head of the NSDAP faction in the Prussian Landtag before the seizure of power.
344. DNB text, September 28, 1943. Mussolini had chosen Gargnano on the Garda Lake as the new seat of his government and personal residence. SS commandos kept him under constant surveillance.
345. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 216 f.
346. In the course of the German offensive in the Ardennes in December 1944, Montgomery was called on to take over command of the endangered sector of the Allied front.
347. Report in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1943.
348. DNB report, October 3, 1943.
349. Shorthand transcripts published in Heiber, pp. 385 ff.
350. DNB report, October 8, 1943.
351. DNB report, October 10, 1943.
352. RGBL, 1943, I, pp. 575 f. Hitler was alluding to this particular ordinance in a speech the following month: "The Americans and the English are right now planning the rebuilding of the world. I am right now planning the rebuilding of Germany!" See above, speech of November 8, 1943.
353. DNB report, October 12, 1943.
354. DNB report, October 14, 1943. Cf. also Heiber, p. 385.
355. Ibid. Illustrated report in VB, No. 289, October 16, 1943. Born in 1882, Rodolfo Graziani had made a name for himself in the Abyssinian War, as had Badoglio.
356. DNB reports, October 13 and 15, 1943.
357. Reports in VB, No. 290, October 17, 1943.
358. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 583 ff.
359. DNB text, October 22, 1943.
360. DNB text, October 19, 1943.
361. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1943.
362. Excerpt from the shorthand transcript published in Heiber, pp. 396 ff.
363. DNB text, October 30, 1943.

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364. Von Moos, Vol. V, pp. 21 ff.
365. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 218 ff.
366. On December 12, 1943, Hitler ordered Keitel to issue a list of general conclusions drawn from previous experience gained from fighting against the Anglo-American powers. Two additional ordinances, dated December 27 and 28, 1943, supplemented Directive No. 51. See below, December 27, 1943, and note 416. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, p. 231.
367. DNB text, November 8, 1943.
368. Cf. Manstein, pp. 554 f.
369. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 500.
370. In the last year of his life, Hitler only managed to spend his annual spring break at the Berghof, but he extended this vacation until July 1944. In view of the circumstances that year, Hitler only wrote a brief statement in commemoration of the events at Munich.
371. DNB text, November 8, 1943.
372. Clemenceau never made the statement which Hitler attributed to him; see above, 1939, note 1014. There was a severe famine raging in India in 1943. Hitler manipulated this fact to allege that unidentified British statesmen had implied that a reduction of overpopulation might be beneficial to the subcontinent. At the time, Leopold Stennet Amery, born 1873 in Gorachpur, India, was serving as British minister for India.
373. Reference is to Japan and Japanese-occupied China at the same time.
374. Reference is to a statement of Churchill in July 1943.
375. Reference is to Roosevelt and Churchill.
376. Reference is to General State Commissar von Kahr. Hitler had him murdered on June 30, 1934.
377. Only a few months later, the German army was not "at such a great distance from the homeland" anymore, as the Allies had reached Aix-la-Chapelle and the Russians had reached East Prussia.
378. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 505.
379. DNB text, November 9, 1943.
380. Ibid.
381. RGBI, 1943, I, pp. 659 f.
382. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 660.
383. RGBI, 1943, I, pp. 665 f.
384. Report in VB, No. 323, November 19, 1943.
385. Cf. von Papen, pp. 576 f., and Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 518.
386. Ibid., p. 518.
387. Heiber, pp. 408 ff.
388. This figure published by the DNB appears to be greatly exaggerated. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 519, noted for instance that around ten thousand officer cadets were present. In previous years, between five thousand and twelve thousand cadets had attended the annual addresses. Even given the fact that the last appeal had been issued in December 1942, the claim that a crowd numbering twenty thousand was present at the 1943 rally cannot be substantiated.

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389. DNB text, November 29, 1943. This particular official communiqué was not published until one week later, and neither the date of the appeal nor where it was issued was indicated in the report. It is highly likely that this was not a coincidence, and that the location was to be kept secret, since Hitler did not want to reveal the fact that arrangements for the meeting could no longer be made in Berlin. The location of Breslau and the date of November 20 are based on information contained in Goebbels's *Diaries*. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 519.
A phonographic record of Hitler's speech before the officer cadets is on file at the archives of the Munich magazine *Quick*.
390. Report in VB, No. 330, November 26, 1943. Born in 1869, Ernst Graf zu Reventlow had already made a name for himself as a radical right-wing author in the days of the empire. Until shortly before his death, he wrote commentaries for the newspaper *Reichswardt*.
391. Report in VB, No. 335, December 1, 1943.
392. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VII, p. 6879.
393. Cf. Churchill, *Second World War*; Vol. IV, p. 364, and von Moos, Vol. V, p. 30.
394. Reports in VB, Nos. 338 and 341, December 4 and 7, 1943.
395. It was for similar reasons that Hitler launched the offensive in the Ardennes along the western front. See below, December 6, 1944.
396. Report in VB, No. 342, December 8, 1943.
397. RGBL, 1943, I, p. 673.
398. DNB text, December 9, 1943.
399. Report in VB, No. 347, December 13, 1943.
400. VB, No. 353, December 19, 1943.
401. Heiber, pp. 435 ff.
402. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
403. During the war, Hitler made similar claims regarding many other sites without ever drawing the proper conclusions. On July 1, 1942, he declared: "If I don't get the oil from Maikop and Grozny, then I'll just have to liquidate this war." See above, July 1, 1942, and 1943, note 5. In March 1943, he had pretended that the loss of Nikopol would signal "the end of the war." See above, March 10, 1943.
404. Karl Otto Saur, born 1902; served as head of the technical department under Speer.
405. Following the D-Day landings by the Allies in Normandy, Hitler behaved as though he felt relieved that a great danger had passed him by. See above, June 6, 1944.
406. DNB report, December 21, 1943.
407. Reference is to the case of SS Führer Hans Ritz and two conscripts by the names of Wilhelm Langheld and Reinhard Retzlaw. These three alleged members of the secret Feldpolizei had fallen into the hands of the Russians in the course of the recapture of Kharkov. A military court found them guilty of war crimes perpetrated at this location and executed the three men on the spot. Cf. Heiber, p. 460.

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408. Ibid, pp. 456 ff.
409. DNB report, December 23, 1943. According to Jodl's testimony in Nuremberg, however, Hitler envisioned a different approach to this issue in reality. Jodl stated that he had attended a December 30, 1943, conference between Hitler and Keitel in the course of which Hitler instructed his men "to strike down without mercy these British terrorists and their accomplices." Hitler refused to accord English and American military personnel court-martial proceedings and a fair trial. He declared: "This would only [unnecessarily] create martyrs."
410. Although the Hague Convention in 1907 had established standards for the conduct of war on land and at sea, there were no provisions for aerial combat in force at the outbreak of the Second World War. Legally speaking, the aerial bombardment of cities did not constitute a violation of international law.
411. DNB text, December 26, 1943. It was a well-known fact that Hitler had served in the First World War as a member of the Bavarian Infantry Regiment 16 "List."
412. Heiber, p. 469.
413. Reference is to Antaeus; mythological Libyan giant, son of Poseidon and Gaia [the goddess Earth], who gained ever new strength from contact with the earth [his mother]; he was an invincible wrestler until Heracles vanquished him by lifting him up off the ground.
414. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 1.
415. See below, December 28, 1944.
416. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 238 ff. For details on Directive No. 51, see above, November 3, 1943. On December 28, Hitler issued another supplementary order forbidding the withdrawal of personnel or material from the areas commanded by the commander in chief, west (that is, the whole area of France, Belgium, and Holland), and the commander of the armed forces in Denmark. On January 17, 1944, he empowered the commander in chief, west, to declare any area he chose a "battle area," in which civilian authorities were under his orders. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, p. 231.
417. The Cotentin Peninsula is situated in Normandy.
418. Heiber, pp. 486 ff.

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Notes

1. See below, order of the day, January 1, 1944.
2. See below, New Year's appeal of January 1, 1944.
3. See below, order of the day, January 1, 1944.
4. Cf. Rommel, pp. 314 f.
5. See above, speech of December 20, 1943.
6. See above, speech of September 30, 1942: "No matter which place [for an invasion] he [Churchill] chooses next, he can consider himself fortunate if he stays on land for nine hours!"
7. See below, June 18, 1944, and note 148.
8. See above, statement of December 20, 1943.
9. See above, speech of April 26, 1942: "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible."
10. See above, speech of November 8, 1941: "The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the field will be a German one!"
11. *Levée en masse* = mass levy; induction of all men liable for military service in France; first carried out in 1793 during the French Revolution; then in 1814 by Napoleon; and in 1870 during the Franco-German War.
12. Speech of April 29, 1937; records on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
13. DNB text, January 1, 1944.
14. *Ibid.*
15. As recently as September 1943, Hitler had still maintained: "The loss of Italy means little militarily."
16. DNB text, January 2, 1944.
17. Report on the talk in von Manstein, pp. 571 ff.
18. Report in Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* (Heidelberg, 1951), pp. 295 f.
19. The reason behind this stubborn refusal to put in place a type of "Ostwall," a fortification line along Germany's eastern borders, was Hitler's gamble that the British would come to his aid the minute Bolshevik troops forced their way into central Europe. The main shortcoming of this theory was Hitler's conception of the British as new German Nationalists, whom the Bolshevik menace would frighten and who would submit themselves to his leadership as the German Nationalists had in the early 1930s.
20. The decree was not published until May 8, 1944. Its contents were forwarded to all contingents with the instruction that every officer should receive the order by July 1, 1944, and a copy of the pamphlet "*Wofür kämpfen wir?*" ("What are we fighting for?"). The author's notes.

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21. DNB text, January 9, 1944. Karl Freiherr Czapp von Birkenstetten, born 1863.
22. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 241; not printed in *Hitler's War Directives*.
23. Cf. von Moos, p. 105 and Inber, p. 75. A partial offensive around Volkhov dated from January 14, 1944. The Soviet generals Govorov and Meretskov simultaneously led two offensives in the direction of Leningrad.
24. See above, September 28, 1941. Quotations from Hitler's letter concerning Leningrad, dated September 29, 1941.
25. Report in VB, No. 22, January 22, 1944.
26. Report in VB, No. 24, January 24, 1944.
27. DNB text, January 24, 1944.
28. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 59.
29. See above, February 6, 1943. See also above, 1943, note 102.
30. Quoted according to Linge, No. 2; von Manstein, pp. 579 f., cited this passage in a similar manner.
31. See above, p. 67.
32. Shorthand transcripts of the discussions at noon and the telephone conversation between Hitler and Zeitzler on January 28, 1944, have been partially preserved. Cf. Heiber, pp. 527 f.
33. Hitler was outraged by the news. On January 29, 1944, he dismissed Field Marshal von Kuchler, whom he blamed for what he thought had been too hasty a retreat. Colonel General Model took command of Army Group North. He was in particularly good standing with Hitler, because as the commander of Army Group Center, he had persevered in the battles surrounding Moscow in the winter of 1941–1942. Hitler repeatedly assigned Model—his *Löwe der Abwehr* (lion of defense)—to critical spots in the course of 1944, first with Army Groups North, South, Center, and finally with Army Group West.
34. Commander of the Fifth United States Army.
35. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 241 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 232 f.
36. Hitler's order of February 14, 1944, demanded an assault upon the bridgehead at Anzio-Nettuno. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 242.
37. DNB text, January 30, 1944.
38. Hitler had been hospitalized for several weeks, in a city named Pasewalk (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), with severe mustard-gas poisoning at the end of World War I. This experience caused his dislike of chemical and bacteriological warfare.
39. Report in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1944.
40. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 127. A condition for this appointment was possession of the Iron Cross First Class. On the emblem, a dagger with the swastika and snakes appears inside an oval oak wreath.
41. DNB text, January 31, 1944.
42. Report in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1944.
43. DNB text, February 8, 1944: In the course of an address before leading figures of the armament industry on February 6, 1943, Hitler had distinguished Speer by bestowing the Fritz Todt Ring on him. See

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above, speech of February 6, 1943. This peculiar award was never heard of again. The pin now issued consisted of the DAF gear wheel with the swastika and an eagle holding a banner with the inscription “Dr. Fritz Todt” between the outstretched claws.

44. Report in VB, No. 42, February 11, 1944.
45. DNB report, February 10, 1944. Illustrated report in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1944. The leaders of the SA, the NSKK, and the Arbeitsdienst were now required to wear shoulder patches on both sides. This was to underline the military nature of their mission. Up to this point, uniforms had only one patch, to be worn on the right shoulder where the shoulder straps went. This custom had originally served to distinguish members of these organizations from the Wehrmacht. Now that only the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS played a crucial role for Hitler, he had evidently determined that the other formations had to submit to the military peculiarities.
46. Cf. Kaltenbrunner’s testimony at Nuremberg in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XI, pp. 268 and 351. Cf. also *ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 173.
47. DNB text, February 21, 1944. Illustrated report in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1944. Lieutenant General Lieb was commander of the XI Corps. General Stemmermann, commander of the XXXXII Corps, had been killed in combat. Herbert Gille, commander of the Fifth Panzer Division “Viking,” was awarded the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds in April 1944. The head of the Fascist “Rexist” movement in Belgium, Léon Degrelle, also received the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross that month and became SS Sturmabführer.
48. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1944.
49. DNB text, February 28, 1944.
50. DNB text, March 2, 1944.
51. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 234 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 243 ff. Hubatsch also lists supplements to these instructions. One of the fortified cities in the east was Vinnitsa in the Ukraine, the location of Hitler’s Werewolf headquarters.
52. See below, Appendix, Final Remarks, point 7.
53. DNB report, March 12, 1944.
54. DNB report, March 14, 1944.
55. DNB text, March 15, 1944.
56. DNB report, March 15, 1944.
57. On the meeting between Schuschnigg and Hitler, see above, February 12, 1938.
58. Reports on this encounter in Schmidt, pp. 587 f., and in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 13, 1944; see also von Moos, Vol. V, pp. 139 f., and statements by Horthy, who took the stand as witness in the so-called “Wilhelmstrasse Trial” before the Nuremberg Court in March 1948 (Dena Report).
59. After the death of his eldest son in 1943, Horthy was contemplating naming his grandson as successor.

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60. Hitler launched the majority of his ventures on weekends, since he believed he could catch his opponent off guard by so doing. See above, 1934, note 92.
61. Upon the arrival of the German troops in Budapest, chaotic scenes took place. Prime Minister Kallay fled to the Turkish legation. Members of the Italian (Badoglio) legation were arrested and carried off. In the central building of the Polish refugees, the Polish officers offered desperate resistance and were butchered one by one. Their corpses lay there for three days.
62. DNB announcement, March 23, 1944. Printed also in von Moos, Vol. V, p. 138.
63. Following the First World War, a *cordon sanitaire*, consisting of a belt of several small states strategically situated, served as a buffer between Russia and central Europe.
64. The “conditions” are published in von Moos, Vol. V, p. 145.
65. DNB text, March 19, 1944.
66. Report on the reception in von Manstein, pp. 602 f.
67. See above, speech of January 27, 1944.
68. Cf. von Moos, Vol. V, p. 140. Adalbert von Imrédy, born 1891 in Budapest; executed in 1946; served as prime minister from 1938 to 1939; pro-German; appointed minister of the interior in 1944.
69. DNB texts, March 22, 1944. Döme Sztójay served as prime minister until August 30, 1944, and was executed in 1946 in Budapest.
70. DNB report, March 23, 1944.
71. Report in VB, No. 92 April 1, 1944.
72. DNB report, March 23, 1944. Lieutenant General Seyffardt had headed the Dutch legion of volunteers and had been assassinated on February 5, 1943.
73. Report on the discussion in von Manstein, pp. 610 ff.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 614.
75. Cf. von Manstein, pp. 615 f.
76. Reference is to Blomberg and Brauchitsch; see above, February 6, 1944.
77. Berlin had secured legal status as a Prussian province on December 1, 1936. Hence, the head mayor, as president of the city, was simultaneously the chief executive overseeing the state’s administrative apparatus. Hitler did not deem the then head mayor of the city, Lippert, reliable enough, in particular since Lippert bore the title Obergruppenführer and thus belonged to a grouping Hitler intensely distrusted. Hitler therefore separated the state and municipal offices and entrusted Goebbels with the executive branch.
78. RGBl, 1944, I, p. 87.
79. The decrees in question concerned the formation of the provinces of Hesse and Nassau, and the administrative divisions of the province of Saxony. Regarding the governmental districts of Aurich and Osnabrück, the bone of contention was the authority granted the position of the Oberpräsident and the performance of tasks by such a plenipotentiary. RGBl, 1944, I, pp. 109 ff.

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80. See above, speech of March 25, 1944.
81. See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
82. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 237 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 250 ff. See also below, April 2, 1944.
83. DNB report, April 7, 1944.
84. Heiber, pp. 549 ff.
85. Under the leadership of archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt, the German Orient Association had recovered the bust of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti in 1912 and it had become part of the Berlin collection. Nefertiti was the wife of Pharaoh Akhenaton, who reigned from about 1375 until 1357 BC.
86. Reports in VB, No. 102, 11, 1944.
87. Reports in VB, No. 109, February 18, 1944. A stroke on June 14, 1942, had left Wagner partially paralyzed. A further deterioration in his condition led to his death on April 12, 1944, at Bad Reichenhall.
88. Every year on November 9, Wagner had stood in front of the Pantheon, called out the names of the sixteen dead, and thereby, so to speak, had sworn in this "Eternal Guard."
89. Illustrated report in VB, No. 109, April 18, 1944.
90. Report in VB, No. 114, April 23, 1944.
91. DNB reports, April 21, 1944. Illustrated reports in VB, Nos. 116 and 117, April 25 and 26, 1944.
92. DNB text, April 21, 1944.
93. Report in Baur, p. 232. Born in 1890, Hans Hube had been among those cut off in Stalingrad, but had been flown out in time.
94. DNB text, April 22, 1944.
95. See below, order of the day, April 26, 1944.
96. VB, No. 117, April 26, 1944.
97. RGBl, 1944, I, p. 113.
98. DNB text, April 26, 1944.
99. DNB text, April 27, 1944.
100. Report in VB, No. 120, April 29, 1944.
101. Report in VB, No. 121/122, April 30/May 1, 1944.
102. Ibid.
103. According to his May 1948 testimony as a witness in the so-called Wilhelmstrasse Trial, Veessenmeyer and General Winkelmann of the Waffen SS had appeared one day and explained that the Jews were being transported back to the Reich for deployment as laborers. At the time, Horthy already had conclusive evidence in hand documenting the actual purpose of the Auschwitz concentration camp. While he protested the deportation, he no longer had the power necessary to intervene (Dena Report).
104. Report in VB, No. 126, May 5, 1944.
105. Ibid.
106. DNB report, May 9, 1944.
107. Ibid.

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108. DNB text, May 12, 1944. Admiral Mineichi Koga was on a plane which was lost in a storm on March 31, 1944. Paul S. Dull, (*Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941-1945)*) Annapolis, Md. 1978, p. 298. Koga had commanded the Japanese fleet in the Pacific. He fell in spring during heavy bombardment by the Anglo-American powers. Hitler's telegram was less a sincere expression of compassion than an admonishment to German generals to follow Kogo's heroic example rather than to capitulate. A year earlier, Hitler had sent Emperor Hirohito a similar note with precisely the same intention on Admiral Yamamoto's "heroic death" in the seppuku [hara-kiri] tradition. See above, May 27, 1943, and 1943, note 235.
109. DNB text, May 13, 1944.
110. See above, August 14, 1941.
111. DNB report, May 15, 1944.
112. See above, speech of January 1, 1944.
113. See above, speech of April 2, 1944.
114. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 239 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 252 f.
115. Fzg. 76 was the original name given to the long-range missiles (pilotless planes) built by the research department of the Fieseler aircraft factory in Kassel; the rocket bomb was later to become famous as V-1 (*Vergeltungswaffe Nr. 1*—No. 1 Reprisal Weapon). For further information on the V weapons, see below, June 16 ff., 1944.
116. The He111 was an oblong, two-engined fighter, produced by the Heinkel aircraft factory, which had built the first jet aircraft in 1939 (He 176 and He 178).
117. DNB report, May 17, 1944.
118. Surviving excerpts from the speech in Heiber, pp. 567 f.
119. DNB text, May 22, 1944.
120. Report in VB, No. 149/150, May 28/29, 1944.
121. DNB report, May 29, 1944.
122. Report in VB, No. 155, April 3, 1944. Ivan Bagrianov; born 1892; executed February 1, 1945.
123. DNB text, June 4, 1944.
124. Report in VB, No. 159, June 7, 1944.
125. Standing before the House of Commons on June 6, 1944, Churchill enumerated the following:
An immense armada of upwards of 4, 000 ships, together with several thousand smaller craft, crossed the Channel. Massed airborne landings have been successfully effected behind the enemy lines, and landings on the beaches are proceeding at various points at the present time. The fire of the shore batteries has been largely quelled. The obstacles that were constructed in the sea have not proved so difficult as was apprehended. The Anglo-American Allies are sustained by about 11, 000 first-line aircraft, which can be drawn upon as may be needed for the purposes of the battle. In *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, Vol. 7, p. 6947. Cf. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, June 6, 1944 (evening edition).

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126. Report on the events at the Berghof on June 6, 1944, in Linge, Sequence VII.
127. See above, December 27, 1944.
128. Cf. impression conveyed in William L. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 947.
129. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
130. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
131. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
132. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
133. See above, speech of September 30, 1942.
134. See above, order of the day, January 1, 1944.
135. War diary of the Seventh Army, entry of June 6, 1944.
136. See above, declaration of December 20, 1943.
137. DNB text, June 8, 1944.
138. Cf. Linge, No. 7.
139. DNB reports, June 11, 15, and 16, 1944.
140. See above, May 16, 1944.
141. Facilities for headquarters at this site had been under construction in 1940.
142. Report on these talks in Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944* (Tübingen, 1949), pp. 113 f. Cf. also Heiber, p. 573, and Linge, No. 7.
143. See above, 1944, Major Events in Summary.
144. This claim was highly propagandist, as the production of turbo jets had barely begun.
145. In his book *Invasion 1944*, Speidel maintains that Hitler left the area because of a V-1 hit near Margival. However, several surviving military men who were traveling with the Führer at the time deny this. Cf. Heiber, p. 573.
146. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 573 ff., reproduction of the discussion according to a preserved shorthand transcript.
147. DNB report, June 18, 1944.
148. After the war, the Commissariat Général à la Protection Aérienne Passive en Belgique compiled minute statistics on every V missile that had penetrated Belgian airspace in the course of the German air raids. Bearing the title *La Belgique sous les bombes*, the commissariat's official report features six maps, twelve spreadsheets, and twenty-one photographs on a total of 311 pages.
For the period from October 1944 to March 1945, the research report enumerates 2, 448 V-1 hits and 1, 265 V-2 strikes in the vicinity of Antwerp alone. These raids were particularly costly in terms of civilian casualties, as there was no way of warning the population before a blast. One especially gruesome instance of this was a direct hit on the downtown Antwerp cinema "Rex" on December 16, 1944, which resulted in 271 dead and 97 seriously injured. A similar explosion at noon on November 27, 1944, had already left 128 dead and 196 wounded, after a V-2 missile had come down over the Avenue de France, one of the busiest crossings in the city. These attacks

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- notwithstanding, the unloading of supply shipments in the harbor continued without interruption in the period investigated. On this topic, cf. Theo Franssen, *The Battle of Antwerp, City of Sudden Death* (Antwerp, 1945).
149. DNB reports, June 21 and 25, 1944. Dr. Toni Winkelkemper, born 1905; Reichstag deputy.
 150. DNB report, June 21, 1944. Johann Heinrich Böhmcker also headed the SA Group North Sea.
 151. DNB report, June 25, 1944. Claus Selzner, born 1899; head of the DAF's organizational bureau; Reichstag deputy.
 152. While Bürckel had obviously committed suicide, the official version of his cause of death read "pneumonia." See below, 1944, note 333.
 153. DNB report, July 7 (!), 1944. Karl Eglseer, born 1890 in Ischl; general of mountain infantry; commander of a mountain infantry corps.
 154. Ibid.
 155. DNB report, July 1 (!), 1944. Cf. Baur, pp. 242 f.
 156. See below, speech of July 1, 1944.
 157. Given this new development, Hitler immediately sent von Ribbentrop to Helsinki, where he was to tell State President Ryti that the Reich was willing to furnish him any weaponry desired. Von Ribbentrop obediently relayed this offer to Ryti on June 16, 1944.
 158. In Baur's book *Ich flog Mächtige der Erde*, Hitler's veteran aviator and expert investigator of airplane accidents blames Dietl's sudden and inexplicable crash in the area of the Semmering on the Ju52 pilot's inexperience and on adverse weather conditions that day. This claim is highly questionable, however. Cf. Baur, pp. 242 f. 159. DNB report, June 30, 1944.
 159. The official report noted Dollmann's unexpected death by relating that, while at his battle station, the colonel general had suffered a heart attack and died as a result. Cf. Heiber, p. 334. Friedrich Dollmann, born 1882; commanding general of the Fourth Army Corps in 1934; from 1939 on, commander in chief of the Seventh Army.
 160. DNB report, June 29, 1944.
 161. Reports on the discussion in Speidel, p. 127. Cf. also Guderian, pp. 302 f.
 162. See below, April 12 and 19, 1945.
 163. DNB text, June 30, 1944.
 164. DNB report, July 1, 1944.
 165. DNB text, July 1, 1944.
 166. Ibid.
 167. DNB report, July 3, 1944.
 168. Ibid.
 169. DNB report, July 6, 1944.
 170. DNB report, July 5, 1944. Report also in VB, No. 188, July 6, 1944. Complete phonographic record of the speech on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (O1-EW 72846-72867). According to the recollections of one of the participants, the congress had already taken

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- place on June 26, 1944. Cf. Heiber, p. 608. This is unlikely, however, as Hitler mentions the loss of the city of Cherbourg in his address, a defeat that took place on the next day. Had the conference been conducted earlier, then the speech's publication would have been unduly delayed, a postponement for which there was no reason.
171. See above, speech of January 27, 1932.
172. In a speech on November 10, 1938, Hitler related a similar anecdote: "One day, a man came up to me and said: 'Listen, if you do this, then Germany will be ruined within six weeks' time.' So I said: The German Volk once survived wars with the Romans. The German Volk survived the *Völkerwanderung*. The German Volk later survived the great battles of the early and late Middle Ages. The German Volk survived the religious wars of more recent times. The German Volk then survived the Napoleonic Wars, the Wars of Liberation, even a World War, even the Revolution [of 1918]—it will survive me, too!" See above, p. 1251.
173. See above, Vol. II, Prologue, p. 1387, and note 26.
174. Word difficult to make out.
175. Reference is to the Upper Rhine region, where the Allied advance had been contained prior to the western offensive.
176. As mentioned before, Hitler was unfortunate in that every time he proclaimed that his audience should just wait and see whether a particular move was a mistake or not, the move inevitably turned out to have been a big mistake. See above, 1939, note 469.
177. Several words here were incomprehensible.
178. Hitler emphasized these words by rapping the knuckles of his right hand on the speaker's desk.
179. This controversy was also a subject debated in the Stieff case, which was brought before the Volksgerichtshof on August 7 and 8, 1944. Cf. IMT, 3881-PS. On August 15, 1944, the German media carried pictures of the July 7, 1944, presentation of new uniforms and equipment at the Berghof. The published text of Stieff's interrogation contained no mention of the date of July 7 and only general statements on an assassination plot to be carried out in connection with such a fashion show. In this context, while Schlabrendorff also recalled Stieff's intention to strike at such an inconspicuous occasion, he cited entirely different dates (even November 1943) for the attempt on Hitler's life. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 132. Helmut Stieff, born 1901 in Deutsch-Eylau; hanged August 8, 1944; major general as of 1944; chief of the organizational department of the general staff of the army.
180. Surprisingly, Schlabrendorff questions the possibility of shooting someone fatally with a pistol drawn casually.
181. One of Hitler's household servants, Schneider, discussed this possibility: "In my opinion, any man determined enough and with direct access to Hitler could have killed him at any point in time. Usually, once dinner had been served, two servants at the most remained behind in the dinning hall. In theory, we servants could carry a small pistol, which was issued to us as a part of the servants'

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- equipment and which was easily hidden in a pocket. In my time as a servant with Hitler, I often asked myself what I would do if one of the guests drew a gun on Hitler during dinner. Well—there was really no other choice than to throw yourself in front of Hitler so that the shot would hit one of us and not him. But—let’s be honest here—that was mere speculation, all theory. Perhaps one could have hit the assassin over the head with something—maybe with one of those heavy silver fruit trays. That’s also just theory, because by this time the assassin’s pistol would have long gone off. Basically, no one can make excuses claiming that an assassination had not been possible because of gigantic (baumlang) SS men hanging around. There were no SS giants to be seen anywhere.” Linge, No. 8.
182. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 146.
 183. Ibid. Cf. also Major General Stieff’s August 7, 1944, testimony before the Volksgerichtshof, IMT, 3881-PS. Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, born 1907 in Jettingen; shot July 20, 1944, in Berlin; colonel with the general staff. For further information on the German resistance movement and the events of July 20, 1944, see, for example, Rudolf Pechel, *Deutscher Widerstand* (Zurich, 1947); Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1955); Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Deutsche Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main, 2nd. ed. 1960); Peter Hoffmann, “Zu dem Attentat im Führerhauptquartier am 20. Juli 1944” in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (Munich, 1964); Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat* (Munich, 1969).
 184. Sauerbruch, pp. 550 ff.
 185. Cf. July 20, 1944, list of cabinet members in Berthold Spuler, *Regenten und Regierungen der Welt. Sovereigns and governments of the world (Minister-Ploetz)* Bielefeld, 1953, p. 134.
 186. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 146, and IMT, 3881-PS.
 187. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 241 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 255.
 188. Operational orders issued on July 22, 1944.
 189. RGBl, 1944, I, pp. 159 f.
 190. Ibid., p. 155.
 191. DNB note, July 18, 1944.
 192. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 256 ff. Cf. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 243 ff.
 193. This intention was never realized, because soon all Gaus became “Theaters of Operations.”
 194. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 247 ff.
 195. See above, March 23, 1942.
 196. DNB report, July 13, 1944.
 197. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 146.
 198. Cf. Speidel, pp. 137 f.
 199. See above, 1939, Major Events in Summary.
 200. DNB report, July 18, 1944.
 201. DNB report, July 19, 1944.
 202. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 592 f.

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203. Report on Hitler's telling Mussolini about the assassination attempt is found in Schmidt, pp. 593 ff.
204. In an address later that evening, Hitler corrected himself by stating that the bomb had gone off two meters to his right. See above, July 20, 1944.
205. Standing at the open window when the bomb went off, Major General Scherff and SS Hauptsturmführer Günsche were catapulted out of the room by the pressure of the explosion.
206. See above, statements of July 4, 1944.
207. DNB text, July 23, 1944. Serafino Mazzolini, born 1890 in Arcovia; died 1945.
208. Reference is to Italian soldiers captured by the Germans.
209. A parallel with Napoleon: On October 23 of 1812, a certain General Hugues-Bernard Malet (1754–1812) spread rumors that the emperor, who was then engaged in Russia, had been killed. Great confusion ensued, and the Paris garrison was paralyzed at the news. The general took advantage of the situation by arresting both the city's president of the police and the prefect. The commander of the Paris garrison, General Hulin, was seriously injured in the scuffle. When the adjutant Laborde and other officers recovered from the initial shock after a few hours, they freed the imprisoned ministers and arrested Malet and his accomplices. They put a total of twenty-five persons on trial. Including Malet, twelve of them received death sentences and were summarily executed on October 28, 1812. Napoleon was greatly disconcerted when reports on the attempted coup reached him. Cf. Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia: The Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza* (Westport, Connecticut, 1976 reprint of 1935 New York publication), pp. 207 ff. For further parallels with Napoleon, see above, June 22, 1941; 1941, note 550; 1942, notes 125, 205, and 460; see also below, August 31, 1944, and Appendix, Indices "Napoleon."
210. Cf. Linge, No. 18. Cf. also the address of Goebbels in DNB text, July 27, 1944.
211. Cf. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (7th. ed. London, 1995), pp. 27 ff.
212. Hitler always feared that a member of Germany's high nobility, in remembrance of the monarchy, might appropriate to himself a leading role in the political and military life of the nation and challenge the Führer's arbitrary reign. He sought to eliminate all vestiges of a monarchical form of government, as he feared the emergence of any person who might be considered a successor or, worse yet, a replacement for the Führer. When he learned that a German prince was serving as commander of a regiment at the outbreak of the war, he was beside himself with rage. See above, March 9, 1940. Once Italy had collapsed, he ordered the removal of all princes from the ranks of the armed forces. See above, September 10, 1943. In private company, Hitler's phobia was such that he said to his entourage on July 20, 1944:

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- “You can believe me—soon we will find out that all along the *Kronprinz* (crown prince) was behind it all.” Cf. Zoller, p. 186.
213. DNB text, July 20, 1944.
 214. Graf Helldorf was president of the Berlin police.
 215. DNB text, July 21, 1944. A few corrections were made in accordance with the phonographic record.
 216. DNB text, July 23, 1944.
 217. Fromm arranged to give Colonel General Beck the opportunity to end his own life by shooting himself. The remaining four officers—von Stauffenberg, Olbricht, Colonel Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, and First Lieutenant Werner von Haefen—faced a court-martial and a firing squad in the courtyard of the war ministry. Since Hitler was growing increasingly suspicious of Fromm as well, he had the bodies exhumed so that their identity could be verified.
 218. Fromm was arrested on Hitler’s orders on July 21, 1944, and put on trial by the Volksgerichtshof in February 1945. He was sentenced to death for “cowardice.” In the Brandenburg prison, he faced a firing squad on March 19, 1945, and died with the cry “Heil Hitler!” on his lips.
 219. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 470 f.
 220. Cf. Josef Kessel, *Medizinalrat Kersten—Der Mann mit den magischen Händen* (Munich, 1961).
 221. Characteristically contemptuous was the attitude expressed after the war by the retired Air Force General Karl Bodenschatz, who had been seriously injured in the blast: “Stauffenberg was a very good friend of mine. I thought him a man of character—a good guy—right up to the day he put a bomb at my feet. It is unworthy of a German officer to sacrifice so many of his comrades to kill only one man. Above all, he was a coward. He made a run for it after he had placed the briefcase at the Führer’s feet. One thing should not be forgotten: in connection with some important affairs, Stauffenberg had to visit the Führer repeatedly for several hours in May and June [more correctly: in early July, the author’s note]. He was eye to eye with Hitler then. It was then that he should have carried through his plan. Admittedly, he might have sacrificed his own life by so doing. And it was this that Stauffenberg wished to avoid!” Cf. interview with Bodenschatz in *Der Hausfreund für Stadt und Land* (Nuremberg), No. 26, June 26, 1954.
 222. DNB reports, July 22, 1944.
 223. Cf. Guderian, p. 308.
 224. Up to this point, the “German salute” (lifting of outstretched right arm to the height of one’s eyes) had to be extended only when officers and soldiers greeted someone bareheaded. From 1938 on, this greeting had become mandatory for all encounters with the Führer. In all other cases, which dominated in the life of a soldier, the customary military salute (hand to hat) had remained the proper form of greeting.
 225. DNB text, July 26, 1944.
 226. DNB text, July 24, 1944.

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227. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 253 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 264 f.
228. Cf. Heiber, p. 596, note 1.
229. Report in VB, No. 207, July 25, 1944.
230. For the radio address of Goebbels, cf. DNB text, July 26, 1944.
231. RGBL, 1944, I, pp. 161 f.
232. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
233. DNB text, July 26, 1944. Wilhelm Grimm, born 1889 in Hof; president of the second chamber of the supreme party court; SS Gruppenführer and lieutenant general of the police.
234. DNB text, July 29, 1944.
235. Report in VB, No 214, August 1, 1944.
236. Cf. Heiber, p. 599, note 1.
237. Heiber, pp. 584 ff.
238. See above, March 20, 1942.
239. The so-called "Huppenkothen Trial," which investigated the murder of Admiral Canaris, took place in the city of Augsburg in 1955. During an interrogation of Colonel General Halder on September 23, 1955, the senior public prosecutor Hölper demanded to know the following of the former chief of the general staff: "Had military treason, that is, the providing of information to the enemy on a pending attack, any influence on the outcome of the war?" Halder denied this by answering "No." He added correctly: the betrayal of such military secrets might have slightly influenced the initial stages of a military operation. However, military treason did not affect the outcome of the war, which was decided by other factors, such as the actual distribution of power. Report in *Fränkisches Volksblatt* (Würzburg), No. 216, September 24, 1955, p. 1.
240. Nearly two years before, Hitler had still insisted: "Therefore, it is better to hold a front at a distance of one thousand or, if necessary, two thousand kilometers from the homeland, than to have a front at the Reich's border and to be obliged to hold it." See above, speech of November 8, 1942.
241. Reference is to Generals Fellgiebel and Wagner. Although the two men had joined the resistance movement, they had not established any contact with the enemy. General Erich Fellgiebel, born 1886; executed September 5, 1944. General Eduard Wagner, born 1894; committed suicide on the night of July 22, 1944.
242. In a public proclamation dated March 1, 1815, Napoleon had belittled his marshals as follows:
"Frenchmen! It was the duke of Castiglione [Marshal Augereau] who abandoned Lyon and us to our enemies without even putting up a fight. The army I had entrusted to him had been perfectly capable of defeating the Austrian army corps it faced, given the valor and patriotism of its troops and strength of its battalions. It was well capable of circumventing and attacking the left flank of the enemy troops threatening Paris.

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- “The French commanded heights as never before; they were mighty as never before. The elite of the enemy’s forces was destined to perish on the wide plateau they so mercilessly ravaged once the duke of Ragusa’s [Marshal Mamont’s] betrayal abandoned the capital city to the enemy and dissolved the army.”
- Aretz, pp. 428 f. See also below, August 31, 1944; 1944, note 300; and Appendix, Indices “Napoleon.”
243. Dietrich and Hausser were the first to be appointed “colonel general of the Waffen SS, ” a rank which had not existed before. Paul Hausser, born in 1880; general with the Reichswehr until his resignation in 1932; joined the SS in 1934 and became head of the SS Junker training school at Brunswick.
244. DNB text, August 2, 1944.
245. Turkey declared war on Germany on March 1, 1945.
346. A phrase attributed to Kemal Pasha Atatürk after World War I read: “Never again war! And if war, then never again on the side of Germany!”
247. Report in VB, No. 217, August 4, 1944.
248. DNB report, August 2, 1944. Ba Maw served as state president of Burma from August 1, 1943, to May 1945.
249. See above, March 4, 1943.
250. See above, June 21, 1943.
251. See above, p. 131.
252. See above, p. 468.
253. Cf. DNB illustrated reports, August 3, 1944. Hitler had recovered extraordinarily quickly from the injuries he had sustained, like the slight damage to one of his eardrums. He prided himself on this fact and, according to his manservant Linge, maintained to Keitel and several staff members of his headquarters: “There you go—I recovered more quickly because I am a vegetarian.” Cf. Linge, No. 18. Nevertheless, for a long time, Hitler as a hypochondriac feared contracting a middle-ear infection as a complication of the earlier injuries. He also made use of his supposedly “imperiled health” as an excuse to avoid having to fly to the west to inspect the frontline there. Cf. discussion of the situation on August 31, 1944, in Heiber, pp. 607 f.
254. Cf. interview with Bodenschatz in *Der Hausfreund für Stadt und Land* (Nuremberg), No. 26, June 26, 1954. In *Mein Kampf*, p. 105, Hitler himself had maintained that human rights prevailed over constitutional law (“*Menschenrecht bricht Staatsrecht*”).
255. Indeed, the conspirators had made many plans, the usefulness of which was highly questionable, however.
256. Hitler had earlier insisted that the conspirators had maintained close contacts with the enemy. See above, July 31, 1944.
257. Hitler once again grossly exaggerated the figures.
258. DNB illustrated report, August 5, 1944.
259. DNB text, August 5, 1944.

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260. General Fritz Lindemann, born 1894 in Berlin; arrested on September 13, 1944, in Berlin; hanged on September 22, 1944.
261. DNB illustrated report, August 6, 1944.
262. DNB text, August 5, 1944.
263. Cf. Speer's testimony at Nuremberg on June 20, 1946, in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, p. 541.
264. DNB report, September 4, 1944.
265. Report on discussions between Hitler and Antonescu is found in Guderian, p. 328, and Baur, p. 249.
266. In January 1944, Hitler had still argued that the loss of the Crimea would lead to "the fall of Turkey and, as a consequence, to that of Bulgaria and Romania." See above, speech of January 1, 1944.
267. Report in VB, No. 213, August 10, 1944.
268. Freisler behaved in a similarly inappropriate manner during the interrogation of the civilian conspirators in September 1944. He more than met his match in Graf Helldorff, however. The former Reichstag deputy, SA Obergruppenführer, and chief of the Berlin police shouted back at him disrespectfully: "Why all the theatrics? Every single one of us must try to abandon ship right now. And *Du* [in proper German, one addresses an official with the formal pronoun *Sie* meaning "you"; Helldorff instead used the familiar pronoun *Du*, also meaning "you" but rude in these circumstances], you know that only too well!" Freisler was left speechless for once.
269. DNB report, August 10, 1944. Illustrated report in VB, No. 230, August 17, 1944.
270. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 199.
271. DNB report, August 15, 1944. Cf. also von Papen, pp. 604 ff.
272. In broad daylight, an attempt had been made on von Papen's life in the streets of Ankara on February 24, 1942. Von Papen and his wife had escaped injury, whereas the bomb tore the would-be assassin, a Macedonian student, to pieces. Cf. von Papen, pp. 550 ff.
273. Cf. Heiber, p. 415.
274. Cf. Guderian, p. 334, and Heiber, p. 612.
275. Cf. Speidel, pp. 159 f. See also Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York, 1952); German translation, Frankfurt, 1954, pp. 679 ff.
276. Cf. Baur, p. 224. Hitler had meant this as a compliment, since Kluge's first names were Günther Hans.
277. DNB text, August 17, 1944. Saint-Malo was a fortified seaport [in northwest France] on the island of Avon at the mouth of the Rance River along the Channel coast. The city is connected to the mainland only by a mole.
278. DNB texts, August 18, 1944.
279. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 272 ff.
280. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 267 ff.
281. Report in VB, No. 234, August 21, 1944.
282. DNB text, August 20, 1944.

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283. A phonographic record of the talks survived. The Bucharest correspondent of the American journal *Time* published its contents in 1947, and the German newspaper *Badische Zeitung* (Karlsruhe) reproduced them in its September 30, 1947, issue.
284. OKW order dated August 23, 1944. Cf. Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Bildern und Dokumenten*, pp. 420 f.
285. See above, June 4, 1944. Also see below, August 28, 1944.
286. Speidel, p. 266, argues that Hitler had initially contemplated a bombardment of Paris; in any case, there was never made a practical attempt to realize such an intention.
287. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 207.
288. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 185.
289. See above, decree of August 26, 1942. Cf. also above, September 5, 1943.
290. DNB report, August 29, 1944. Hitler had established the Close Combat Clasp on November 25, 1942. It was awarded to servicemen with fifty days of close combat.
291. DNB note, August 28, 1944.
292. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 276 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 265 ff.
293. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 268 ff., Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 279 ff.
294. Part of the transcripts of the talks have been preserved and are reproduced in Heiber, pp. 610 ff.
295. As Hitler observed, this was truly a "completely idiotic idea," but he himself had advocated it many times before, as he insisted on courting the British either in order to turn against Russia with their help or to gain their help after having turned against Russia. The British had done their best to inspire Hitler with these "idiotic ideas," as they had successfully done before in the case of Napoleon. See above, pp. 1907 f., 2064 ff., 2092 ff., and June 22, 1941.
296. If the situation was less than favorable, then all one had to do was to wait for better times to come. This approach is based on the idea that in times of victory, Germany could dictate the peace, an assumption that had already proved false for imperial Germany in World War I.
297. It was beyond Hitler why the British consistently declined his "magnanimous offers." On the contrary, these offers were actually perceived as grave affronts by the British. Hitler was undaunted by this and certain that he would ultimately reach a deal with the British.
298. The money in question was a gift of two hundred fifty thousand Reichsmarks on the occasion of Kluge's sixtieth birthday on October 30, 1943, ostensibly meant for the restoration of his estate. Hitler passed out similar, even higher, remuneration to a number of field marshals. Obviously Hitler did not count on their loyalty without giving them concrete financial advantages.
299. The base salary for a field marshal was approximately three thousand Reichsmarks per month, which Hitler supplemented with various bonuses, running up to several thousand Reichsmarks per month in cases of special loyalty. See above, February 6, 1943.
300. See above, July 31, 1944, and note 242.

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301. Frederick the Great avoided the most severe consequences of the Seven Years' War by allying himself with the ultimately victorious British and not by proclaiming inspiring slogans. This historic truth stands in marked contrast to Hitler "Fredericus complex"; see below, April 12, 1945. [Editor's Note: It was in fact the British who allied themselves with Frederick the Great in the expectation that he would protect George II's electorate of Hanover and tie down the bulk of France's armies while they themselves appropriated the French colonial possessions in Canada and India with minimal opposition. Britain abandoned the alliance as soon as its colonial ambitions had been achieved and left Frederick to his own devices.]
302. Hitler had considerably scaled down his predictions for the future. As early as May 10, 1940, he had maintained that the outcome of the campaign against France would "determine the fate of the German nation for the next one thousand years." See above, p. 1992, proclamation of May 10, 1940.
303. Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XI, p.343
304. Surviving excerpts from the speech in Heiber, pp. 261 ff.
305. DNB text, September 16, 1944. Finland ceased hostilities on September 4, 1944. Representatives of both countries signed a cease-fire agreement in Moscow on September 19, 1944.
306. Directive No. 64, dated September 3, 1944. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 272 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 286 ff.
307. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 288 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 276 f. These instructions concerned von Rundstedt's juridical powers in his capacity as commander in chief west.
308. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 289 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 277 f. This information was disseminated in the form of a telex message on September 9, 1944, to the troops affected by the new regulations.
309. DNB text, September 5, 1944.
310. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, p. 533.
311. DNB report, September 5, 1944.
312. DNB text, September 11, 1944. A year earlier, an exchange of wounded soldiers had taken place via Sweden from October 17 to 20, 1943. Cf. Heiber, pp. 404 f. Hitler did not officially acknowledge these proceedings. Another such humanitarian effort took place in January 1945. See below, January 24, 1945.
313. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 290 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 278 ff.
314. DNB text, September 19, 1944.
315. Despite reinforcement by Polish parachutists, the British First Airborne Division under Major General Urquhart was virtually wiped out. After days of fighting, it retreated across the Rhine. Cf. R. E. Urquhart, *Arnhem* (London, 1958).
316. Cf. Heiber, pp. 661 f.
317. There is little doubt that Hitler would have risked it. The Allies pursued no such fantastic plans, but took a systematic step-by-step approach.
318. DNB text, September 19, 1944.

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319. See above, July 13, 1944. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 256 ff., and *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 243 ff.
320. Decree of September 19, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 282 ff.
321. Decree of September 20, *ibid.*, pp. 284 ff.
322. Report in VB, No. 265, September 21, 1944. Born in 1925, Rama VIII Mahidol was king of Thailand at this point.
323. Decree of September 20, 1944, in RGBl, 1944, I, p. 211.
324. RGBl, 1944, I, pp. 225 f.
325. See above, January 30, 1937.
326. RGBl, 1944, I, pp. 317 f.
327. See above, p. 501, July 13, 1934, quotation of a speech before Kreisleiters at the Ordensburg Vogelsang on April 29, 1937.
328. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
329. See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
330. RGBl, 1944, I, pp. 253 f. Although Guderian had advised entrusting the SA with the organization of the *Volkesturm*, Hitler instructed the Gauleiters to carry through this attempt at rallying the remnants of Germany's strength. Hitler's dislike of the SA was well-known. Guderian, p. 327.
331. DNB texts, September 27, 1944.
332. Kunaiki Koiso, born 1879; died 1950; prime minister from 1944 to 1945.
333. DNB reports, September 29, 1944. Actually, the Gauleiter's suicide had been prompted by Hitler's anger, which Bürckel had elicited by withdrawing from Metz. See above, speech of January 30, 1939. In Hitler's eyes, a good party comrade was a dead party comrade. Therefore, at Bürckel's funeral, Hitler had Rosenberg present the deceased with the "highest class of the German Order with Swords." Since Todt's death, numerous other dead had received this macabre distinction.
334. According to the memoirs of former generals such as von Manstein, Kesselring, Speidel, and Guderian, the heads of the Allied military made one mistake after the other in World War II! During the campaign against Poland in 1939, for instance, the Allies had missed their chance to invade Germany from the west; allegedly, they could have advanced as far as Berlin then. In 1940, the Allied forces failed to rescue Finland and occupy Norway. When they took Morocco and Algiers in the year 1942, they failed to take Tunis. One year later, the Russians failed to cut off the German Caucasus army at the same time as the German army in Stalingrad. In 1944, by stopping at the borders of the Reich, the Allies made another mistake and thereby prolonged the war for half a year; and so forth.
335. On July 29, 1943, after the overthrow of Mussolini, Churchill had stated in a speech before the House of Commons: "We should let the Italians, to use a homely phrase, stew in their own juice for a bit." Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VII, p. 6811.
336. DNB report, October 7, 1944.
337. DNB text, November 10, 1944.

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338. By late September, Allied forces had reached the fortified line built in 1938–1939, the West Wall, which stretched from Aix-la-Chapelle to Saarbrücken. The Allies referred to the fortifications as the “Siegfried Line,” although this expression was never used in Germany. In the First World War, a fortified rear line of defense, which was called “Siegfried Line” by the German army command, ran from Arras via St. Quentin to the Chemin des Dames, the southern part of the “Hindenburg Line.” The western powers had penetrated this line in 1918. To commemorate this victory, the western Allies had called the West Wall the “Siegfried Line,” too. Exuberant British soldiers had composed a new song on the occasion: “We’re going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line.” Although the heads of the German military ridiculed the confidence of the Allied forces in the early stages of the war, they felt less inclined to laugh in 1944–1945, when enemy tanks simply charged through the supposedly impenetrable line of fortifications.
339. From the beginning, the Allied commanders realized the military insignificance of the eagerly erected West Wall. Although it would have been relatively easy for Allied pilots to bomb the construction site and disrupt the work, they made no such effort. Once the western powers reached the “Siegfried Line” in the spring of 1945, their tanks failed to fulfill the German propaganda’s promise that they would “plunge into the depths” of the supposedly impassable abyss. They crossed them by simply laying railroad tracks across the ditches and letting their tanks roll over them.
340. Hitler had established this award in 1939. It consisted of an oval pendant to be worn on a brown band. See above, August 2, 1939.
341. RGBL, 1944, I, p. 247.
342. DNB note, October 10 and 13, 1944.
343. See above, November 3, 1942.
344. See above, 1944, Major Events in Summary.
345. See above, July 15, 1944.
346. Cf. reactions to Rommel’s death in Speidel, pp. 178 ff. Cf. also testimony by Lieutenant General Maisel before the Berchtesgaden Spruchkammer (denazification court) in 1948 (dena report). Cf. further the Nuremberg court’s interrogation of Keitel in 1945, IMT, Supplement, p. 1256. Cf. also Desmond Young, *Rommel—the Desert Fox* (New York, 1950). Wilhelm Burgdorf, born 1895; missing in action on May 2, 1945; appointed new chief adjutant of the Wehrmacht on October 12, 1944; promoted to the rank of infantry general on November 1, 1944.
347. See above, p. 479.
348. DNB text, October 15, 1944.
349. DNB report, April 16, 1944.
350. Cf. Schmidt, p. 589. Cf. also Skorzeny, pp. 238 ff.
351. Verbatim reproduction of the speech in von Moos, Vol. VI.
352. Horthy’s testimony in the so-called “Wilhelmstrasse Trial” in dena report, March 1948.

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353. DNB report, October 17, 1944.
354. Franz Szalasi, born 1897 in Kaschau; shot in 1946.
355. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, October 22, 1944.
356. See below, speech of January 1, 1945.
357. DNB text, October 19, 1944.
358. DNB report, October 19, 1944.
359. During the Battle of the Nations in the vicinity of Leipzig, Napoleon's troops suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of Russian, Austrian, and Prussian armies on October 18, 1813. Therefore, Hitler's choice of this date for the launching of the *Volkssturm* was fateful in the sense that it would soon become another slaughter for the troops of the twentieth-century Napoleon, Adolf Hitler. Had Hitler searched more extensively for a historical parallel, he would have discovered a more appropriate date, namely, the anniversary of the foundation of the Prussian *Landsturm* on April 21, 1813.
360. DNB text, October 29, 1944.
361. About thirty years later, it would come to light—from sources found in the city archives of Augsburg and Sigmaringen—that very prominent French politicians, at the top of the Communist Party (for example, Georges Marchais) and of the Socialist Party, had collaborated with the Nazis; a fact that—allegedly—had not been known before to the western intelligence services. In the nineties, even the president of the republic, François Maurice Marie Mitterrand (1916–1996), was incriminated in collaboration by photographs discovered in German archives. See also above, 1936, p. 743.
362. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 595 f.
363. DNB text, November 2, 1944.
364. Report in VB, No. 307, November 2, 1944.
365. DNB report, November 6, 1944.
366. DNB reports, November 2 and December 1, 1944.
367. Partial transcript in Heiber, pp. 672 ff.
368. Launched on April 1, 1939, the battleship *Tirpitz* was not completed until 1942. Officially classified as a vessel of 35,000 tons, the 42,900-ton battleship was a sister-ship of the *Bismarck*. It had escaped the enemy and hidden in a succession of Norwegian fjords. Despite these efforts, it had increasingly become the target of British air raids and attacks by small British submarines, the so-called “pocket-V-boats.” While it lay at anchor in the Sandesund Fjord off Tromsø, British six-ton bombs hit and sank the ship on November 12, 1944, with a crew of twelve hundred men aboard. Cf. Jochen Brennecke, *Schlachtschiff Tirpitz* (3rd ed. Munich, 1961).
369. Hitler had used this expression in a situation report on November 6, 1944.
370. A partial publication of a United Press interview with the Spanish dictator in the *Völkischer Beobachter* informed the German public about Franco's curious behavior. The article in German stressed Franco's

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- desire to “cooperate with the Anglo-Americans and Russians” in an effort “to organize peace.” Report in VB, No. 314, November 9, 1944.
371. See below, December 4, 1944.
372. DNB report, November 19, 1944.
373. See above, speech of January 30, 1941: “What is it they are hoping for? Somebody else’s help? America’s? I can only say one thing: we had provided for every eventuality from the start.”
374. See above, speech of October 3, 1941: “There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance in the sense that one explains afterwards: I didn’t notice that or I didn’t take it seriously.”
375. DNB text, November 12, 1944.
376. See above, 1939, note 1014.
377. It was a question of a few hundred National Socialists, and not thousands. See above, p. 157.
378. Gürtner had already served as Reich minister of justice in the von Papen and Schleicher governments, before Hitler came to power in 1933. Hitler left the judge in office, as he did many administrative specialists whose expertise was crucial to the running of an effective government (examples: Neurath, Schwerin-Krosigk, and Eltz-Rübenach).
379. Hitler by no means treated his enemies “magnanimously.” On the contrary, he persecuted and killed them, if he considered them a danger. He courteously treated, for tactical reasons and not in every case, only those who submitted themselves to his will without any reservations, such as von Papen and Severing.
380. Catiline (Lucius Sergius Catilina), about 108–62 B.C.; Roman politician, planned a military coup; after Cicero had exposed the conspiracy, Catiline died at the head of the insurgents.
381. No such “revolt” had been in the making in 1934. For circumstances of the Röhm Purge, see above, pp. 465–482.
382. Report in VB, No. 321, November 16, 1944.
383. Cf. Schramm, p. 1754. Cf. also Bullock, p. 767. For details on the 1935 operation on Hitler’s vocal cords, see above, May 23, 1935.
384. Report in VB, No. 330/331, November 25/26, 1944.
385. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 299. Cf. *Hitler’s War Directives*, p. 288.
386. *Ibid.*, dated November 28, 1944. This order did not reach some of the troops until December 14, 1944, [when it finally reached them] by telex. For example, this happened to the *Luftgaukommando Reich*.
387. VB, No. 335, November 30, 1944.
388. Report in VB, No. 337/338, December 2/3, 1944.
389. DNB report, December 3, 1944.
390. Report in VB, No. 341, December 6, 1944.
391. DNB text, December 5, 1944. Cf. also Schmidt, p. 585.
392. DNB report, December 5, 1944.
393. VB, No. 342, December 7, 1944.
394. Along with two other appeals to the troops, von Rundstedt and Guderian read Hitler’s instructions at one military academy’s rally to the officer cadets senior grade. Cf. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*,

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- December 6, 1944. Similar calls persisted in the remaining months of the war—for example, an appeal issued by Dr. Jutta Rüdinger, the Reich official responsible for the *Bund deutscher Mädel*, *BdM* (Union of German Girls), and an appeal issued by Gertrud Scholz-Klink, the head of the *Reichsfrauenführung* (Reich women's movement). They envisioned the formation of a *Wehrmachthelferinnenkorps* (Corps of female assistants to the Wehrmacht), in which every "German woman willing to defend her country (*wehrwillige deutsche Frau*) and over eighteen years of age can take the place of a soldier and do every task assigned to her by this Corps in accordance with her abilities." Cf. VB, No. 340, December 5, 1944.
395. Report in VB, No. 343, December 8, 1944.
396. RGBl, 1945, I, p. 1. This particular medal was to be worn on the left upper sleeve of the uniform, like similar earlier distinctions such as the Shields of Narvik, Kholm, Demyansk, and the Crimea.
397. DNB text, December 10, 1944. This *Sturmbootflottille* (storm boat flotilla) consisted of several boats each seating one man. Missions included penetration behind enemy lines to blow up bridgeheads. While these "daredevil" ventures made for many heroics, they were also extremely dangerous for those involved.
398. The purely propagandist offensive to reclaim Zhitomir began on December 6, 1943, and ended that same month in a complete disaster. See above, December 6, 1943.
399. See above, September 1, 1944.
400. See above, 1935, note 50.
401. Ziegenberg was located eleven kilometers west of Bad Nauheim along the highway to Usingen. Officially part of the township Langehain-Ziegenberg in the district of Friedberg, the headquarters was situated at a crossroads near Wiesenthal on a rise on which stood the Castle Ziegenberg (also known as the Kranzberg Castle). This had earlier belonged to a branch of the von Bismarck family and later passed into the hands of the von Passavant family of Frankfurt. The Reich government had bought the estate in 1939. In the course of the following year, several fortified bunkers were added to the structures surrounding the castle and disguised as cut-stone walls. While American occupation forces supervised the destruction of most other bunkers immediately after the war, one bunker was inexplicably spared. Today its ruins can be viewed in front of a residential home (address: Schlossberg 7).
402. Cf. Liddell Hart, p. 541.
403. Cf. Guderian, p. 342.
404. Heiber, pp. 713 ff.
405. Author's expression, Vol. I, p. 65.
406. Hitler interpreted the term "capitulation" to mean only one thing: "submission to the will of another." He made this clear in a speech before nearly nine thousand officer candidates three years before:

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- “As a National Socialist, there was one word I refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your supreme commander. Once more, this one word is “capitulation” and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never! And you have to think exactly the same way.” See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
407. On other previous occasions, Hitler had insisted on the identical nature of Bolshevik Jewish states and plutocratic Jewish states.
408. This figure had no basis in reality. The United States lost approximately 174, 000 men in the field, both in Europe and in North Africa, due to operations from 1942 to 1945. Cf. Heiber, p. 724.
409. Report in VB, Nos. 351/352, December 16/17, 1944.
410. VB, No. 350, December 15, 1944.
411. DNB text, December 15, 1944.
412. Cf. Skorzeny, pp. 268 ff.
413. Cf. Guderian, pp. 346 f.
414. See above, December 24, 1943.
415. Approximately half of the shorthand transcript of this speech survived and is reproduced in Heiber, pp. 738 ff.
416. Competition between England and France for hegemony of the continent had been the cause of the Seven Years’ War. While Austria allied itself to the French, who were later defeated, Prussia joined the British, who won the war. The conflict between Prussia and Austria played only a peripheral role in the dispute, and their fate depended directly on that of their respective ally. The Führer’s often repeated claim that Frederick the Great had pitted an army of “three and a half million Prussians against fifty-two million Europeans” did not reflect historic reality and served only as a propagandist thesis. [Hitler indeed had his history wrong, but Domarus also has a highly questionable interpretation of the Seven Years’ War here. It was in fact Frederick the Great and Prussia that bore the brunt of the fighting (against Austria, France, Russia, and Sweden), while Britain, at war only with France, limited itself to naval and colonial adventures in Canada, the West Indies, and India, and paid Frederick and a number of minor German princes to provide for the defense of George II’s German possession, the Electorate of Hanover.—Ed.]
417. A civil war between republican and monarchist factions was raging in Greece at the time. Churchill’s offices as mediator did not, as Hitler maintained, aggravate the situation, but rather helped to bring about the cease-fire agreement both parties signed on January 11, 1945.
418. What particular “third blow” Hitler had in mind here is open to speculation. It is possible that he contemplated launching a renewed offensive along the northern sector of the front in the west, conceivably advancing in the direction of Antwerp from bases in the vicinity of Arnhem.

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419. The United States secretary of the treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., conceived this highly controversial plan. He envisioned converting Germany into a purely agrarian country after the war. The plan was initiated in the course of the second summit meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill in Quebec during September 1944, but never implemented. Cf. Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs* (New York, 1948), chapter 113. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., born 1891; United States secretary of the treasury in the Roosevelt administration.
420. For the ordinance on the revision of the statutes affecting the *Verdienstorden vom Deutschen Adler* (Service Medal of the German Eagle), see above, December 27, 1943.
421. Ordinance of December 29, 1944, in RGeBl, 1945, I, pp. 11 f. According to information provided by Oberarchivrat Major Treske (senior archivist at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz), the special edition mentioned above fell into the hands of an American officer.
422. RGeBl, 1945, I, p. 11.
423. Heiber, pp. 758 ff. Wolfgang Thomale, born 1900; major general; chief of staff to the inspector of Panzer troops; lieutenant general in 1945.
424. Cf. Guderian, p. 349.
425. Cf., in addition to Russia, all the signatory powers to the Versailles Treaty, listed in RGeBl, 1919, pp. 701 ff. The former German Kaiser, however, cited only twenty-eight enemy states. Cf. William [Wilhelm] II, *Ereignisse und Gestalten aus den Jahren 1878–1918* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1922), p. 289.

The Year 1945

Notes

1. "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible." See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
2. See below, proclamation of April 15, 1945.
3. "I wish to bear the entire responsibility." See above, speech of January 30, 1942.
4. ". . . and I am now responsible for the entire German Volk. And no action will take place for which I will not vouch with my life, as this Volk be my witness." See above, p. 522, speech of August 17, 1934.
5. "I promise the entire German Volk: if ever I were to err here, or should the Volk ever be of the opinion that it cannot agree with my actions, then it may have me executed. I will calmly stand firm!" See above, p. 386, speech of October 24, 1933. For a series of similar statements, see above, p. 35.
6. See above, statement of August 31, 1944.
7. Even Goebbels appeared in civilian dress in late November 1944 to speak before one hundred regimental commanders who had left the front to attend a seminar in Berlin. Cf. DNB illustrated report, November 25, 1944. Numerous leading figures of the party took advantage of their olive-green or field-gray Volkssturm paramilitary uniforms to escape capture and recognition following the collapse in 1945. Many managed to go underground and disappear as common prisoners of war in Allied camps.
8. See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
9. DNB text, January 1, 1945.
10. The Austrian state chancellor and contemporary of Napoleon, Prince Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar von Metternich (1773–1859), had presided over the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It reflected a reassertion of reactionary ideals in Europe and had made many enemies in the nationalist circles in the various German principalities.
11. DNB text, January 1, 1945.
12. Ilya Grigorovich Ehrenburg, born 1891; Soviet author and journalist; died 1967.
13. See above, 1944, note 419.
14. As recently as the preceding October, Hitler had given a completely different assessment of the developments in Hungary and Horthy's role in them. See above, October 16, 1944.
15. A few minutes earlier, Hitler had blamed Germany's allies in Europe for its repeated losses. Now he expressed good faith in their assistance!
16. Report in VB, No. 1, January 2, 1945. Cf. also Guderian, p. 349.
17. DNB report, January 3, 1945. Hans-Ulrich Rudel, born 1916 in Konradswaldau (Sudeten Mountains); commander of the Fighter

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- Squadron Immelmann; emigrated 1948 to Argentina; took refuge in Paraguay after Peron's fall.
18. Guderian, p. 355.
 19. Report on the talk is found in Guderian, pp. 350 f.
 20. Parts of the shorthand transcripts have survived of the discussions of the situation at noon and in the evening, which took place on January 9, 1941. The noon discussion of the situation on the following day has also been partly preserved. Cf. reproductions in Heiber, pp. 781 ff.
 21. See above, appeal of December 20, 1941.
 22. RGeBl, 1945, I, p. 5.
 23. Ibid., p. 23.
 24. A second signature by a Reich minister, normally Lammers, is missing in this instance. The verification was standard procedure.
 25. DNB report, January 12, 1945.
 26. Cf. Guderian, p. 355.
 27. Report *ibid.*, p. 356.
 28. Ibid., pp. 359 f.
 29. Ibid., p. 360.
 30. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 289 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 300.
 31. Cf. Guderian, pp. 362 f. Walter von Seydlitz-Kurzbach, born 1888; one of the generals captured in Stalingrad; president of the antifascist *Bund deutscher Offiziere* (German Officers' League); member of the Moscow *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland* (National Committee for a Free Germany); released from captivity in 1955.
 32. DNB text, January 23, 1945.
 33. The coffins of von Hindenburg and his wife found a new resting place at Saint Elizabeth's Church in Marburg, where the remains of the Prussian kings Frederick William I and Frederick II the Great were also brought from Potsdam. After the war, the kings' coffins were transferred once more to the Hohenzollern fortress outside Sigmaringen.
 34. Report in VB, No. 22, January 25, 1945. The exchange of wounded military personnel with the western powers constituted the third such humanitarian effort conducted through the good offices of Sweden.
 35. DNB note, January 26, 1945.
 36. Cf. Guderian, pp. 367 f.
 37. Heiber, pp. 820 ff.
 38. American military statistics recorded 65, 000 dead in the First World War. Losses in the Second World War amounted to a total of 174, 000 dead. Cf. Heiber, p. 852, note 2.
 39. In addition to the *Volksempfänger* (radio) and the *Volkswagen* (car), now there would be a *Volksgewehr* (gun)! However, this project was never realized.
 40. DNB text, January 28, 1945.
 41. Hitler had no intention of restoring Norway's independence, as the secondary clause proved.
 42. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 290 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 301.

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43. Emergency units (*Alarmeinheiten*) were units on the alert, made up of vacationers as well as slightly injured and recovering personnel.
44. Cf. Rudolf Semmler, *Goebbels: The Man Next to Hitler* (London, 1947), pp. 174 f.
45. RGBI, 1945, I, p. 20.
46. DNB text, January 30, 1945.
47. Reference is to the 1920 Battle of Warsaw during the Russian-Polish War.
48. This would have been Reich President von Hindenburg, who had died in 1934, but Hitler is obviously referring to God as the one who had commissioned him.
49. Hitler is alluding to the slogan on a laurel-wreath banner placed in the Feldherrnhalle on March 12, 1933, in memory of the movement's dead. See above, March 12, 1933, p. 267.
50. DNB report, February 2, 1945.
51. DNB text, February 8, 1945.
52. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 301.
53. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 290 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 302.
54. Cf. Gerhardt Boldt, *Die letzten Tage der Reichskanzlei* (Hamburg/Stuttgart, 1947), pp. 11 ff.
55. At one time, Guderian pointed out to Hitler what he felt was in Germany's best interests. This provoked the following outburst from Hitler: "What do you think I am doing—am I not struggling for Germany? My entire life has been one great struggle for Germany!" Cf. Guderian, p. 374.
56. Evidently, Hitler was convinced that he needed these troops to exert military pressure on Sweden and to prevent the Swedes from declaring war on him. Nevertheless, even had Sweden joined the fifty-eight other states which had already declared war on Germany, this would not have made any difference.
57. See above, discussions on January 1, 1945.
58. Schmidt, p. 587. Cf. also von Ribbentrop's testimony in Nuremberg in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, pp. 342 f.
59. Linge left the conference room stunned by the outburst, the like of which he had never witnessed before. Alfred Bormann admonished him later for not having stepped out in a more timely manner: "Listen, Linge, you should have left the room when I started to speak. It is because you were there that he made such a scene." Cf. Linge, Series II. Alfred Bormann, a brother of Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, served with Hitler's adjutancy.
60. Guderian, pp. 375 f.
61. In looking back, Guderian asserted that none of the other men present recalled ever having witnessed an outburst of such force. Many of the men, whose names Guderian fails to reveal, had served at the Führer headquarters for years. Had he asked men like Göring, Brauchitsch, Halder, Jodl, and Linge, they could surely have told him about far more hair-raising scenes and fits of rage.

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62. Like so many other large cities, Dresden was nearly half destroyed in the course of an air raid, this one on February 13, 1945. The attack on Würzburg on March 16, 1945, was far more ferocious—ninety percent of the city lay in ashes on the next morning. Würzburg was destroyed to a disproportionate extent, far greater than any other city in Germany. The outcome was all the more horrendous, as neither of the cities was prepared for such an attack at this late stage in the war. There is no substance to rumors then in circulation relating that the raids had been prompted by the extraordinary concentration of refugees at these sites. Neither do the facts support any of the other speculations current at the time, for instance the claim that the Soviet Union had a particular, though mysterious, interest in the destruction of these two sites and had pressured the Allies to make a last determined offensive there. For details of the aerial bombardment during the war, specifically the history of their effects on Würzburg and Dresden, cf. Max Domarus, *Der Untergang des alten Würzburg und seine Vorgeschichte* (7th enlarged ed. Gerolzhofen, 1995); see further Arthur Travers Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (London, 1947) and Anthony Verrier, *Bomberoffensive gegen Deutschland 1939–1945* (Frankfurt, 1970).
63. Cf. testimony by Göring and von Ribbentrop before the Nuremberg Court in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. IX, p. 434. On the topic of Hitler's instructing Dönitz, in the course of a February 19, 1945, briefing, to investigate the possible consequences of a withdrawal from the Geneva Convention, cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XIII, pp. 517 ff. See also Jodl's notes in preparation for an encounter with Hitler to discuss advantages and disadvantages of an unilateral abrogation of the international conventions on the conduct of war; IMT, 606-D.
64. Goebbels remarked the following in his diary under May 10, 1943: "The Führer has no intention of following the Japanese procedure of court-martialing aviators shot down over German soil and having them executed. He fears the English have too many possibilities for reprisals and that we may stumble into a situation where we know where it begins but not where it is likely to end." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 367. Roosevelt had sharply condemned the Japanese treatment of prisoners of war in a statement on April, 22, 1943. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 192; see also above, 1943, December 21–22 and 1943, note 410.
65. See above, 1941, note 136.
66. Cf. briefing of March 2, 1945, in Heiber, p. 905.
67. Guderian, pp. 387 f.
68. On February 20, 1945, Dönitz advised against withdrawing from the Geneva Convention and argued that it was preferable "to take the measures necessary without any prior announcements and to save face abroad." Cf. IMT, 158-C.
69. DNB report, February 19, 1945.
70. Report in VB, No. 42, February 20, 1945.
71. The commemoration had been canceled the previous year. See above, February 20, 1944.

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72. DNB text, February 25, 1945.
73. Ibid. Cf. report in VB, No. 49, February 27, 1945.
74. Cf. illustrations in DNB text, February 25, 1945. Up to this point, there had been only a Golden Cross of the German Order. The addition “with Oak Leaves and Swords” was unprecedented.
75. Heiber, pp. 884 ff.
76. In cold blood, Hanke had ordered that Spielhagen, the second mayor of Breslau, be shot by a unit of the local *Volkssturm* in front of Frederick the Great’s statue at Breslau’s city hall in late January 1944. DNB note, January 31, 1945. Hanke fled Breslau aboard a Fieseler-Storch airplane on May 5, 1945, one day before the city capitulated. Reportedly, Czech border guards beat him to death, as he was trying to make his escape.
77. Lieutenant General Niehoff served as combat commander (*Kampfkommandant*) from March 6, 1945, on. For details on the siege of Breslau, cf. Hugo Hartung, *Der Himmel war unten* (Berlin-Grünewald, 1951).
78. Report in VB, No. 49, February 27, 1945.
79. Report, *ibid.*
80. DNB text, February 26, 1945.
81. Report in VB, No. 54, March 5, 1945.
82. In 1959, Arthème Fayard published François Genoud’s French translation of the recovered transcripts which Bormann had commissioned. André François-Poncet took advantage of his familiarity with the situation in Germany and authored a commentary included in a volume for which Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper (Baron Dacre of Glanton) wrote a preface. In a private letter dated December 3, 1959, Trevor-Roper assured the author of the veracity of the French translation in consideration of the fact that the German original was not a verbatim reproduction of Hitler’s statements, but rather consisted of notes outlining the general nature of his utterances. Cf. Arthème Fayard, ed., *Le Testament Politique de Hitler—Notes recueillies par Martin Bormann* (Paris, 1959).
83. Wilhelm II, p. 234. For other parallels, see below, Appendix, Indices “William II.”
84. Cf. decree on the formation of the *Volkssturm*, see above, September 25, 1944.
85. See above, speech of May 4, 1944.
86. See above, November 8, 1941.
87. Heiber, pp. 893 f.
88. In a speech on October 9, 1938, Hitler said: “However, let me voice one conviction: no power on earth will ever be able to break through this wall!” See above, p. 1222, speech of October 9, 1938.
89. Guderian, p. 380.
90. See above, March 30, 1944.
91. Schramm, pp. 1387 f. Kesselring assumed his new post on March 10/11, 1945.
92. Fragment in Heiber, p. 917.

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93. On February 22 and 23, 1945, in commemoration of George Washington's birthday, more than nine thousand British and American bombers had flown an Allied large-scale mission with the code name "Clarion." The planes had systematically targeted strategic points in the railroad network in central and southern Germany. This had paralyzed a multitude of small and medium-sized railroad stations, the overwhelming number of which greatly hindered repair efforts. Cf. Domarus, *Untergang*, pp. 92 f.
94. See above, March 12, 1944.
95. There were rumors that Hitler was suffering from Parkinson's disease. The Führer's private physician Morell described the numerous ailments from which Hitler believed himself to be suffering as hysterical symptoms. Apparently, these psychosomatic illnesses, such as a tremor, his left leg dragging, and so on, were part of Hitler's ever increasing identification with Frederick the Great. A portrait of the Prussian king had already accompanied Hitler in his headquarters, since he believed in the magical powers of this Lenbach painting. During the last months of his life, the Führer was imitating the *Alte Fritz* in an effort to gain sympathy and to underline what he believed to be the historic parallels between the Prussian king's fate and his own destiny. Superstitiously, Hitler was hoping to be relieved at the very last minute, as Frederick II had been.
96. The *Wochenschau* produced a short film on Hitler's visit with the troops stationed along the Oder front, and the German media carried numerous illustrated, propagandistic reports on the concern displayed. Cf. *Wochenschau* (9/1945). The *Völkischer Beobachter* gave a detailed account of Hitler's tour of one particular battle station. Cf. illustrated report in VB, No. 61, March 13, 1945. The *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* published an illustrated article on Hitler's visit to the staff of an army corps on location. Cf. DNB report, March 15, 1945.
97. DNB report, March 11, 1945.
98. DNB text, March 11, 1945.
99. DNB report, March 15, 1945.
100. Report in VB, No. 65, March 17, 1945.
101. Guderian, p. 381; Linge, series 2.
102. After Hitler's order to remove their stripes, members of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler placed all their orders and decorations into a tin chamber pot and sent them back to Hitler. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 80.
103. Titles of other such awards: Kreta, Feldherrnhalle, Infantrieregiment List, Grossdeutschland. On December 6, 1944, Hitler granted the last of these sleeve stripes to the Fifth Cavalry Regiment Feldmarschall von Mackensen on the occasion of Mackensen's ninety-fifth birthday.
104. Memorandum dated March 15, 1945. Cf. IMT, item Speer, No. 23, submitted as evidence in Speer's trial.
105. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 547 f. Cf. also IMT, item Speer, No. 24.

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106. Speer's remarks were naturally tainted by his interest in not incriminating himself. In his own defense, he had a vested interest in making Hitler's role appear all the more sinister and in minimizing the role he himself had played in the developments. The wording of this letter, especially the unusual interjection "if I did not misunderstand you" puts into question the authenticity of the correspondence. Although Guderian reported that he had heard similar destructive statements about the German Volk by Hitler in 1945, he also had an interest in making his involvement in the matter appear peripheral. Cf. Guderian, p. 375.
107. In a speech on January 25, 1936, Hitler said: "We perceive in this historical evidence for Teutonism the unconscious mandate vested by Fate: to unite this stubborn German Volk, if necessary by force. That was, in terms of history, just as necessary then as it is necessary today." See above, p. 744.
In another speech of December 18, 1940, Hitler stated: "It is a question of whether these eighty-five million people, in their national unity, can assert their right to life or not. If yes, then the future of Europe belongs to this Volk. If no, then this Volk will perish, and sink back, and it will no longer be worthwhile to live in this Volk."
See above, p. 2168.
108. See below, April 29, 1945.
109. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 293 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 303. See also evidence submitted at Speer's war-crimes trial (Items Nos. 25, 26, 28, and 29). It is not clear to the author why Shirer was so outraged by this order (cf. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 1003 ff.). Legally speaking, the German government was empowered to proceed as it pleased within the borders of the German Reich of 1937. And among the many "despicable" orders which Hitler signed into law, this one was certainly not the worst, in comparison with the notorious *Kommandobefehl* or the *Kommissarbefehl*, which undeniably harmed foreign people contrary to international law, not to speak of other cases of genocide. It is indeed remarkable that the order issued March 19, 1945, complied with international law, constitutional law, and military jurisdiction.
110. DNB text, March 20, 1945. Report in VB, No. 68, March 21, 1945. Illustrated report in VB, No. 74, March 28, 1945.
111. *Wochenschau* (10/1945). Copy on file with the Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
112. *Ibid.* (9/1945).
113. Cf. Guderian, p. 387.
114. The briefing that night (March 23, 1944) began at 2:26 a.m. and lasted until 3:34 a.m. The shorthand transcript of the discussion of the situation survived in its entirety; cf. Heiber, pp. 922 ff.
115. See above, February 24, 1945.
116. Cf. Zoller, pp. 29 f.
117. Hofer, *Der Nationalsozialismus, Dokumente 1933–1945* (Frankfurt, 1957), p. 257.

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118. Verbatim reproduction of Rokossovski's demand for surrender is found in Hofer, p. 256. General Konstantin Rokossovski, commander of the Soviet forces on the Don front.
119. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 543 f.
120. The Chancellery also housed numerous people who could not be held responsible for Hitler's politics, such as shorthand typists, secretaries, guards, and so on.
121. There were no searches conducted on persons entering the bunker. Only briefcases and weapons carried visibly had to be turned over. Therefore, it would have been easy for Speer to introduce a small pistol or dagger into the building, had he indeed desired to do so. Cf. Boldt, p. 11.
122. At the trial in Nuremberg, Speer related: "When I was finally ready, I, together with this Hänschel [head mechanic at the Chancellery], inspected the induction pipes in the garden of the Chancellery. We realized that shortly before, on personal orders by the Führer, a four-meter-high chimney had been built to surround the openings. Hence, it had become impossible to carry out our project." It is likely that Hitler ordered this chimney to be built as a precautionary measure because he greatly feared that the Russians might introduce nerve gas into the ventilation system to capture him numbed but alive. See below, April 30, 1945.
123. Guderian, p. 389. Theodor Busse, born 1897; infantry general; commander in chief of the Ninth Army.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 390. Hans Krebs, born 1898; infantry general; reported missing in May 1945 in Berlin.
125. See above, February 1, 1943. Despite this solemn pledge, Hitler had continued to make the following men field marshals in the meantime: Busch, Kleist, and Weichs (February 1, 1943); von Richthofen (February 16, 1943); Model (April 1, 1944). In addition to Schörner, Ritter von Greim was named field marshal in late April 1945. See below, April 26, 1945.
126. DNB text, April 6, 1945.
127. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 295 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 306.
128. DNB report, April 12, 1945.
129. See above, February 24, 1945.
130. VB, No. 87, April 13, 1945.
131. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 13.
132. Ward Price, p. 16. For Hitler's attitude and relations to women, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 34 ff.
133. Hitler spoke at great length about syphilis in his book *Mein Kampf*. Even as Chancellor, he could talk about it for hours on end. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 269 ff.
134. One curious incident of this compulsive desire to dominate in every situation was recorded by his servant Linge. On New Year's Day 1939, Hitler had been invited to a party and decided he was going to try his

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- luck at bowling. He scored only a three and, much taken aback, left the company. Cf. Linge, No. 5.
135. Goebbels, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*, p. 167.
 136. Eva Braun was the daughter of a vocational-school teacher named Friedrich Braun and his wife Franziska (maiden name: Kranburger). She received her education at a boarding school in Simbach am Inn.
 137. On this topic, see the commentary of Eugen Kogon in Günter Peis, "Die unbekannte Geliebte," in *Der Stern*, No. 24 (Hamburg, 1959).
 138. George Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators* [Hitler and Mussolini], German translation: *Führer und Duce, wie ich sie kenne*.
 139. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 85.
 140. The correct name of the young lady was Sigrid von Laffert, born on December 28, 1916, in Damaretz (Mecklenburg); daughter of Oskar von Laffert auf Damaretz and his wife Erika von Pressentin.
 141. Hoffmann recalled that this affair had taken place in 1921 and had ended in the girl's attempting to hang herself in a hotel room. However, she had been discovered in time. Attempted or successful suicides seemed to be an ingredient in Hitler's amorous escapades. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 5.
 142. Before her marriage, Inga Ley had been an actress at the Görlitz city theater.
 143. See above, p. 31.
 144. In a speech delivered to Kreisleiters at the Vogelsang Ordensburg on April 29, 1937, Hitler said: "Never in my life, nor in my political life, have I allowed a woman to persuade me of anything! But in other spheres, we'll grant women their rights." Speech on file at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
 145. Statements made on January 25, 1942, found in Picker, p. 413.
 146. According to a diary entry by Reich Minister Graf Schwerin von Krosigk cited by Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 186 ff., Goebbels had made the attempt to calm Hitler's fears by reading to him excerpts from Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* in early April. Supposedly, Hitler had tears in his eyes when Goebbels read of the "hand of fate" intervening on the Prussian King's behalf.
 147. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 297 ff.
 148. The Red Army launched its offensive on April 16. Hitler's proclamation was prematurely published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* and other daily papers. This was evidently far earlier than intended, as a postscript affixed to the proclamation read: "Following Order of the Day to be made known down to the company level. Publication in army papers permitted. Publication in daily papers prohibited." Cf. VB, No. 90, April 17, 1945. *Ibid.*, pp. 310 f.
 149. Brimming with self-confidence, Napoleon had assured his men in the face of the enemy's advance on the French capital: "The allies do not realize that I am closer to Munich and Vienna than they are to Paris." When this estimate had proved incorrect, and Marshal Marmont had been forced to surrender the city to the enemy, Napoleon attempted to

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- brand the marshal a traitor: “The French commanded heights as never before; they were strong as never before. The elite of the enemy’s forces was destined to perish on the wide plateau they so mercilessly ravaged once the Duke of Ragusa’s [Marshal Marmont’s] betrayal abandoned the capital city to the enemy and disbanded the army.” Aretz, pp. 428 f.
150. DNB text, April 16, 1945. Hubatsch cited the text in accordance with a telegram circulated among the troops which contained many errors. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 310 f. Cf. also *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 300 f.
 151. Reference is to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
 152. DNB text, April 2, 1945.
 153. VB, No. 90, April 20, 1945. Karl Holz, born 1895; killed in action on April 16, 1945, in Nuremberg.
 154. DNB text, April 19, 1945. Joachim Albrecht Eggeling, born 1884. Georg Tesche, born 1901.
 155. Ibid.
 156. Report in Karl Koller, *Der letzte Monat* (Mannheim, 1949), p. 16. In the following citations of Koller, reference is always to his diary. Cf. also the report in Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 98 ff.
 157. Ibid., p. 95.
 158. Cf. Koller, pp. 19 ff.
 159. Later, it became apparent that the battery was located near Marzahn, at a distance of approximately twelve kilometers from downtown Berlin. It was a 10 to 12 cm battery.
 160. In 1918, German rockets hit Paris from a distance of a hundred twenty kilometers. Fritz Rausenberger had constructed the cannons. They were forty meters long with diameters of 38 cm and 21 cm.
 161. The telegram of April 21, 1945, was made public in the *Frankfurter Presse, Alliiertes Nachrichtenblatt der 12. Armeegruppe*, No. 3 (1945).
 162. Morell’s testimony following his arrest; it was aired in a BBC broadcast of May 22, 1945. Morell had left the bunker on April 22, 1945.
 163. The shorthand typist Gerhard Herrgesell reported on this briefing in *Time* magazine, May 21, 1945. Report published in Schramm, pp. 1696 ff. In a personal letter to the author, Trevor-Roper expressed doubts as to some of Herrgesell’s assertions. Cf. also Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 105.
 164. Cf. Schramm, p. 1454.
 165. DNB text, April 22, 1945. Reimann commanded a corps stationed in Potsdam. He was replaced later by General Weidling, who was the commander of the Fifty-Eighth Panzer Corps which had just returned from the Oder front. Cf. Boldt, p. 87.
 166. DNB text, April 23, 1945.
 167. See above, Prologue, note 28.
 168. The decree Göring referred to had been drafted by Hitler on June 29, 1941, following Hess’s escape. At the time it had not been published in the *Reichsgesetzblatt*. Speaking before the Reichstag on September 1, 1939, Hitler had named Göring as his successor. This was in obvious

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- violation of the constitution, as was the provision that, should Göring prove unable to exercise this function for some reason, Hess was to take over the position. The decree of June 29, 1941, restricted a possible succession to Göring.
169. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 582 f.
170. At 7:00 p.m. on the evening of April 14, 1945, the SS apprehended Göring at his home on the Obersalzberg. As the mountain became the target of Allied bombardment the following day, Göring and his staff retreated to Upper Austria, to the Mauterndorf Castle, which he owned. In a scheme involving the implicit consent of the SS, Luftwaffe units “liberated” Göring. On May 9, 1945, Göring surrendered to the American military and was imprisoned. He pretended that he had been “liberated” by American troops and that he intended to build a new Europe in cooperation with them. Sentenced to death by the Nuremberg Court, Göring did not have the courage to face the impending execution and took poison shortly before he was to be hanged with his former comrades. Given the unpleasant experiences with him of numerous other veterans of the First World War, this uncomradely behavior on his part came as no surprise to the public. During the Second World War, he had nevertheless been the most popular among the leaders of the Third Reich because, as Ciano aptly phrased it, Göring was thought to possess “a dash of humanity.” Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 443.
171. It had been Ritter vom Greim who had flown him to Berlin in the course of the Kapp Putsch.
172. VB, No. 100, April 28, 1945. The German broadcasting company had already aired the announcement on April 26, 1945.
173. VB, No. 98, April 26, 1945.
174. Cf. Boldt, pp. 77 ff. Boldt gives a detailed account of the measures which Hitler envisioned. For instance, he ordered all underground facilities in the city to be flooded in order to prevent the Russians from using them to their advantage. Hitler accorded little consideration to the thousands of wounded German soldiers who had taken refuge in these channels.
175. Cf. Linge, No. 1.
176. Schramm, p. 1457.
177. Napoleon had shouted this desperate exclamation at Marshal Macdonald before retreating across the Rhine River in the vicinity of Mainz.
178. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 134, according to Koller, quoting Greim.
179. Cf. Koller, p. 61.
180. Schramm, p. 1460.
181. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 142.
182. Schramm, pp. 1461 f.
183. Rudolf Holste; lieutenant general; commanding general of the Forty-First Army Corps.
184. Schramm, p. 1462.

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185. The Twelfth Army under General Wenck had come within fifteen kilometers of Potsdam, but then was bogged down.
186. The western powers naturally rejected Himmler's cease-fire proposals. They insisted on the unconditional surrender by Germany to Russia. Himmler had become acquainted with Count Folke Bernadotte af Wisborg (born 1895, murdered 1948), who served as the representative of the Swedish Red Cross. In his capacity as Reich minister of the interior, Himmler was responsible for dealing with the Red Cross, which sought the repatriation of Danish nationals who had been brought to Germany against their will. There was some irony of Fate to the fact that Hitler's satrap should approach a descendant of the Napoleonic Marshal Bernadotte with the request to mediate peace.
187. The claim by Himmler and his companion, SS Brigadeführer Schellenberg, that Hitler was ill and had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage was untrue. It served as an excuse for the negotiations before their own "conscience" and the German people.
188. The battle of Berlin lasted only ten days, a remarkably short time, considering the fact that Hitler was holding out at this location. In Würzburg, for example, fighting began on April 1, 1945, and lasted until April 6, 1945. This was not much shorter than in Berlin, although Würzburg was forty times smaller as a city. While the British and Americans could have reached Berlin before the Russians did, had they wanted to, they apparently felt that the Russians had a right to take the city. Therefore, the Red Army was given the honor of conquering Berlin.
189. "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible." See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
"It is my great pride that Providence has chosen me and allows me to lead the German Volk in such a great age. I will unconditionally tie my name and my life to its fate, I address no other request to the Almighty than to bless us in the future as in the past and to preserve my life for as long as it is necessary in His eyes for the fateful struggle of the German Volk. For there is no greater glory than the honor to be the Führer of a Volk in difficult times and, therefore, the bearer of the responsibility! And I know no greater happiness than the awareness that this Volk is my German one." See above, *ibid.*
"I do not doubt for one second that we will win. It was not in vain that Providence has had me stride forth along the long path from the unknown soldier of the World War to the Führer of the German nation, to the Führer of the German Wehrmacht. It has not done this only in order to suddenly take away again all we had to struggle so hard for, as if it were just for the fun of it." See above, speech of May 30, 1942.
"The gods love those who demand the impossible. If we accomplish the impossible, then we will surely receive the approval of Providence.

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- Perhaps I am not a so-called shinning light—a pietist. I am not that. But deep in my heart, I am a religious man, that is, I believe that the man who, in accordance with the natural laws created by a god, fights bravely and never capitulates in this world—that this man will not be abandoned by the lawgiver. Instead, he will in the end receive the blessings of Providence.” See above, speech of July 5, 1944.
190. “. . . what is decisive in this war is who lands the final blow. And you can be assured that we will do that!” See above, speech of November 8, 1942.
191. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 152.
192. Once in Rechlin, Greim and Reitsch made their way to Plön where they joined Dönitz. They reached Zell am See on May 8, 1945. Taken prisoner of war by the American forces, Greim committed suicide on May 24, 1945. Cf. Koller, p. 128.
193. Schramm, p. 1664. Reference is to the German occupation forces besieged in the cities of La Rochelle, Saint-Nazaire, and Gironde.
194. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 589 f. Cf. also Boldt, p. 76. Cf. further Linge, No. 5. Cf. “Hoffmanns Erzählungen,” Series No. 5. Hoffmann describes Eva Braun as very naive.
195. In a BBC broadcast on June 21, 1945, an English radio commentator described Eva Braun’s character in great detail and called her the only sane person in Hitler’s entourage. While serving as the *Daily Telegraph’s* correspondent in prewar Berlin, he had the occasion to observe and speak with Eva Braun whenever they encountered each other shopping or out on a walk. On one such occasion, she sighed: “It is too bad that Hitler became Reich chancellor—otherwise he might have married me.”
196. DANA text, December 30, 1945. The report also features a facsimile reproduction of the marriage license. Printing errors in the text corrected by the author.
197. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 754 f.
198. In 1938, Hitler had lamented: “I have wasted my best years in this struggle!” See above, p. 1087, speech of April 9, 1938.
199. See above, speech of September 1, 1939.
200. Cf. IMT, 3569-PS (Part II).
201. Obviously, Hitler had finally remembered his long-forgotten title as Chancellor from the old days when it had been particularly dear to him. In more recent times, he had scarcely employed the term.
202. Hitler was not empowered to appoint a Reich president. Already the law of August 1, 1934, concerning von Hindenburg’s succession had been unconstitutional. See above, pp. 507 f.
- Other measurers such as the naming of Göring and Hess as Hitler’s successors in the Chancellery also demonstrated a pronounced disregard for the constitution by Hitler (see above, speech of September 1, 1939). Neither the Enabling Act of March 23/24, 1933 (see above, p. 275), nor the formal “Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag,” of April 26, 1942 (see above, April 26, 1942), had conferred such powers on him. In accordance with Article 41 of the Reich constitution, a new Reich

president could be elected only in a plebiscite. For the interim period, the president of the Reich court exercised the functions of Reich president in accordance with a law of 1932 (RGBl, 1, p. 547). See above, December 17, 1932

In a letter to Frick on August 2, 1934, following von Hindenburg's death, Hitler maintained that the title Reich president was "unique" and "indivisibly bound up" with von Hindenburg. "The greatness of the deceased bestowed a unique significance upon the title Reichspräsident. All of us feel that this title, in view of what it meant to us, is indivisibly bound up with the great man who has passed away." See above, p. 510. Differentiating between such offices as that of Reich president and Reich chancellor would decidedly have been out of character for Hitler. Had he agreed to such a separation, somebody else would also have had to take over as Führer of the party. And who was to succeed him in such a demanding office—assuredly not Dönitz? On this topic, Hitler remarked the following in a speech of September 16, 1935: "For when the new Führer is appointed, he shall be head of the party, Head of the Reich, and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht." See above, p. 711.

203. On the one hand, Hitler as head of state was at complete liberty to appoint a new Reich chancellor at any time. However, he was not empowered to name new ministers before naming a chancellor to succeed him. In all likelihood, Hitler and Goebbels discussed this topic.
204. The title party minister was new. From December 1, 1933, on, Hess had served in the capacity of Reich minister and as the Führer's deputy in the framework of the NSDAP. After Hess's mysterious escape on May 10, 1941, Hitler had assumed these responsibilities himself. Although he accorded Bormann cabinet rank in connection with the latter's appointment as head of the party chancellery, he did not name him Reich minister.
205. After Hitler rid himself of Blomberg by the measures of February 4, 1938, the Reich war ministry as such became defunct and no one was ever named to replace Blomberg as Reich minister of war. Hitler himself assumed Blomberg's earlier post and took it upon himself to fulfill the duties related to such an office.
206. Reference is to the Gauleiter of Salzburg, Dr. Gustav Adolf Scheel, who also served as head of the Reich students and lecturers' association.
207. Dr. Theo Hupfauer; Oberdienstleiter; head of the DAF office for *Soziale Selbstverwaltung* (social self-administration).
208. Karl Otto Saur, born 1902; Hauptdienstleiter; head of the technical office in the Reich ministry for armament and the military-industrial complex. Hitler no longer called on Speer in this connection.
209. Ley had never made any claim to the title of Reich minister.
210. With Napoleon, too, the forces allied against him demanded his unconditional surrender. They rejected the emperor's abdication in favor of his son, the "King of Rome." The French Senate resolved thereupon to bring about Napoleon's abdication by the powers bestowed on it. Nevertheless, Napoleon persisted in rejecting the

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legality of the Senate's measure. Headed by Ney, Napoleon's marshals finally resorted to the use of force in getting him to sign the following letter of abdication on April 11, 1814:

"As the allied powers have pronounced the Emperor Napoleon the only obstacle in the way of the restoration of peace in Europe, the Emperor Napoleon solemnly declares that he and his descendants relinquish all claims to the thrones of France and Italy. He deems no personal sacrifice too great, not even that of his own life, in the interests of France. Given at the Fontainebleau Castle this 11th of April, 1814.

Napoleon"

Napoleon retired on the night of April 12, 1814, with the intention of ending his life by swallowing poison. He had carried a flask on his person ever since the Russian campaign. However, the potion had aged considerably. Therefore, he lived, no doubt relieved that his valiant attempt had failed.

For further parallels see below, Appendix, Indices "Napoleon."

211. See above, April 26, 1942. Article 43 of the Reich constitution had explicitly provided for procedures to be initiated by the Reichstag for the dismissal of the head of state, that is, the Reich president.
212. IMT, 3569-PS (Part I).
213. This statement reveals that Hitler preferred the obedient Bormann to Goebbels, although as the following events would show Goebbels was far more loyal than Bormann, who chose to make a run for it while Goebbels followed Hitler to the grave.
214. Hitler evidently did not get on too well with Eva Braun's father. When proceedings against him were initiated in Munich after the war, it was revealed that he had received no more than a gold watch and a one-time, two-week vacation on the Obersalzberg from his "son-in-law"—at least technically speaking.
215. Reference is to Hitler's housekeeper of long standing, Anni Winter. Together with her husband (who was still alive at that time), she had seen to the Hitler household at Prinzregentenplatz 16 in Munich. Later she followed Hitler to the Berghof, where she was granted a small apartment on the fourth floor. As the result of a lawsuit filed with the civil chamber of the Munich Court of Justice in 1953, she was accorded numerous "personal remembrances" from Hitler's belongings. She secured various items such as five different editions of *Mein Kampf*, a few watercolor paintings from the First World War, as well as several sketches Hitler had "drawn while speaking on the telephone." Cf. dpa (Deutsche Presse-Agentur: West German Press Agency) court report in *Der Volkswille*, November 11, 1953.
216. Cf. postscript in IMT, 3569-PS.
217. IMT, item no. 9, submitted as evidence in the Streicher case.
218. Johannmeier never reached Schörner to hand him the communication and, therefore, buried it in his garden in Iserlohn.
219. Lorenz took the note of Goebbels with him, as well as the original letter. On the fate of these documents and their final discovery, cf.

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- Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 194 ff. The document intended for Dönitz which was recovered in Tegernsee, a village outside Bad Tölz, is published in IMT, 3569-PS. Cf. also DANA report, December 30, 1945, in *Neue Zeitung*, January 1, 1946, and January 10, 1946.
220. Cf. Boldt, pp. 83 f. Major Bernd Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven (general staff) was specialist adviser under Krebs. The group managed to flee Berlin, but failed to reach Wenck's army. Soviet troops captured Weiss, while Freytag escaped to Leipzig. Boldt succeeded in returning to his family in Lübeck.
 221. Cf. Baur, p. 274.
 222. In front of the British officers interrogating him, Below maintained that he had destroyed the original message immediately after hearing of Germany's official capitulation. The version reproduced above is based on his testimony from which the report was reconstructed, cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 171 f.
 223. Reference is to the alleged "sailors's mutiny" of 1918. See above, January 27, 1940. Also see above, 1940, note 60.
 224. As he had little actual knowledge of the conduct of the general staff in World War I, Hitler would have done better simply to state that the general staff he faced in World War II did not correspond to his conception of "bloodhounds." See above, September 24, 1941. The only substantial difference between those serving with the general staff in the First and Second World Wars was that the latter were even more zealous in fulfilling all orders issued to them, even if they judged these to be counterproductive or downright stupid.
 225. Italian partisans had captured Benito Mussolini and Clara Petacci outside Dongo on Lake Como on April 27, 1944. They allowed the former Duce and his mistress to spend one last night together before shooting them the next day at the Villa Belmonte on the road between Bonzanigo and Azzano after having released them to forces at Giulino di Mezzagra. Their corpses were brought to Milan, where they were hung upside down in the center of the Piazza Loreto. A raging crowd pelted them with rocks, and some women fired pistols at the bodies. These outraged women were rumored to have been mothers of soldiers killed in the senseless war. Reports in von Moos, Vol. VI, pp. 299 ff. Cf. also Lada-Macarski, "Die drei letzten Tage Mussolinis" in *Neue Auslese* 6 (1946); the Allied Information Service published this article in Munich.
 226. Schramm, p. 1466.
 227. *Ibid.*, p. 1467.
 228. Among the women present at this curious farewell scene was a Baroness von Varo, an occasional visitor at the bunker. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 178 and 221.
 229. See above, p. 1879; Churchill's radio broadcast of November 12, 1940, in Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174.
 230. Cf. Baur, pp. 275 ff.
 231. Hitler was mistaken on this account, as Dönitz was still in Plön at the time and did not go to Flensburg until well after Hitler's death.

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232. See above, September 12, 1937, and 1945, note 95. Baur rolled up the portrait and carried it with him in his knapsack as he left the bunker on the night of May 1, 1945. His escape was cut short, since he was wounded the next day and fell into the hands of Russian soldiers. Since he was incapable of providing any other information on the fate of the painting, it is highly likely that it was lost while Baur was fleeing from the Chancellery and was destroyed in the general confusion.
233. Baur was not the only man whom Hitler entrusted with the task of cremating the bodies of his wife and himself; almost everyone who had remained behind up to this point was instructed to see to this: Linge, Bormann, Goebbels, and Günse, to name only four. Evidently, Hitler wanted to make certain that his last wish was indeed fulfilled.
234. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 177.
235. See above, p. 198.
236. See above, February 1, 1943.
237. See above, August 31, 1944.
238. On June 26, 1813, Napoleon challenged Metternich: "It is war you want, isn't it? Well, you shall have it. I don't give a damn about one million lives more or less!" Cf. Friedrich Sieburg, *Im Licht and Schatten der Freiheit* (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 282.
239. See above, speech of February 15, 1942.
240. William II expounded the dilemma he faced: "And others said: the Kaiser should have killed himself back then [in 1918]. My unyielding Christian convictions prevented me from doing so. And would they not have turned around and said: What cowardice! Now he seeks to escape all responsibility by committing suicide. Another consideration that ruled out such course of action was that I had to consider how to assist and how to be of the greatest service to my people and my country in the undoubtedly difficult times ahead." Cf. Wilhelm II, p. 246.
241. There is no clear evidence to determine whether Hitler shot himself through the temple or whether he placed the gun in his mouth, from where the bullet could have penetrated and exited the body in the area surrounding the temple.
242. Linge is mistaken in his assertion that the event took place at 3:50 p.m.; cf. Linge, No. 1. The official judicial declaration of death, issued by the Amtsgericht (district court) Berchtesgaden in 1956, indicates that Hitler committed suicide at 3:30 p.m., and this is the generally accepted time of his death. Amtsgerichtsrat Dr. Stephanus, who countersigned the forensic certificate of death, stated the following in the document: "This is to assert the death of Adolf Hitler, born on April 20, 1889, in Braunau am Inn. This is to establish 3:30 p.m. on April 30, 1945, as the time of death." Amtsgericht Berchtesgaden, Archives.
243. Cf. Kempka's testimony in Nuremberg, IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 494 f.

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244. Kempka had received instructions to procure two hundred liters of gasoline, but had been able to secure only a hundred eighty liters in various containers.
245. Soviet military personnel searched the Reich Chancellery garden after capturing the city. It appears beyond reasonable doubt that they came across the remains of Hitler and his wife. Their dental records were the main criteria for a positive identification. As an assistant to Hitler's dentist (Professor Blaschke), the local dentist Fritz Echtmann had carried out repair work on the Führer's dentures. He also lent a hand in fitting Eva Braun with a new plastic denture in the fall of 1944. On May 11, 1945, Soviet experts questioned both him and Professor Blaschke's secretary in connection with an investigation to determine the identity of two sets of dentures recovered from the ashes of the Reich Chancellery's garden. Both Echtmann and Blaschke's medical assistant, Catharina Häusermann, recognized them as those they had made for Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun. Especially important to the identification was the repair work performed on Hitler's upper dentures the year before, which reduced the number of elements in the gold bridge from eleven to nine because of a gum infection. Shortly after the interrogation on May 29, 1945, the dentist Echtmann (born 1915) was shipped to the Soviet Union as a prisoner of war. He was released from captivity only in 1953. The above information is based on statements he made at his civil court hearing before the Amtsgericht Berchtesgaden on October 16, 1953.
246. One of the members of the security personnel at the bunker by the name of Hermann Karnau turned to one of his comrades to lament: "It is sad that not one of the [SS] officers seems to worry about the Führer's body. I am proud that I alone know where he is." Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 182.
247. Cf. Schramm, p. 1468.
248. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 185.
249. General Vasili Chuikov, not to be confused with Marshal Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov. According to the official account of this meeting, published by Lieutenant Colonel Troyanovsky in the Red Army Paper *Red Star*, Krebs negotiated with Chuikov and not with Zhukov as stated in most accounts. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. XXXIX f., and Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 1135.
250. Schramm, p. 1469.
251. Ibid.
252. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 190. It was easy for the Red Army to identify these bodies because of the premature end of the cremation process. On photographs of the corpse of Goebbels, his facial features are still clearly discernible.
253. Cf. Kempka's recollections in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVII, pp. 488 f. Cf. also Baur, p. 282.
254. Official declaration on July 13, 1934, by the then Reichstag president Göring; see above, p. 502.

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255. DNB text of May 1, 1945.
256. Von Moos, Vol. VI, pp. 313 f.
257. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
258. OKW report of May 2, 1945.
259. Karl Wolff, SS Obergruppenführer; general of the Waffen SS; originally a career officer; joined the SS in 1931; served as Himmler's adjutant for many years. Heinrich von Vietinghoff genannt von Scheel; colonel general; succeeded Kesselring as commander in chief of Army Group Southwest.
260. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 189.
261. See above, p. 35.
262. See above, speech of May 3, 1940.
263. See above, oath of loyalty of April 30, 1945.
264. A stone was erected at the site in commemoration of the signing of the capitulation. The signature took place at Montgomery's former headquarters in a forest south of Lüneburg. The memorial remained there until it was transferred to the British War Museum in London in 1958.
265. The signing took place at 11:16 p.m. (Greenwich Mean Time) on the evening of May 8, 1945. This corresponded to 12:16 a.m. Central European Time on May 9, 1945. Therefore, the capitulation became effective at 11:01 p.m. on May 8, that is, 12:01 a.m. on May 9 (Central European Time).
266. Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov, born 1896 in Strelkovka, fought during the Civil War 1918—1920 in the cavalry of the Red Army. He had stopped the German advance on the central front already in August 1941, successfully defended Moscow in the winter of 1941—1942, and then led his troops in a slow but steady advance all the way to Berlin.
267. Arthur William Tedder, 1st Baron Tedder of Glenguin, marshal of the Royal Air Force (= field marshal); deputy commander in chief of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe from 1943 to 1945.
268. German translation of the document in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik and Dokumenten*, p. 383. Cf. also Schramm, pp. 1679 ff. Photocopy of the definitive English-language document with signatures available in *A Treasury of America's Most Famous Historical Documents*, New York: Drake Publishers, no date, pages not numbered.
269. State Secretary Matthias Erzberger, born 1875 in Bittenhausen; murdered 1921 by German nationalists; head of the German Cease-fire Delegation in 1918, as Reichstag deputy for the Center Party. Other members of this delegation: Graf Oberndorff, General von Winterfeld (former military attaché at the Paris embassy), and Captain Vanselow. By referring to the impending dangers of Bolshevism, the members of this delegation attempted to gain more favorable terms for Germany, but failed to obtain them.
270. Schörner escaped by plane behind the American lines. On a request by the Soviets, the American military handed him over to the Russians, who sent him to prison. He was released from captivity in Russia in

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1955. On returning to Germany, he was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison for the shooting of a soldier without trial but was paroled.
271. See above, 1945, note 202.
272. See above, Hitler's political testament of April 29, 1945.
273. See above, p. 2114, speech of November 8, 1940.
274. See above, October 1, 1939, p. 1829; broadcast speech in Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.
275. See above, June 22, 1941; statement in Churchill's broadcast speech; *ibid.*, pp. 6428 ff.
276. See above, November 1, 1943; statement in Churchill's BBC broadcast speech; *ibid.*, p. 6897.

Epilogue

Notes

1. Cf. Foch, p. 262.
2. Cf. Foch, p. 111.
3. William II: "The overthrow [of 1918] destroyed enormously great values. It occurred at the very moment when the struggle for existence of the German people was to come to an end and all efforts were to be applied to reconstruction. It was a crime against the people." (Cf. Wilhelm II *Ereignisse und Gestalten 1878–1918*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1922, p. 288.)
"With Wilson's guarantee, Germany left the enemy territories she had conquered and laid down her arms, thus making herself defenseless. The key to the solution of our present situation lies in Wilson's excessive trustfulness and non-observance of his Fourteen Points, on the one hand, and in the outbreak of the German revolution, on the other." (ibid., p. 272.)
"The international part of the program of socialist doctrine turned out to be a horrible error. The workers of the Entente were set against the German people, with the aim of annihilating it. There was not even a trace of international solidarity of the masses. This error is also one of the causes of Germany's failure in the war." (ibid., p. 290.)
"Never yet has Germany been overwhelmed when she was united." (Proclamation to the German people of August 6, 1914.)
4. "From tomorrow on, Switzerland will be an authoritarian state," declared the ambassador of Switzerland to State Secretary Weizsäcker after the decree of the martial laws of 1939. (Author's record.)
5. Cf. Proclamation of March 16, 1935, Vol. I, p. 494.
6. The national frenzy of August 1914 seized especially the masses of German workers, including the Social Democrats and their leaders. William II was also full of praise for the German workers. He declared: "Under me, the German workers fought brilliantly on the battlefields, and at home, too, for many years, they took care of the munitions and war equipment!" (Cf. Wilhelm II, ibid., p. 289.)
7. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 29–30.
8. "The German soldier is the best!" (Speech on July 4, 1944.) "The German people can be proud today: it has the best political leader, the best field commanders, the best engineers, economists, and organizers. But it also has the best workers and the best farmers." (Speech of October 3, 1941.)
9. "We, Germans, number eighty-two million people in today's Reich. We are the only state, not counting China, with such a great number of people of one nationality." (Speech of January 24, 1940.)
"Eighty-two million German Teutons! At the present time, we are the most numerous political entity of one race on the earth, not counting China." (Speech of May 3, 1940.)

Epilogue—Notes

10. The fact that all Hitler's efforts against the united Allied forces failed to result in anything follows best from his own words: "I may some day stand before German history accused in every respect but certainly not in one, namely, that I hadn't given my last, in general all that was humanly possible to prepare the German people for this struggle better than it had been unhappily prepared in 1914." (Speech of November 18, 1940.) Yes, definitely, speaking of "all that was humanly possible," he meant Germany's military power; but to what purpose?
11. Cf. here p. 2930.
12. Churchill replied to Hitler's threats with a lapidary statement: "If words could kill, we would have all been dead long ago. But we will not be frightened by these bloodthirsty threats. Yes, we take them as a sign of weakness in our enemy." (Radio address on November 12, 1939.)

Hitler and History

Notes

1. Speech of February 15, 1942.
2. Speech of November 8, 1943.
3. Speech of October 6, 1939.
4. Speech of July 9, 1933.
5. Speech of November 10, 1933.
6. Speech of December 11, 1933.
7. Speech of September 5, 1934.
8. Speech of September 16, 1936.
9. Speech of March 7, 1936.
10. Interview, March 9, 1936.
11. Speech of January 30, 1937.
12. Speech of April 6, 1938.
13. Speech of February 20, 1938.
14. Speech of September 1, 1933.
15. Speech of October 6, 1939.
16. Speech of December 18, 1940.
17. Speech of October 6, 1939.

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

Notes

1. New Year's Proclamation, January 1, 1943.
2. Clarification, May 20, 1943.
3. Speech of March 21, 1943.
4. Political Testament, April 29, 1945.
5. Speech of September 19, 1939.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Political Testament, April 29, 1945.
9. Speech of December 18, 1940.
10. Clarification, February 1945.
11. Proclamation of September 25, 1944.
12. Order of the Day to the Wehrmacht of January 1, 1945.
13. Proclamation of February 24, 1945.
14. Ibid.
15. Speech of January 30, 1945.
16. New Year's Appeal, January 1, 1945.
17. Political Testament of April 29, 1945.
18. Ibid.
19. Speech of April 26, 1942.
20. Speech of June 6, 1937.
21. Speech of September 10, 1937.
22. Speech of May 30, 1942.
23. Clarification in Hitler's Proclamation, April 15, 1945.
24. Cf. Vol. II, p. 1245.
25. Cf. Vol. III, p. 1393.
26. Cf. Vol. III, p. 1672.
27. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.
28. Speech of October 3, 1941.

Afterword

Notes

1. Speech of December 10, 1940.
2. Speech of September 10, 1938.
3. Speech of December 2, 1938.
4. *Mein Kampf*, p. 735: "The main point of consideration in every foreign policy is to bring the land area into correspondence with the number of the people."
5. Speech of December 18, 1940: "Anglo-Americans are nothing but offspring of our German people."
6. Speech of February 15, 1942: "Actually, we were the ones who colonized England, and not the other way around: the English didn't colonize us."
7. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 357 and 359.

Bibliography

Note from the American Editor of Volume Four

It is certainly not my intention to compile a thorough bibliography on Adolf Hitler. Such a work would require at least an additional volume. Paul Madden needed 754 pages for his 1998 bibliography of Hitler and the Nazi epoch, and he covered only English-language works. The primary sources, however, are largely in German, French, Italian, Russian, Polish, Japanese, and in the languages of various other countries, especially ones attacked by Hitler.

However, even a quick glance at the bibliography in the German original of Domarus (Volume Four, 4th edition, 1988, pages 2317 to 2322) will show that the following bibliography to this present English translation (1989–2004) takes more space and lists more items. There are several reasons for the new material.

- Domarus typically listed only one edition of a book he cites. Often there are several editions with varying pagination (usually the later the edition, the more the pages). In the endnotes, Domarus will refer to page numbers in this one edition. For the convenience of readers who have (or whose libraries have) a different edition, whenever I can find the publication facts, I list the various editions and the number of pages in each. If a book had editions of 100, 200, and 300 pages, and Domarus cited from the 200-page edition, it would be likely that the same passage would appear later in the 300-page edition and might not be present at all in the 100-page edition. At the very least, the reader has a clue that there may be a problem about the page number of a cited passage.

Bibliography

- Domarus does not list publishers. Sometimes publisher information can give a valuable hint about possible bias in the book. A work published by the Nazi party can be expected to have a different slant from that of a book published by the British government on the same subject.
- If Domarus cites an author and I discover that this author has other books relating to Hitler and the Nazi period, I will list the other books by that author. Domarus cites mainly works from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s with only a slight sprinkling of titles from 1960 to 1965. In many cases, it is a fair assumption that he would have been interested in later books by the same authors but did not get to see them.
- When I know of a book whose subject is one of the authors whom Domarus cites, I usually list it. Exceptions (because they would each need huge bibliographies) include Bismarck, Churchill, Clausewitz, Eisenhower, Napoleon, William II, and, of course, Hitler himself, although if a book's main subject were, for example, "Churchill Fights Hitler," I would list it.
- Domarus tends to cite only German editions. Even Eisenhower is credited with *Kreuzzug in Europa* without any mention of the English-language original. I try to list the original works in addition to the German translation which Domarus cites. Likewise, I try to list English translations of works originally published in German.
- Ladislaus Bolchazy, the publisher of this translation, and a few other friends, especially Professor Lilita Zalkans of the University of Stockholm, have called to my attention several books which I list because of their importance or interest. I have added some others to the bibliography on my own. This category includes mostly such reference works as atlases, bibliographies, companions arranged alphabetically, dictionaries, encyclopedias, fact books, guides, handbooks, and lexicons, that is, works designed not for continuous reading but for finding specific pieces of information.
- I have worked on the general assumption that the reader might wish to know not only about the exact edition which Domarus

Bibliography

has cited, but also about other editions and about other works related to the same subject. For a similar reason, I on a few occasions give a not strictly bibliographical fact about the author or the subject of the book (such as Rommel's nickname "The Desert Fox").

There is an occasional mistake in the German bibliography, or an entry is alphabetized in an unexpected way (for example, Napoleon under his German-language editor). I make note of such instances because the reader may find the reference as Domarus cites it but may need to find the book in question as, for example, Library of Congress would catalogue it.

In the following lists, different editions and translations of the same book are combined into one entry. However, different books by the same author form separate entries. For ease of cross-reference, these books are distinguished by their date, printed as a superscript after the author's last name. This system puts the titles of an author's works in at least roughly chronological order. Sometimes, the first edition for which we have a date is not the earliest edition; sometimes a book is published after its author's death, but often the dated entries reveal the development of that author's work and interests. If Domarus lists a book where it might not be expected (for example, Napoleon's autobiographical writings under the name of their German editor Aretz), I give the bibliographical information under both editor and author (under Napoleon and under Aretz, in our example).

I would like to thank especially Professor Dr. David J. Marshall, Jr., who teaches philosophy to doctoral students at the University of Munich, for many hours, indeed days, of slaving in German reference libraries, obtaining information not readily available to me in the United States, and for much other help with all of Volume Four.

James T. McDonough, Jr., Ph.D.

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