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THE OBERSALZBERG
A CASE STUDY IN NATIONAL SOCIALISM

By
Jasper C. Boone, Jr.

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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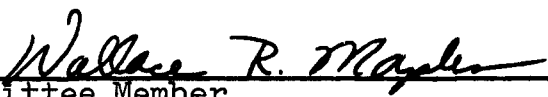
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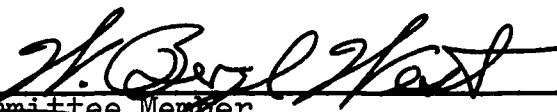
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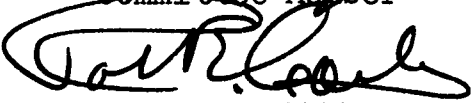
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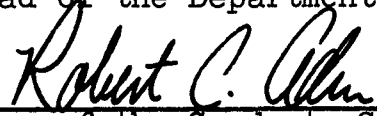

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ABSTRACT

THE OBERSALZBERG A CASE STUDY IN NATIONAL SOCIALISM

By Jasper C. Boone, Jr.

The purpose of this investigation is to present a comprehensive study of the Obersalzberg as a point of departure in teaching the National Socialist movement of the second quarter of the twentieth century. Utilizing the case study method, the Obersalzberg and the activities there from 1923 to 1945 serve as a focal point for the broader issues and events in which Adolf Hitler and his regime were involved.

Located in the Bavarian Alps on a plateau area of the Kehlstein mountain, the Obersalzberg overlooks the medieval German village of Berchtesgaden. Although the area has been well known to Germans for centuries, its international prominence dates no farther back than the Hitler era. Hitler first visited the Obersalzberg in 1923, following the Munich Putsch, and returned again in 1925, after his release from prison where he completed writing the second volume of Mein Kampf. After having rented the Haus Wachenfeld for two years, he purchased it

Jasper C. Boone, Jr.

in 1928. Following three renovations, the small chalet emerged as Hitler's fashionable villa, the Berghof. From this nucleus, there developed a thriving community of National Socialists, which included the homes of Martin Bormann, Hermann Goering, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, and Albert Speer.

Authors, such as Alan Bullock, imply that Hitler's function at the Berghof was that of a prophet. To be sure, Hitler did dream great dreams there, but he also translated many of them into reality while at the Berghof, a fact verified by a number of incidents. At the Berghof, the Anschluss was realized; Hitler's position on the Sudeten question was unequivocally stated; the planning for, and news received of, the successful conclusion of the Russo-German Non-aggression Pact; the planning and implementation of the invasion of Poland; the planning for "Operation Sea Lion," and "Operation Barbarossa"; news was received of Hess's flight to Scotland, of the Russian offensive which led to the German defeat at Stalingrad, and of the allied invasion of Normandy.

At the Berghof, the whole range of Hitler's personality is evidenced. In conversations with David Lloyd George, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Francois-Poncet, and Lord Halifax, Hitler was a personable host. Schuschnigg, Chamberlain, Lipski, Beck, Henderson, Burckhardt, and

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King Leopold of Belgium saw yet another aspect, that of a diplomatic intriguer. At his military conferences, the Fuehrer displayed characteristics of a strategist who intuitively determined moves of the German Army without regard for his generals' advice.

Toward the conclusion of World War II, Hitler was expected to command Germany's last stand from the Obersalzberg as a part of the "Alpine Redoubt." Eisenhower's headquarters was so thoroughly convinced of the redoubt myth, that it became a primary consideration in the decision to stop western troops at the Elbe. As a factor in that decision, the Obersalzberg takes on considerable significance.

The study is based on a variety of materials which include interviews with Paula Wolf, Hitler's sister; Hans Baur, Hitler's personal pilot; and Johanne Langwieder, Hitler's First Sergeant during World War I. In addition to these sources, documents, memoirs, diaries, and key secondary material were utilized.

An integral part of the study is the guide to teaching the unit. Suggestions are made with regard to procedures, methodology, and evaluation. Included in the guide are discussion and research topics with an annotated bibliography for each, a media section which lists materials collected and held by the writer, and relevant commercially produced films.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the years 1958 to 1960, I served the United States Army as Director of Publicity for the Armed Forces Recreation Center located in Berchtesgaden, Germany. My position and experiences there led me to investigate the Obersalzberg and to seek out individuals who were acquainted with the area during the Hitler era. Astonished by the tales told by tour guides and by myths that had been propagated through the years, I sought to uncover facts that would present an accurate perspective of the area, an endeavor that has continued since.

Whatever success I have had in putting together the bits and pieces for this project is due to the efforts of a number of people. I am greatly indebted to "Freddie," my photography technician in Berchtesgaden, who, as a resident of the area, assisted me in making numerous contacts with such people as Paula Wolf, Hans Baur, Johanne Langwieder, and Otto Widl. I am particularly grateful to Professor Roscoe Strickland of the history department of Middle Tennessee State University and chairman of my doctoral committee, for his patience, advice, and consultation during the researching and writing of the study. To the other members of my committee, whose cooperation and guidance

made my doctoral studies a pleasure, I express my thanks. To Dr. Robert E. Corlew, Chairman of the History Department at Middle Tennessee University, I acknowledge with appreciation the encouragement and interest he has shown me from the time of my first visit to the University.

Most of all, I am grateful to my family, whose willingness to sacrifice made the past two years of study possible. My children, Kathy and David, have shown unusual patience and understanding during the hours I spent researching and writing this dissertation. To my wife, Ann, whose sympathetic understanding during my moments of discouragement and whose long tedious hours of typing have made the study a reality, I can only express my appreciation and affection.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Socialist movement of the second quarter of the twentieth century is both interesting and relevant to students of western civilization. In studying the movement, however, too much time often is spent describing conferences, political events, and military strategy, with the human element overlooked. This dissertation concentrates on the Obersalzberg as a point of departure in teaching the history of the period in order to emphasize the human element in the development of National Socialism and its subsequent activities.

Located near the medieval German village of Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps, the Obersalzberg became well known during the Nazi era as a retreat area for Adolf Hitler and his closest associates. Hitler first went there in 1923, following the "Munich Putsch," and returned again in 1925 after being released from prison. From then and until the end of World War II, there developed a community of Nazi "VIP's" surrounding Hitler's villa, the Berghof. Hitler considered the Berghof his home, although he had a residence in both Berlin and Munich.

The Fuehrer felt an extremely strong attachment to his Obersalzberg home and expressed fear over what would

happen to it at his death.

I can already see the guide from Berchtesgaden showing visitors over the rooms of my house: "This is where he had breakfast. . . ." I can also imagine a Saxon giving avaricious instructions: "Don't touch the articles, don't wear out the parquet, stay between the ropes. . . ." In short if one hadn't a family to bequeath one's house to, the best thing would be to be burned in it with all of its contents--a magnificent pyre!¹

During the war years, Hitler often reminisced about the Obersalzberg during his teatime monologues at his eastern headquarters in Rastenburg. On August 12, 1942, Hitler told his listeners that although he found mountain life satisfying, it was not good for everyone. For example, after spending six weeks at the Obersalzberg, his sister, Elli, had to go to "Nauheim for a cure." Hitler went on to explain how life in the mountains had influenced him in designing clothing for the Alpine troops. He spoke fondly of his preference for leather shorts, shoes, and socks as the best mode of dress, even at low temperatures.²

On another occasion the Fuehrer recalled,

Those rainy days at Berchtesgaden, what a blessing they were! No violent exercise, no excursions, no sunbaths--a little repose! There's nothing lovelier in the world than a mountain landscape.³

¹Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Conversations: 1941-1944, trans. by Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens, Signet Books (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 306.

²Ibid., p. 586.

³Ibid., p. 298.

Hitler spent a considerable amount of time at the Obersalzberg, but little has been written of his activities there. Whenever authors have mentioned the Obersalzberg, they have done so in a rather superficial manner. Alan Bullock, who has written the definitive biography of Hitler, is a good example. He has described Hitler's stays at the Obersalzberg as that of a visionary and prophet.

This was the mood in which Hitler indulged, talking for hours into the night, in his house on the Obersalzberg, surrounded by the remote peaks and silent forests of the Bavarian Alps; or in the Eyrie he had built six thousand feet up on the Kehlstein, above the Berghof, approached only by a mountain road blasted through the rock and a lift guarded by doors of bronze. There he would elaborate his fabulous scheme for a vast empire embracing the Eurasian Heartland of the geopoliticians; his plans for breeding a new elite biologically preselected; his design for reducing whole nations to slavery in the foundation of his new empire.⁴

Bullock, like many others who have commented on the Obersalzberg, has erred on three points; or has, at least, misled the reader. He has led the reader to believe that Hitler confined his activities at the Obersalzberg to prophesying, that Hitler built his "mountain eyrie," the Eagle's Nest, and that the Fuehrer spent a great deal of time at the Eagle's Nest. None of these is accurate.

The primary purpose for compiling a history of the Obersalzberg is to provide students of western civilization

⁴Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny, Revised Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 374.

with an aspect of Nazi history not available from any other source. In doing so, I have concentrated on the human drama at the Obersalzberg with the hope that students will be motivated to find additional information on broad topics suggested in the narrative, but which are incomplete.

Other purposes for writing a history of the Obersalzberg are to present a study of Nazism which reflects the conflict of personalities among the Nazi leadership; to resolve popular misconceptions and myths associated with the Obersalzberg; to describe major conferences and decisions, which took place at the Obersalzberg; and to provide students with a well-rounded view of Hitler by unfolding the drama of the Obersalzberg in which Hitler emerges as a personable host, diplomatic intriguer, and military strategist.

Chapters one through five provide a narrative description and history of the area until 1945. Chapter six is concerned with utilizing the narrative as a unit of study in a western civilization course, or as a part of an upper division course in modern German history. Suggestions are made concerning topics for further study, methodology, sources, and media. Hopefully, students will find the unit a satisfying departure from the usual approach to the Nazi period.

CHAPTER I

THE OBERSALZBERG: ITS SETTING

Berchtesgaden is a medieval German village nestled deep in the Bavarian Alps near Salzburg, Austria. Lying in the shadows of the Watzmann and Kehlstein mountains, it became prominent during the years 1933-1945 as the location of the Nazi installation known as the Obersalzberg. Specifically, the Obersalzberg is the plateau area of the Kehlstein located about halfway from the summit.

To the outside world, it was Adolf Hitler who first brought recognition to Berchtesgaden and the Obersalzberg. Germans, however, were well aware of the area long before because of its rich heritage.¹

Berchtesgadeners date their beginnings to the early eighth century when the Bavarian Duke Theodor gave the woodlands Ganzo and Ladusa--now Goetschen and Larosbach--to

¹Considerable confusion has arisen among Americans over the careless use of the terms Berchtesgaden and Obersalzberg. Authors dealing with the area often do so without distinguishing between the two. Very few, if any, Hitler conferences took place in the village of Berchtesgaden. They were at the Obersalzberg. The area encompassing Berchtesgaden and Obersalzberg is referred to by the populace as Berchtesgadenerland.

Rupertus, Bishop of Salzburg.² It was not until the turn of the twelfth century that four Augustinian monks were sent into the area to build a monastery, and with its founding the settlement of Berchtesgaden began. Until the early nineteenth century, the history of the area was one predicated upon poverty and hardship. In 1805, Berchtesgaden became part of Austria for four years, but by the terms of the Peace of Vienna in 1809, it was reunited with Bavaria. With development of salt mines and woodcarving as the two major income producing industries, the village of Berchtesgaden began to thrive economically.

Until 1877, the Obersalzberg was little more than a barren area where a few hardy farmers struggled to make a meager living. It was then that Mauritia Mayer (called "Moritz," which was her father's name), at the age of forty-four, purchased the Steinhauslen, an old farm house, and began a new era on the mountain. A spinster in debt and mistrusted by the Berchtesgadeners, Moritz took scythe and plow and with her hired help accomplished what appeared to be the impossible. She drained the meadows, built paths, renovated the Steinhauslen, converting it

²Material dealing with the early history of Berchtesgaden and Obersalzberg was gathered by the writer, during 1959-1960, from natives of the area who particularly mentioned a work Das Berchtesgadenerland im Wandel der Zeit by an A. Helm as their source. Unless otherwise noted, material concerning the era prior to 1923 is based upon verbal accounts collected during that investigation.

into a boarding house, and opened a restaurant which she called the "Pension Moritz." The old farm house she named the "Platterhof."

The area was now opened as a haven for vacationers and mountain recreation. There were numerous, well-known personalities who began to frequent the area. One of Moritz's favorite guests was Ludwig Ganghofer who chose the vicinity as the setting for his novel, Das Golleslehen. The Bavarian Prince Regent Luitpold often visited the pension, and Johannes Brahms reportedly composed several songs in her home.

Richard Voss, author of Zwei Menschen, was closely linked with Moritz and the Obersalzberg. There has been considerable speculation that in this notable novel the character Judith was actually Moritz, and the young Rochus von Enna was Voss. The setting was definitely the Obersalzberg, and the tangled affair between the two main characters was representative of the relationship between Moritz and Voss who had great admiration for each other. While preparing to visit Voss and his wife, Moritz died of a heart attack, March 1, 1897. She was buried in the Berchtesgaden cemetery near the Franciscan church, and on her "memorial tablet" were engraved the words of Richard Voss:

True in friendship, wise in advice,³
Kind in heart, and strong in action.³

Following the death of Moritz, life at the Obersalzberg and at the Pension Moritz continued much as before. Her younger sister Antonie, at the time working as a governess for a count in Italy, inherited the boarding house and continued to operate it in the gracious tradition of her sister. Distinguished guests continued to visit the pension. With the completion of the railroad linking Munich and Salzburg, Berchtesgaden, being en route, attracted larger numbers of visitors, many of which found their way to the Obersalzberg. However, with the coming of the First World War and difficult times, Antonie was forced to sell the estate in 1917 to Princess Adalbert of Bavaria. Until 1919, the boarding house was part of the navy sanitorium.

Dr. Ernst Josef and Eugen Josef bought the Pension Moritz in May, 1919, and operated it until September, 1921, when Bruno Buechner took possession of the whole estate. Buechner was the major figure on the Obersalzberg when Hitler first visited there in 1923.

Just as Berchtesgadenerland was rich in heritage, it was as greatly endowed with legend and folklore.

³Witnessed by the writer, January, 1960.

Christmas has especially been an occasion for the enthusiastic display of such folklore.⁴

As a custom observed traditionally by the people of Berchtesgaden, the Christmas shooting has taken place for centuries. Its origin sprang from the belief on the one hand that the demons hostile to vegetation had to be banished, and on the other hand that the sleeping spirits of growth had to be awakened when the sun turns at Christmas. On Christmas Eve shooters from the various communities gather at designated spots on the hills around Berchtesgaden. At first only single shots sound through the night; then the actual shooting begins, reaching its climax at midnight. At exactly midnight the shooting ceases and silence prevails, except for the faint whispers of midnight Mass.

Hitler indirectly participated in the Christmas shootings during his early years at the Obersalzberg. Speaking to his guests during one of his many tea hours, he related:

The fact was, that it was my yearly custom to give sacks of gunpowder to our village shots. They fired them off to their hearts' content, playing havoc everywhere with their old rifles and sixteenth century arquebuses. . . .⁵

⁴Information concerning Christmas folklore is based upon a previously published article. See J. C. Boone, Jr., "Christmas in Bavaria," SACOM Scene (Munich, Germany) November 25, 1959, p. 3.

⁵Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 298.

One of the original children's Christmas festivals is St. Nikolaus and the twelve Buttenmandl which takes place December 5 and 6. The twelve Buttenmandl (little men) are clothed in dresses of straw and wear masks of deerskin pulled over their heads. Horns are sewn to their caps. Around their waists are worn heavy cowbells and long tails are attached to the seats of their garments. In these uncommon costumes the Buttenmandl, along with St. Nikolaus, visit each house, and with their switches mete out punishment for the year's misdeeds and rewards for the well-behaved children.

Another custom is the "Klocklsingen" which dates back to the mythological god of thunder, Thor, who knocked on all local doors with his hammer. In this festivity boys and girls wander from house to house on the first three Thursdays in Advent, knocking on doors and singing their "Klocklsongs." The caroling youths are rewarded with apples, cookies, and other treats.

Aside from its affect upon the people and their activities, the air of mystery introduced into Berchtesgadenerland through such folklore has little historical value. A mood, however, is captured that seems pervasive throughout the area, one that is heightened and climaxed by the legend of Siegfried-Barbarossa, and which ironically may have a bearing on Adolf Hitler's appearance

at Obersalzberg. According to Richard Wagner, the medieval Kaiser, Frederick Barbarossa, was a mystic, spiritual, reincarnation of Siegfried, the legendary warrior and first noted superman.⁶ As the legend goes, Siegfried-Barbarossa would someday return to save his German people in their time of deepest need. The site where the sleeping Barbarossa is to reawaken and resume his rule over Germany is Berchtesgaden.

In Berchtesgaden . . . among its limestone crags in a spot scarcely accessible to human foot, the peasants of the valley point out to the traveler the black mouth of a cavern and tell him that within Barbarossa lies in an enchanted sleep waiting to descend with his crusaders and bring back to Germany the golden age.⁷

There is little doubt that Hitler was aware of this legend. Wagner popularized the legend, and Hitler was steeped in Wagnerian opera. Wagner's style served not only as a model for the political ideas of Mein Kampf, but also for its grammatically involved prose. The book also imitated Wagner's stylistic faults, painful repetition, crank tangents, and emotion to the point of hysteria. Hitler's speeches had the quality of Wagner's assets; a

⁶Peter Viereck, Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), p. 111.

⁷James Bryce, The Holy Roman Empire, (4th ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), pp. 177-178. According to villagers, the cavern is located on the Untersberg Mountain which faces the Obersalzberg lying to the east.

vigor and energy sweeping along impressionable listeners, and vague mystic strivings making listeners feel heroic and uplifted. Wagnerian techniques of showmanship were effectively initiated by Hitler. Designed to inspire the audience, these techniques were the model for Hitler's stage-managing of Nazi party rallies. The torchlight parades, the mob choruses, the grand nordic heroes, and ever-rising climaxes were all Wagner-inspired.⁸

There is also evidence that Hitler was inspired directly by the Siegfried-Barbarossa legend. The Nazi excuse for Germany's 1918 defeat was that her unbeatable armies were stabbed in the back by Jews and democrats at home. Germans readily accepted this propaganda because they had been conditioned by three generations of Wagnerian operas which emphasized that the German hero could never be struck down except by a stab in the back, such as dark Hagen administered to blond Siegfried.⁹ Hitler wrote, "Because of the Parliamentary footpads the warring German Siegfried received a healthy stab in the back."¹⁰ Following an early meeting of the Nazi party, he commented that out of its flames was bound to come the sword which

⁸Ibid., pp. 126-143, passim.

⁹Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰Ibid., cited from Mein Kampf.

would "regain the freedom of the German Siegfried."¹¹

Hitler is also known to have stood by Wagner's grave heroically dedicating himself as the reincarnated Siegfried.¹²

Other indications point to wide acceptance of the legend by the German people. During the years of the Weimar Republic, audiences attending Wagnerian operas went wild with enthusiasm over the symbolic scene where Siegfried forged the German sword. When Nazi Germany finished its huge western line of forts, the German people and the journalists unanimously referred to it as the "Siegfried line" indicating how widely Wagner had popularized Siegfried with the masses. Finally, early in 1940, Robert Ley, in an important speech to a group of German workers, recalled the legend of Siegfried and the dragon. He summarized the war as a war against the English dragon which deprived the German Siegfried of the Nibelungen hoard (living space, raw materials, and colonies).¹³

During the 1880's, Georg Waltenberger, an amateur artist and painter, at the request of Moritz painted a series of local legendary scenes on the dining room walls

¹¹Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. by Ralph Manheim, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), p. 370.

¹²Ibid., p. 143.

¹³Viereck, Metapolitics, pp. 140-143.

of the Pension Moritz. Among them was one of Barbarossa in the Untersberg Mountain. At the Obersalzberg guests were therefore reminded of the legend, and Hitler appropriated it for himself. In a conversation with his colleagues at the Berghof, he explained, "You see the Untersberg over there. It is no accident that I chose my residence opposite it."¹⁴

Adolf Hitler was drawn to this legendary setting for reasons known only to himself, and the Obersalzberg came to play a very important role in his life as indicated in a statement he made to a group of intimates during his "table talks" on the night of January 17, 1942.

There are so many links between Obersalzberg and me. So many things were born there and brought to fruition there. I've spent up there the finest hours of my life. My thoughts remain faithful to my first house [Berghof]. It's there that all my great projects were conceived and ripened. I had hours of leisure in those days, and how many charming friends! Now it's stultifying hard work and chains. All that's left to me now is these few hours that I spend with you every night.¹⁵

Earlier in the same month he told a group of officers:

When I go to Obersalzberg, I'm not drawn there merely by the beauty of the landscape. I feel myself far

¹⁴Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 86.

¹⁵Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 222.

from pretty things, and my imagination is stimulated. When I study a problem elsewhere, I see it less clearly, I'm submerged by the details. By night, at the Berghof, I often remain for hours with my eyes open, contemplating from my bed the mountains lit up by the moon. It's such moments that brightness enters my mind. . . . All my great decisions were taken at Obersalzberg. That's where I conceived the offensive of May 1940 and the attack on Russia.¹⁶

A month later, he remarked, "There was a time when I could have wept for grief on having to leave Berchtesgaden."¹⁷

When Hitler and his young sister, Paula, first arrived at the Berchtesgaden area, in April, 1923, he made a point of visiting one of his friends, Dietrich Eckhart, who was in political asylum at Obersalzberg. Snow still covered Obersalzberg, and the normal two-hour walk from the village was made even more difficult by its presence. He arrived at the Pension Moritz late in the night. It was Eckhart who welcomed him and invited Hitler to stay for a while. The visit lasted for several days.

The next day Hitler arose at 7:30 A. M. in order to get an early view of the terrain which he described as "a countryside of indescribable beauty."¹⁸ Eckhart had also arisen, and, when Hitler came down the stairs into the eating area, he introduced the stranger as "my young

¹⁶Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 218.

friend Herr Wolf," the alias taken by Hitler during the early years of the Nazi party. Concerning his first visit to Obersalzberg Hitler remarked,

I had become immediately attached to Obersalzberg. I'd fallen in love with the landscape. The only people who knew who I was were the Buchners, and they kept the secret. All the others thought of me as Herr Wolf. So it was very amusing to hear what people said at the table about Hitler.¹⁹

Hitler's identity was not to remain incognito at Obersalzberg very long. During one of his next visits, which came at close intervals now, he met a gentleman at the inn who had come from Holstein and who planned to go to Passau to hear "that man Hitler . . . speak." Hitler, realizing that his true identity was about to be exposed, invited the man to make the trip with him. When they arrived at Passau, Hitler asked the man to go on with the rest of the party and he would join them later. Actually, he had to take off his coveralls which hid his uniform. When Hitler appeared on the stage, the man was astounded. After the meeting Hitler begged the man not to reveal his identity to the others at the inn, and the man agreed not to do so. However, his identity as Herr Wolf was not to last much longer. Hitler had agreed to make a speech in Berchtesgaden in commemoration of Germany's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian war. There was a

¹⁹Ibid.

large gathering for the occasion with some fifty guests from the inn attending. When Hitler approached the platform to make his speech, all the guests were amazed. Hitler later recalled, "They stared at me as if I'd gone mad. When they became aware of the reality, I saw that it was driving them out of their minds." When Herr Wolf returned to the inn, the atmosphere was stifled. He said, "Those who had spoken ill of Adolf Hitler in my hearing were horribly embarrassed. What a pity."²⁰

When Hitler was released from prison in 1925, he again returned to Berchtesgaden and to the Obersalzberg. Having become disillusioned with the proprietors of Pension Moritz, he moved to the Deutsches Haus in Berchtesgaden where he lived for two years. From this residence Hitler walked to the Obersalzberg daily at which times he completed the second volume of Mein Kampf.²¹ These were the politically lean years for Adolf Hitler; but, as he later said during his long monologues with old party comrades in his headquarters at the front during the war, they were the best years of his life.²²

²⁰Ibid., pp. 219-220.

²¹Ibid., p. 221.

²²William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1960), p. 129.

All in all, going back to the spring of 1925, events had taken a discouraging turn for Hitler. He could speak publicly only in a few minor states, until 1927. He had broken with Roehm and Ludendorf, Goering had been abroad since the abortive Munich Putsch, and Nazi affairs in northern Germany conducted in the name of Gregor Strasser and his younger brother, Otto, were largely out of his control. In fact, he was no longer the party's undisputed leader and did not re-establish his authority until May, 1926. Yet, both the party and the Sturmabteilung (SA) badly needed thorough reorganization under a firm hand if the Nazi movement were to prosper again. Unable to cope with such difficult matters at the moment, Hitler retired to the Obersalzberg and spent his time writing, visiting friends, relaxing, and making plans for his future and the future of the party.²³

In 1928, Hitler rented the Haus Wachenfeld from a Frau Winter, whose husband was an industrialist. The rent was set at a hundred marks a month. About one year later, he purchased the house which later became known as the fashionable Berghof.²⁴

²³Eliot Barculo Wheaton, The Nazi Revolution 1933-1935: Prelude to Calamity, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), pp. 92-93.

²⁴Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 221.

While still a boy, Hitler once bought a lottery ticket in Linz, Austria. Convinced that he was going to win the prize money, he made plans to build a luxury villa. He failed to win the lottery, but the Berghof came to be the realization of his dream castle.²⁵

Haus Wachenfeld was only a modest country house, a Bavarian chalet.²⁶ The first floor was built of ashlar, but the second floor was of wood with a balcony all around in Alpine style. Later a terrace was built in front of the house. There were large stones on the roof to prevent the wind from blowing the slates off. The kitchen was in the basement. There was an attic and a dog kennel behind the house--nothing was lavish. There was the luxury of the mountains. The house was located on the northeast slope of Obersalzberg overlooking the Salzburg valley. The slope was comparatively deserted, offering Hitler solitude and relaxation. At the base of the mountain lay

²⁵Interview with Paula Wolf, Hitler's sister, April, 1959.

²⁶Sources dealing with the physical features of the Obersalzberg and the descriptions and evaluation of personalities and activities there were gathered, between 1958 and 1960, by the writer unless otherwise noted. Herr Josef Geiss, a long-time resident of the Obersalzberg, contributed significantly to the collection and evaluation of the data. Other major contributors were Hitler's sister, Paula Wolf; his personal pilot, Hans Baur; and a stenographer in Goebbels' propaganda ministry, Hermann Bowiks. One of the better commentaries describing the Berghof is found in Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 83-101.

the picturesque village of Berchtesgaden; and on the other side of the mountain, to the southeast, lay the crystal clear Lake Koenigsee. In any direction there was a panoramic view of the Bavarian Alps.

The term "Berghof" refers to a neat farm building with the characteristics of a mountain home. By the time Hitler's home on the Obersalzberg was renovated for the third time, its simplicity was virtually eliminated, and the structure which overlooked the Berchtesgaden valley and the Untersberg Mountain became a symbol of power. During the renovations, Hitler is said to have commented that he would have liked to have had a larger, more elegant house, but he wanted the house to be in keeping with the natural surroundings. The restricted size would have to be adequate. Architect Degano from Munich designed the renovations from sketches drawn by Hitler.

In August, 1932, Herman Rauschnig visited Hitler at the Obersalzberg at which time he described the Berghof as it appeared three years before its final renovation. In his opinion it was a small, agreeable, modest mountain home. Its most outstanding feature was the lounge across the width of the house which was furnished in the style of a Bavarian peasant's cottage.²⁷

²⁷Herman Rauschnig, The Voice of Destruction (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1940), pp. 12-29, passim.

In 1935, Hitler remodeled the Berghof for the last time. The old house was taken into the new, larger structure. The most valuable materials were used, including marble imported from Carrara, Bohemian stone, and rare wood that would have cost a fortune in foreign currency. Modest estimates of its costs have been set at more than one million marks. The house was built with elegant taste. Wide stairs led to the arcade-like front building. From there, one entered the first floor. A Gothic hall with heavy pillars of Untersberg marble formed the lobby of the famous conference room with its twenty-five by twelve feet, electrically operated windows which opened to a panoramic view of Berchtesgadenerland. Also located on the first floor was a hall, a vestibule, the dining room, the guardroom, a day-room for the personnel, a large kitchen, a terrace, and two rooms for the adjutants. On the second floor were fifteen rooms, three for personnel, Hitler's living room, his bedroom, his study, four rooms for his permanent body guard, five rooms for guests, and an apartment for the caretaker or Hofmarschall. The third floor had the same number of rooms as the second floor and was used by guests and personnel. Underneath the first floor were the garages, supply rooms, the heating system, and a bowling alley.

Numerous memoirs of famous personages contain vivid descriptions of the interior of the Berghof.²⁸ Traudl Junge, Hitler's secretary at the Obersalzberg, has given a less than flattering description of the building to which she said she could never become acclimated. To visiting dignitaries, the structure was highly impressive, but to Hitler's secretary,

The place had a strange, undefinable quality that put you on your guard and filled you with odd apprehensions. The only comfortable room was the library on the first floor, which in the old house had been Hitler's private sitting room. It was rustically furnished, with beer mugs placed here and there for decoration. The books at everybody's disposal were of no great interest: world classics that nobody seemed to have read, travel atlases, a large dictionary, albums and drawings, and of course copies of Mein Kampf bound in gold and morocco leather. I also liked the little winter garden with its greenhouse full of orchids, but the finest feature of the Berghof was the terrace, which was immense, full of color, pleasant, with the whole world for a backcloth.²⁹

During the years prior to World War II, Hitler's photographer, Heinrich Hoffman, worked with Goebbels to portray Hitler at the Berghof as a relaxed servant of the people. For this reason many Germans made pilgrimages to the Obersalzberg to pay their respects to their leader.

²⁸An excellent description of Hitler's conference room is given in Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, The Inner Circle (London: The Macmillan Company, 1959), pp. 94-98. A good general description of the Berghof is given in Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 83-101.

²⁹Nevin E. Gun, Hitler's Mistress: Eva Braun (New York: Meredith Press, 1968), p. 98.

They waited patiently for hours to catch a glimpse of their Fuehrer. The women were the most obstinate, and many remained until well after nightfall. Hitler merely spoke briefly to the youngest and prettiest of them, signed a few autographs, and conducted himself with the decorum expected of a man of his position.

It was Hitler's habit to stand, sometimes for hours, in front of the Berghof greeting visitors who paraded by. On one occasion, after a hot summer afternoon spent greeting a long file of adulatory citizens, Hitler remarked that he was exhausted. He did not tolerate the sun well. The next day when Hitler returned to the accustomed spot, he was speechless. There stood a huge shade tree. During the night, on Bormann's orders, the tree had been removed from its original site and replanted in front of the Berghof.³⁰

The Berghof became the nucleus for Nazi activities on the Obersalzberg. From this nucleus came other buildings under the direction of Rudolf Hess until he became deeply involved in political matters, and then the direction was passed on to Martin Bormann. Near Hitler's Berghof, Bormann constructed a house for himself. It was second only to Hitler's villa in elegance, However, its elegance

³⁰James McGovern, Martin Bormann, Tempo Books (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1969), p. 26.

was hidden behind an exterior of rustic looking boards. Its exquisitely furnished interior reflected the general belief that he used funds in its construction beyond his own income. It was a theoretical policy that no Reich minister was to be paid more than one thousand marks per month, and workers around the Bormann house resented the idea that state money was possibly being used in its construction. Bormann had very few personal visitors at his house, and those who did visit were carefully chosen.

Bormann became known as the "God of the Obersalzberg."³¹ He was directly responsible for all official construction that took place, and he managed to accompany the Fuehrer on most of his visits to the Obersalzberg. Very little took place at Obersalzberg without Bormann's prior approval. When Hitler was renovating the Berghof, it was Bormann who took over all the details, paying the bills from the Adolf Hitler "Spende," and providing the furnishings. He saw to the construction of the greenhouses that were to provide the Fuehrer with the fresh vegetables that were his only "gastronomic indulgence."³²

³¹A title by which Bormann was popularly known in the village of Berchtesgaden. Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 84, refers to Bormann as "the master of the Obersalzberg."

³²Eugene Davidson, The Trial of the Germans: Nuremberg 1945-1946 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 103.

Bormann maneuvered closer to Hitler as the months went by. One summer afternoon he was standing on the terrace of the Berghof with Hitler and his personal driver, Eric Kempka. Hitler paused, enjoying the view of the wide, green expanse below him. It was unfortunate, he remarked, that this splendid panorama was broken by an old peasant house. Kempka later drove Hitler to Munich. They returned to the Berghof twenty-four hours later. Kempka could not believe his eyes at the sight which greeted him--the old house had vanished. In its place was a broad meadow upon which cows grazed. Bormann had found other quarters for the peasant farmer and had called in hundreds of workers who overnight tore down the house which had blocked the Fuehrer's view.³³

In addition to his being in charge of construction projects, Bormann was also responsible for all land acquisition on the Obersalzberg. Hess had purchased real estate with party funds, but when Bormann took over, he indulged in an interesting form of speculation. He had originally obtained land at low prices, because for a number of landowners Hitler was an embarrassing neighbor. When Hitler became Chancellor, however, the situation changed. Prices soared, and then Bormann forced the sale of land and properties under the threat of legal

³³McGovern, Martin Bormann, p. 25.

seizure and through harassment by the SS. Under such circumstances most owners capitulated. Bormann then sold the land to important government personalities at a high price and handsome profit. There is little wonder that Bormann was both feared and hated by his associates at the Obersalzberg.

Because of Bormann's favored position, he was constantly opposed by other high officials. Beginning in the autumn of 1941, it became apparent that there was going to be a critical shortage of German war materials. Hitler had agreed with Albert Speer that peacetime construction should not interfere with the needs of the military. Speer recalled:

In actual fact he at last agreed to suspend all the building he was still engaged on, including those at Obersalzberg. . . . Reichsleiter Bormann was the arch offender. He easily persuaded Hitler that the Obersalzberg project need not be cancelled. The large crew employed there, who had to be provided for, actually stayed right there on the site until the end of the war. . . .³⁴

The continued conflict between Speer and Bormann was further indicated by a letter sent to Bormann's wife at the Obersalzberg in which he noted:

Herr Speer who, as I see time and again, has not the slightest respect for me, simply went to Hagan and Shank and asked for a report on the Obersalzberg construction. . . . Instead of going through proper channels and addressing himself to me, the

³⁴Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 215-216.

God of Building, without any more ado he ordered my men to report directly to him. . . .³⁵

Because of Bormann's never ending desire to preserve the Fuehrer's favor, he began construction of the Eagle's Nest in 1937, and officially presented it to Hitler on his fiftieth birthday. The cost of this engineering feat was estimated at thirty million marks and involved approximately three thousand laborers, some of whom lost their lives in the frigid weather found at this altitude of over six thousand feet.

The construction of this project began with the road which left the Obersalzberg and wound its way up four and a half miles of mountainous terrain. It was cut through solid rock and through portions of the Kehlstein Mountain, leaving five tunnels to be driven through. At its end was a parking lot where another tunnel, four hundred feet long lined with red marble, took visitors to an elevator shaft. Here a brass-lined elevator took visitors a hundred and sixty-five feet up into the Eagle's Nest. It took three months to blast the shaft through the mountain. The blasting was started at the top and the bottom simultaneously. Only small charges of explosives were used in order to avoid collapsing the shaft.

³⁵Martin Bormann, The Bormann Letters, trans. by H. R. Trevor-Roper (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 103.

The Eagle's Nest was known to Hitler simply as the Teahouse. However, Andre Francois-Poncet, French Ambassador to Berlin, was invited to visit Hitler at the retreat October 17, 1938. From his vivid description came "Un nid d'aigle," Eagle's Nest. Arriving around 3:00 P. M. he remarked:

From afar . . . it looked like a sort of observatory or hermitage, perched at an altitude of over 6,000 feet, atop the crest of a ridge of rocks. A hair-pin road about ten miles long wound upward. Its daring layout honored the talents of the engineer Todt and the dogged labors of the workmen who had accomplished this task within three years. The road led to the entrance of a huge underground passage dug deep into the soil commanded by a massive bronze door. At the end of this corridor a roomy copper-lined elevator . . . its shaft hewn vertically through the rock, rose over three hundred seventy feet to the level on which the Fuehrer had his dwelling.³⁶

Francois-Poncet was ushered into a

squat solid building which consisted of a gallery with Roman pillars, an immense glassed-in rotunda (giant logs blazed in a huge fireplace and there was a long table with some thirty chairs around it) and several handsomely appointed rooms on the side. To look out in any direction was like looking down from an airplane. In the hollow of the amphitheatre lay Salzburg and its neighboring villages, dominated, as far as the eye traveled, by a horizon of chains and peaks with meadows and woods clinging to the slopes. Hitler's house gave the appearance of being suspended in space. . . .³⁷

³⁶ Andre Francois-Poncet, The Fateful Years: Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1931-1938, trans. by J. LeClerq (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1949), pp. 280-281.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 281-282.

Francois-Poncet's comments are important, not because of their statistical accuracy but because of his impressions as the only foreigner to visit the Eagle's Nest until after the war was over in 1945.

Authors have often confused the Eagle's Nest with the Berghof. However, a greater point of confusion has been the numerous references to the Berghof as Hitler's Teahouse, which is a misnomer. The Teahouse, in which the Fuehrer held his afternoon monologues with guests, was located on a hill called the Mosslahnerkopf, just opposite the Berghof. By paved road, the Teahouse was about a mile from the Berghof, and it required about thirty minutes to walk leisurely between the two by using the narrow winding path which cut through the woods.³⁸

The building consisted of three rooms: a round lounge about twenty-five feet in diameter with a large fireplace, an entrance hall, and a bedroom. The lounge was comfortably furnished with cushioned chairs and a round table. Guests were served coffee or tea, while Hitler reminisced about the past and revealed his plans for the future. From the windows at the back, there was a magnificent view of the baroque towers of Salzburg.

³⁸Personal interviews and observations. See also, Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 89.

Bormann's construction was not limited to those projects previously mentioned. Obersalzberg eventually became a thriving area with a population in excess of four thousand workers, Schutzstaffel (SS), and officials. Where the Pension Moritz stood, the luxurious Platterhof Inn was begun in 1938. It was the largest single building to be constructed, and it was to have been a national hotel for those citizens who came to visit the Fuehrer. It was intended that they would be able to spend one night near Hitler for only one mark. As construction progressed and as Bormann enlarged the plans, it became evident that the Platterhof would become something other than a "Volkshotel." It had three stories and a cellar. On the first story was a spacious reception hall, its floor covered with heavy rugs, lavishly furnished and elegantly decorated. A large barber shop and beauty parlor sold the best perfumes. There was a reading room, a mirrored hall, a library, a large dining room, a tourist hall, a beer room, a large breakfast room, the Dietrich Eckhart room, the Richard Voss room, a bar, a bombproof bowling alley, a theatre, and guest rooms with about one hundred fifty beds. The kitchen was furnished with the latest equipment. Since the construction of the hotel took place during the war when certain building supplies were scarce, German housewives were asked to donate copper

kettles and brass items in order that door handles, roofing and guttering could be made of these materials. When the Platterhof was completed, it became a retreat for ranking Nazi officials and their guests only.

The Berghof, the Bormann House, and the Platterhof formed a triangle which was the center of official activities on the Obersalzberg. A high fence was erected around the whole Fuehrer territory, which reached to the top of the Kehlstein Mountain. This territory was divided into two parts. The inner circle or so called Hoheitsgebiet, in which the Berghof and Bormann's house were located, was guarded by SS sentries. The outer circle with entrances to the extended Fuehrer territory, where most of the construction sites were located, was guarded by the Reichssicherheitsdienst (RSD) or State Security Service.

At the entrances to the Fuehrer area individuals were required to show valid passes to the RSD, and only those who worked in the restricted area were authorized to enter. Delivery men and representatives of building firms received a one-hour or one-day pass, depending upon the nature of their visit.

Just outside the Hoheitsgebiet Herman Goering built his home. By no means as extravagantly built as the Berghof or Bormann house, it was far above that of

an upper middle class residence. Ceilings in the house were of a material resembling mosaic tiles, and the house was tastefully furnished and decorated.

Of the officials on the Obersalzberg, Goering was the one liked best by the workers. He appeared to them to be quite congenial and jovial. Frau Goering often invited workers in for a meal or a snack. What they liked best about Goering was his willingness to talk and laugh with the workers wherever he was on the Obersalzberg.

There were numerous other important buildings constructed in the extended Fuehrer territory. One of them was the People's Theatre which was a large building located in the center of the workers' areas. It gave the workers their only form of recreation and provided a place for their party rallies. Hitler's experimental farm, Gusthof, provided facilities for select breeding of animals. It also contained a well-furnished greenhouse which kept Hitler supplied with flowers, and it produced mushrooms for the Fuehrer's diet. In addition to these, there were general stores, a post office, a coaling station, the Gestapo Headquarters, which guarded the Berghof, numerous small sentry buildings, and the SS barracks.

Spacious barracks were built for the SS. The troops came from Berlin in regular relays to serve as a guard of honor, although the possibility of a putsch or

attack by conspirators may also have been envisioned. Members of the guard were recruited among the SS on the basis of seniority and fanaticism. They had the inscription of "Adolf Hitler" embroidered on the left sleeves of their uniforms. They were divided into three squads: first, the door guards and the operators of the telephone exchange; secondly, the parking lot guards commanded by Kempka; and finally, the domestic personnel or "Schatten." At night the neighborhood was patrolled by soldiers armed with machine guns, who were under orders to fire first and ask questions afterward.³⁹

Life at the Obersalzberg was pleasant for the SS who preferred duty there to being at the front. They lived in comfort; there were assembly rooms, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, and even a day nursery. Local girls found the SS irresistible, and spicy stories circulated about affairs with ladies living at or visiting the Berghof.⁴⁰

Two large settlements were built in the extended Fuehrer territory. The first was the Settlement Klaus (Klaushoche), consisting of four rows with eight houses each. Each house had three apartments. The other settlement was Buchenhoche, which had forty apartment

³⁹Gun, Eva Braun, p. 100.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 102.

houses, a department store, an inn, a kindergarten, swimming pool, a school, a gymnasium, a fire station, and a central heating system. It was much more elaborate than the first settlement. Only favored personnel and ranking officials were allowed to rent in either settlement.

As the war years dragged by, it became clear to Bormann that some precautions should be taken in the event of air raids at Obersalzberg. In August, 1943, plans were rushed, modified, changed, disapproved, remade, and finally approved to construct an extensive and elaborate system of bunkers underneath the buildings. Virtually all other projects were postponed.⁴¹

By then only about thirty percent of the Obersalzberg personnel were Germans, most of these being engineers, architects, and construction specialists. Only a few elderly Germans, unfit for military service, were laborers. The remainder were foreign laborers, primarily Italians and Czechs, whose lack of understanding of German posed a major problem during construction.

⁴¹Only Hitler's bunkers are open to the public today. Entrances to the others have been covered with brick because they were damaged during the air raids over Obersalzberg. Most are about knee-deep in water, except for those under the Platterhof, which are still in good condition and where large numbers of documents were found by the U. S. Army in 1945. Measurements used in the description of the bunkers have been converted from meters and along with technical data were supplied from the files of the U. S. Army Engineers attached to Berchtesgaden in 1960.

Construction began with the Fuehrer bunker beneath the Berghof, followed by a second one for Bormann and his family. Adjacent to these bunkers, rooms for the administrative staff were planned. Bunkers for Goering had also been intended in this system, but he had already built a shelter next to his house in 1941.

Principles of construction varied to some degree from bunker to bunker, but they followed basic patterns. A straight corridor led from the entrance, ninety-eight to one hundred and sixty-four feet, into the mountain. The lengths varied according to the location of the bunker, who it was to house, and its size. About midway into the corridor was a barrier which prevented concussions from exploding bombs. Beyond the barrier was a gas lock, and from this point, the main corridor continued. Caverns or rooms were located on both sides of the corridor. Most of the corridors contained sub-tunnels in which systems such as ventilation, electrical power, water, cables, drainage canals, and forced hot-air heating were installed.

Completion of the first section of Hitler's bunker was scheduled for December 24, 1943, because of his anticipated arrival for Christmas. However, where his bunker was to be constructed, ruptures appeared in the soil causing the corridor to collapse and making it

necessary to provide strong supports at the weak points. As concrete linings were fastened, the supports were removed. Only eight weeks were left to meet the schedule when the problem was solved. Construction was speeded up by every possible means.

At the end of eight weeks, a bunker approximately four hundred and twenty-six feet long with adjacent rooms was completed, which included a polished inlaid floor, wainscoting, and furnishings. Originally, very plain bunkers were planned, but now personal wishes were considered. The security forces demanded that machine guns be installed. Marble, wood wainscoting, air conditioning, carpet, and dressing tables were installed. Bormann wanted headquarters moved farther below; Goering demanded that his bunker be connected with the rest of the system, but Bormann refused. Consequently, the Goering-Bormann bunkers remained separated by approximately thirty-three feet of soil and were the only link in the system that did not interconnect.

As the bunker system was expanded to include other areas of the Obersalzberg and existing ones were enlarged to meet personal demands, the ventilation system proved to be inadequate. Excavation was begun to rectify the situation. When that was completed someone remembered that another room was needed in the Hitler

bunker. Again, there was an excavation--the housekeepers now decided they needed supply rooms. It was also decided that Hitler's German shepherd dog, "Blondi," needed a room. Eva Braun wanted her own bathroom. The cooks wanted, and obtained, a complete kitchen and refrigeration system, and an emergency power system was installed. At the end of the war, the bunker under the Berghof had seventeen rooms.

Bormann's bunker was second only to Hitler's. His inlaid floor was covered with thick rugs; the walls were finished in wainscoting, and doors and door frames were finished in "polishing lacquer." The kitchen was equipped with dual ovens, and bathrooms were lavishly furnished. His offices were equipped with hardwood furniture. Filing cabinets, shelves, upholstered chairs, and sofas were built into the rocks. Living rooms, bedrooms, and a nursery were similar to those in his house.

In addition to the bunkers previously described, others were eventually constructed. They included bunkers for the FLAK Command, the SS, the Platterhof, the Klaus, and Buchenhoche. All bunkers had approximately the same dimensions. The corridors were from four feet nine inches to five feet nine inches wide and about eight feet two inches in height. The rooms were approximately six

and a half to eleven and a half feet wide and deep. Their ceilings were the same height as those of the corridors. A bunker was also built for the laborers at Antenberg Camp, but it was a simple emergency shelter much like those found throughout Germany.

During the first two months of 1945, Bormann wrote two known letters to his wife indicating his concern for the safety of those on the Obersalzberg. On January 5, 1945, he wrote to her saying:

I am pressing so hard for the construction of as many cellars as possible in the whole of Obersalzberg. The stone houses at Hintereck stand in less danger than the barracks, the Turkenhaus and the manor. As soon as possible we must also get on with the construction of the Buckenhole shelters with all the labor we can spare.⁴²

On February 2, 1945, he wrote of his concern particularly for his own family and property.

I am very much afraid that the Berchtesgaden district and particularly Obersalzberg will soon be subjected to round after round of carpet bombing. So, let me say again; take all you can into the cellars. Whatever remains above ground will someday be destroyed.⁴³

Work on the bunker system continued until the day the war was over. The system was composed of corridors consisting of about 8,102 feet and seventy-nine rooms and caverns totaling 44,348 square feet.

⁴²Bormann, The Bormann Letters, p. 161.

⁴³Ibid., p. 174.

Only Germany's defeat kept the bunkers from being completed as planned. After Hitler departed from the Obersalzberg in late summer, 1944, a vast plan for refining and enlarging the bunker system was revealed. The entrance to Hitler's bunker was to be redesigned and the stairs removed. From the Berghof an elevator was to lead directly down to the main corridor.

Underneath the existing system a second one, but about one hundred sixty feet farther below, was planned. This construction was started from several points. Another bunker was planned for several thousand people and for a parking lot for more than one hundred vehicles. The corridor entrance would have been 1,640 feet long, and wide enough for two cars to pass. At the end of the corridor was to be the main shelter. This bunker was also begun and sheltered several hundred children during the air raids in 1945. Had these plans been completed, the Obersalzberg would have become an impregnable fortress.

In order to complete the enormous task he had undertaken, Bormann was forced to take on foreign laborers, voluntary or otherwise. They lived generally under revolting conditions, occupying barracks with eighteen laborers to a room. Camp canteens provided food which was adequate, but lacked variety. Two SS physicians met their medical needs. Workmen could not leave the area,

but were free to circulate after working hours. German laborers received passes periodically to go home or visit in the village of Berchtesgaden.

Treatment of the laborers varied according to their status as Germans or foreigners and according to skills. Passive resistance to the work program was not tolerated. The threat of prison kept resistance at a minimum, but it was not unusual for foreigners to be tortured. Wives of SS troops were entitled to have a woman from the east as a maid without obligation.

Berchtesgadeners deny that concentration camp prisoners were used as laborers at the Obersalzberg, and there appears to be little evidence to the contrary. They often point with pride to Hermann Goering's wife, who reportedly often invited laborers working at her house for lunch.⁴⁴

In Berchtesgaden, there were two facilities which were prominent during the Nazi years. The largest was the Berchtesgadener Hof, the large hotel which quartered foreign dignitaries, such as Neville Chamberlain in 1938. It was also used for entertainment and social functions.

⁴⁴Nevin Gun, Eva Braun, p. 101, describes the wife of one of the Obersalzberg SS as reporting that concentration camp prisoners were used for dynamiting rock, laying foundations, and for impressing upon foreign laborers the need for diligence in their work or else suffer the same cruelty as that suffered by the prisoners. This does not appear to be substantiated by other sources.

The other facility was the Reich Chancellery built for Hitler's Berlin staff to occupy when he was at the Obersalzberg.⁴⁵ The building was begun in the fall of 1936, and occupied July 17, 1937. Hitler was in the building only a few times, never spending any great amount of time there. He was present for its dedication, January 18, 1937, and was there with Goering for the sixty-fifth birthday of Dr. Lammers, Hitler's Chief of Staff. The Fuehrer was also present to award General Keitel's fortieth service ribbon.

There was a large private office for Hitler, but he never used it. The building was three stories high and included numerous offices. The conference room was the largest, and it was furnished with a massive table equipped with a special communication arrangement, whereby participants pressed a button to speak. Paintings on the walls were originals taken from the Haus der Kunst in Munich. On the back of each picture were the eagle and swastika, along with the cost of each painting. Prices

⁴⁵Karl Hinterseer, who was the Haus Meister (custodian) from July 1940, to the end of the war, and who serves as custodian for the U. S. Armed Forces Recreation Center Headquarters which currently occupies the building, was helpful in furnishing data about this facility. When American troops entered Berchtesgaden in 1945, the building had been deserted by the German military, and it was Hinterseer who ran a white sheet up the flag pole. He was interviewed on numerous occasions between 1958 and 1960.

ranged from 20,000 marks upward. There was also a large law library, and the entire basement was a bar and officers' mess. Below the basement was a bunker.

The Obersalzberg, therefore, was the center of activities rather than Berchtesgaden. It developed from a Bavarian mountain retreat to a sophisticated community of National Socialists, and life there reflected the changes brought by the new inhabitants.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AT THE OBERSALZBERG¹

The tempo of life at the Obersalzberg reflects characteristics of Adolf Hitler which are not generally attributed to him. An examination of personable traits exemplified by the Fuehrer and his associates there add a human dimension necessary for understanding the drama of National Socialism.

When Hitler rented Haus Wachenfeld in 1928, he brought his half sister Angela Raubal to the Obersalzberg as his housekeeper. She had a daughter, Angela Maria, known as Geli, with whom Hitler had the only truly deep love affair of his life.² She was also his ward over whom he jealously watched. She was nineteen years younger than he and a strikingly beautiful blond. She lived with her mother at the Obersalzberg. Hitler liked to show her off everywhere, particularly to his comrades

¹Portions of an interview with Hans Baur on April 9, 1959, in Traunstein, Germany, have been used to reconstruct life at the Obersalzberg. All material, unless otherwise cited, has been taken from that interview. Baur's version is similar to that given by Gun, Eva Braun, pp. 103-116.

²Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 9.

in the party whose wives or girl friends, nearly all, were less than pretty. He once told Hoffmann, his photographer, "I love her, but I don't believe in marriage. I make it my business to watch over her until such time as she finds a husband to her taste."³ Annie Winter, a second house-keeper, after 1929, commented,

Geli loved Hitler. She was always running after him. Naturally she wanted to become Frau Hitler. He was highly eligible, but she flirted with everybody, she was not a serious girl. . . .⁴

Geli committed suicide September 18, 1931, in Hitler's Munich apartment, after he had left for the Obersalzberg.⁵ It is difficult to explain her suicide, but it may well be connected with an incident that took place on the morning of the same day, soon after Hitler's departure. According to Frau Winter, Geli was cleaning up the Fuehrer's room when she pulled a letter from one of his jacket pockets, after which she tore the letter into small pieces and left them on the table so that her uncle could see it. Frau Winter said that it was a letter from Eva Braun thanking him for a wonderful evening at the theatre and expressing the hope that they would meet again.⁶

³Gun, Eva Braun, p. 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁶Ibid., p. 13.

Hitler mourned the death of his niece for several years. He had fresh flowers placed in her Obersalzberg room once a week and went there for meditation every Christmas Eve until problems of war interrupted his vigil.⁷

Hitler had always manifested an interest in girls, even during his earliest days at the Obersalzberg. He and his party cronies often visited the "Dreimaederlhaus," where there were always pretty girls, one of which Hitler referred to as a real beauty. From his conversations while in his headquarters on the Russian front, it would appear that he knew many women intimately.

At this period [on the Obersalzberg] I knew a lot of women. Several of them became attached to me. Why then didn't I marry? At the slightest imprudence, I ran the risk of going back to prison for six years. So there could be no question of marriage for me. I, therefore, had to renounce certain opportunities that offered themselves.⁸

Only Eva Braun has received prominence as Hitler's mistress; and, in the last days, as his wife. She was destined to spend most of her time at the Obersalzberg, after becoming Hitler's mistress in the first months of 1932.⁹ In the early days when Eva went to Berchtesgaden,

⁷Ibid.

⁸Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 220.

⁹This appears to be borne out by pictures which Eva pasted in her photograph album, and the first snapshot of Eva taken at the Obersalzberg appears to have been in the early spring of 1932. See Gun, Eva Braun, p. 51.

Hitler always mindful of appearances, did not accommodate her in Haus Wachenfeld, but in the Berchtesgadener Hof. Later, she stayed at the Platterhof until she moved into the Berghof.

During the early 1930's, Hitler spent considerable time at the Obersalzberg, and Eva Braun was seen with him more and more. It was not surprising that Angela Raubal hated Eva, for in her opinion Hitler should have been totally faithful to the memory of her daughter who died so tragically. She saw in Eva a young upstart, slyly working to snare her inexperienced half brother who was an easy prey for ambitious females. Angela was forever trying to turn Hitler against Eva and constantly humiliated her when she was invited to Haus Wachenfeld. She ostentatiously avoided shaking Eva's hand and avoided her presence most of the time, except when Hitler and Eva were alone. Then she would find some pretext for interrupting them.¹⁰ In 1936, Angela Raubal remarried and left the Obersalzberg. Eva's major antagonist was now gone, and she was free to cultivate her relationship with Hitler.¹¹

By the end of the summer of 1940, Hitler surrounded himself with a climate of austerity, giving up his meetings

¹⁰Gun, Eva Braun, pp. 92-93.

¹¹Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 9.

with theatre and movie stars. His relations with Eva became more open and tender. The Berghof staff realized that she was no longer an ordinary guest and referred to her among themselves as "Chefin," wife of the "Chief." In order to avoid indiscretions, she was never mentioned by name in public.

Eva always alluded to Hitler as "Chief" or the "Fuehrer," never addressing him by his name or title in public. She used the familiar "du" and Hitler did likewise. He also used a Viennese diminutive, "Tschapperl," which meant "little thing." "Effie" was his favorite name for her. Eva did not allow others to take liberties with her name. Martin Bormann once tried when he maliciously called her "Ewe," a Jewish form of her name.¹²

Hitler would stroke her hand in company, but otherwise avoided giving any indication of affection. In the mornings he continued to act formally when he met her downstairs, greeting her ceremoniously and kissing her hand.

There were light moments, amusement, and small talk for the couple. For example, following dinner at the Berghof one evening, Eva amusingly said to Hitler, "Sit up straight, you're stooping like an old man." "I've got some heavy keys in my pocket," he retorted, "and

¹²Gun, Eva Braun, pp. 168-169.

don't forget that I'm lugging a whole sackful of worries about with me." Then Hitler added,

Like this we're better matched, Tschapperl. You put on high heels to make yourself taller, while I stoop to make myself smaller, and so we go well together.¹³

Eva Braun's relationship with most wives of high-ranking commanders was not very personal. Anneliese von Ribbentrop ignored her, while Elsa Himmler seldom visited the Berghof because of Eva's presence. There was little but conflict between Emma Goering and Eva, even though Hitler had warned Goering that Eva was to be treated with respect. Such conflict was indicated one day when Frau Goering invited the ladies of the Berghof to come for tea at her villa. She invited secretaries, assistants, and hair dressers. The list of invitations was in alphabetical order meaning Eva Braun was listed under the "B's" rather than at the head of the list as one so close to Hitler should have been. This was taken as a personal affront to both Eva and Hitler. Hitler proceeded to telephone Goering, requesting that he forbid his wife to concern herself further with Eva. Emma Goering was no longer invited to the Berghof.¹⁴

When Magda Goebbels visited the Berghof, she flirted with Hitler, which was one reason there was

¹³Ibid., pp. 176-177.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 111-112.

rivalry between her and Eva. There was another reason. Her husband had an affair with a Czechoslovakian actress, and Frau Goebbels took refuge in Hitler's house demanding a divorce. Eva was kept away while she was there. Eva apparently never forgave her. There are evidences of continued conflict. On one occasion, Frau Goebbels was boasting of her learned French expressions, whereupon Eva announced that she spoke French fluently and proceeded to spout French for about an hour. At another time, Eva was chatting with Magda Goebbels in the latter's room just before the evening meal. Frau Goebbels had been drinking heavily and unable to bend over asked Eva to tie her shoelaces. Without replying, Eva rang a bell, a maid appeared, and Eva suavely ordered her to tie the shoelaces. Eva left the room.¹⁵

Her relations with Speer's wife were amicable, and she had a liking for Bormann's wife, Gerda. Eva did not care for Bormann, whom she accused of mistreating his children and running after the young ladies in Berchtesgaden. Because of Bormann's prominence and power, she avoided harassing him, although a secret rival characterized their relationship.¹⁶

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 112-113.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 113-114.

When an important visitor was expected at the Berghof, Eva was confined to her room. She was denied the excitement of King Boris of Bulgaria, of Lloyd George, of King Carol of Rumania, and of innumerable other notables who were received at the Obersalzberg before 1939.¹⁷

Eva begged Hitler to let her be introduced to the Duchess of Windsor when she visited at the Berghof. Hitler claimed that the demands of protocol prohibited the meeting. He also refused her request to meet Count Galeazzo Ciano, whom she greatly admired, during his August, 1939, visit to the Berghof. In protest, Eva stayed at her window to photograph with her telephoto lens phases of Ciano's visit. Ciano noticed the figure of the young girl and asked Ribbentrop her name. He responded very evasively. Hitler immediately dispatched an SS trooper with orders to Eva to close her window.¹⁸

A typical day began with the Berghof wrapped in silence--it seemed deserted. Because the house was built of concrete, and the noise of water running in the bathroom disturbed Hitler's sleep, no one was allowed to bathe in the mornings. Guests had breakfast according to their pleasure or to the demands of service. There

¹⁷Ibid., p. 133.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 133-134.

was orange juice, coffee, tea, or cocoa, an assortment of brown bread, jam, and butter. During the war, butter was rationed in theory, but one could ask for more; white bread was reserved for Hitler. He seldom came down to breakfast. When he did, Eva was never far away. He usually had two cups of milk, some biscuits, and some bitter cocoa. Eva had strong coffee, bread, and a generous portion of butter.

Hitler seldom arose until an hour or so before noon. Then the Berghof burst alive. Mercedes cars with screeching brakes stopped in front. The sound of heavy boots was heard as officials approached SS soldiers stationed at the top of the steps. Later in the war, visitors were primarily high-ranking generals, and they preferred to go onto the patio to smoke a last cigarette while waiting for the conference.

No member of Hitler's immediate entourage could be present during these political or military conferences unless they were specifically requested. They usually lasted indefinitely. Lunch was never served before two, and it was often as late as four o'clock.

When Eva appeared with her two Scottish terrier dogs, it was evident that Hitler was not far away and that lunch would soon be served. Guests would begin to gather. Upon Hitler's arrival, he would converse with his guests

and tease Eva about her dogs. Heinz Linge, Hitler's personal valet, would approach one of the ladies to inform her that the Fuehrer was about to offer her his arm to go to the table. Another orderly advised the rest of the company of the seating arrangement. Finally, Linge would announced that lunch was served.

The Fuehrer was extremely particular about service at the meal. He inspected every detail of the table. Handpainted Rosenthal china and silver with the Hitler monogram were customarily used. Eva supervised flower arrangements. Napkins were folded in paper envelopes bearing the guests' names. At either end of the huge table were salt shakers and oil and vinegar cruets of Bohemian glass.

Guests were required to finish their servings, and the servants could not remove a plate until it was empty. To improve the manners of his regular guests, Hitler, before the war, sent an emissary to study table etiquette at the court of England, and his findings were applied to the Berghof.

Martin Bormann always escorted Eva to the table, an act which emphasized her position as mistress of the house. She sat to Hitler's right, while he took his place at the center of the big table. The guest of honor was seated opposite him. The servants immediately

brought in the salads, and then came the succession of dishes. Hitler disapprovingly allowed his guests to drink beer or Rhine wine--both he and Eva had mineral water or cider. Occasionally, he requested a special beer which had an alcohol content of two percent. After meals he frequently took a Fernet Branca or a Boonenkamp bitters.

Unfortunately, food at the Berghof was hardly edible. There was a special menu for vegetarians, but Hitler was usually the only vegetarian. Meat was available for guests, but the Fuehrer took delight in telling obnoxious stories at the table that in some way adversely reflected upon meat. There were delicious Viennese pastries. Otherwise, guests suffered through such concoctions as baked potatoes flavored with cream cheese and liberally doused with linseed oil.

Politics were never discussed at the meal. Conversation was usually innocuous enough. Hitler complimented the ladies and recalled amusing episodes of his youth. Pretty women were his favorite topic. He enjoyed chiding Eva about wearing too much makeup, which he described as paint. He marveled at the actress Zarah Leander's plunging neckline, and went into raptures over Anny Ondra's legs. Eva diverted the conversation to films or a fashionable play.

The meal normally lasted sixty minutes, and then everyone prepared for a walk. Hitler put on a gray oil-skin lumber jacket and his felt hat, took his cane, and called for Blondi, whom he kept on a leash.

Hitler led the entourage to the Teahouse where guests basked in the sunny meadow when the weather was good. Eva would often take one photograph after another. She would ask Hitler to take off his hat, which he refused to do, or to remove his dark glasses. In the winter, they gathered around the fire. It was during these times that Hitler would go into his lengthy rambling monologues. Then, although he claimed that he fell to sleep with difficulty and only under very quiet conditions, he sometimes dozed off in his chair. Eva would pursue the conversation in a hushed voice, and everyone else pretended not to notice that Hitler was napping.

A variety of subjects was covered during these tea times. In 1942, Hitler was discussing the church as being indispensable in political life. He would be happy, he said, if someday a prominent churchman turned up who was suited to lead one of the churches; or, if possible, to reunite both the Catholic and Protestant churches. What he wanted to see in Germany was one established church such as England had.¹⁹

¹⁹ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 95.

After about two hours, the tea time ended, generally around six. Hitler stood up, and the procession moved on to the parking area where cars awaited. After returning to the Berghof, Hitler usually withdrew to his room, while the others scattered. Bormann frequently disappeared into the room of one of the younger stenographers, which elicited spiteful remarks from Eva Braun.

About two hours later, the evening meal was announced by telephone. The company met in the lounge around eight o'clock with a repetition of the afternoon's trivialities.

After dinner, Hitler had a political and subsequently, a military conference. As he left his company, his personality made a complete transformation. Whereas he had been a jovial, good-natured host, he then became a fierce warrior.

Before the war, when Hitler returned from a conference, a film was shown. Eva Braun chose the film and liked romantic ones, but Hitler insisted on adventure films. He sat on the front row, with Eva beside him, and the other spectators behind. Everyone was invited, even the kitchen staff. During the war, the time was spent listening to the phonograph. The repertoire consisted of Johann Strauss, Richard Wagner, and Hugo Wolf.

Near midnight, Hitler, accompanied by Eva, would sit in front of the fire. He drank tea while she drank

champagne or schnapps. Later Hitler was served apple cakes while the others had sweet rolls. There was subdued conversation. From one o'clock on, some members of the company, in spite of efforts to control themselves, could no longer control their yawns; but the social occasion dragged on for another hour or more. At last, Eva had a few words with Hitler and was permitted to go upstairs. Hitler would stand up about fifteen minutes later and bid his guests good night. Those who remained, often followed those numbing hours with a gay party over champagne and cognac.²⁰

The one day of the year officially celebrated at the Berghof was New Year's Eve. For this occasion, the ladies wore their finest clothes, and Hitler wore tails. At the Obersalzberg, Hitler always wore civilian clothes until the outbreak of the war. It was 1938--the last New Year's Eve celebrated in peace--and the guests that evening, with few exceptions, were Hitler's favorite group. There were about thirty in the group, but about the only people known publicly were the Max Schmellings and the Czechoslovakian movie star, Anny Ondra. Otherwise, the guests included Drs. Morell and Brandt and their

²⁰Baur confessed that he, like many of the staff, used every opportunity to escape these long sessions, but there was no graceful way to do so. His major complaint was that it tired him to the point of interfering with his flying ability.

wives; the press chief, Otto Dietrich; the dentists, Drs. Blaschke and Ritter; Martin Bormann and his brother, Albert. Albert Bormann was one of Hitler's aides and did not get along with his brother. Martin, in fact, treated him with contempt. There were other aides present--Bruecker, Schaub, Putkammer, Albrecht, Engel, Below, Schumdt, the photographer, Hoffmann, Gerda Bormann, the wives of some of the other gentlemen, the Secretaries Wolf, Schroeder, and Gerta Daranowsky, and others of less prominence.²¹

Hitler was partial to caviar, and there was an abundance of it on the table. There was a fireworks display at the end of the meal. Willy Kannenberg, Quartermaster, had been brought from Berlin to organize the festivities. The show was a miserable failure because only a few rockets were fired across the terrace. There was no dancing because Hitler did not approve of this form of entertainment. Hitler went into another room and stood between two candelabras to receive his guests. Then he took part in the lead pouring ceremony, a Teutonic tradition dating far back into history. It consisted of pouring molten lead into a small basin of water and interpreting the future according to the shapes it assumed. Hitler did not appear satisfied with his results. He sat

²¹Gun, Eva Braun, pp. 103-104.

down in an easy chair and stared dejectedly into the fire and hardly spoke for the rest of the evening.²²

When Hitler and Eva left, the atmosphere became more relaxed. More champagne and brandy were served. Kannenberg played the accordian, and the dancing began.²³

Life at the Obersalzberg had not always been like that described thus far. Until 1936, when Hitler arrived at the Berghof from Munich or perhaps Nuremberg, he would go straight to his bedroom from which he would emerge dressed in a Bavarian sports coat of light blue linen, which he wore with a yellow tie. A few hours later, a Mercedes sedan would drive up with his two secretaries and a single Munich girl, Eva Braun. The secretaries appeared to disguise the mistress's presence.²⁴

Hitler often took mountain walks, even though he rejected mountain climbing and skiing. He considered them dangerous and thought they should be made illegal. Between 1934 and 1936, Hitler still took lengthy hikes along the forest paths, accompanied by his guests and three or four plain-clothes detectives belonging to his SS bodyguard. At such times, Eva Braun was permitted to accompany him, but she trailed along with the two

²²Ibid., p. 105.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 46.

secretaries at the end of the file. He set a fast pace. Frequently, they were joined by other walkers who hesitantly greeted Hitler, whereupon he responded with a few friendly comments. The destination was often the Hochlenzer, a small mountain inn about an hour's walk from the Berghof, where the entourage sat outside and had a glass of milk or beer.²⁵

On other occasions, the group drove to Lake Koenigsee and went from there by boat to Bartholomae Peninsula at the base of the east wall of the Watzmann Mountain. As they strolled along their way, people did not immediately recognize Hitler in his rustic Bavarian clothes; but shortly before reaching their destination, the Schiffmeister Restaurant, a band of enthusiasts would follow Hitler and his party. Hitler's group would almost run to the restaurant and would barely reach the door before they were overtaken by the crowd. They sat eating cake and drinking coffee while the crowd outside swelled. Hitler waited until police reinforcements would come before he would enter the car which had been driven there to meet his party. The front of the seat was folded back, and he stood beside the driver, left hand resting on the windshield, as the car moved at a snail's pace through the

²⁵Ibid., pp. 46-48.

throng. Wherever Hitler went during the first years of his rule, such scenes were repeated.²⁶

Hitler's stays at the Obersalzberg often came when he was in need of rest or when he needed to think clearly. During another of his tea time monologues, January 2, 1942, the Fuehrer recalled

During my first electoral campaign the question was how to win seats. Only the parties that had a certain importance had any hopes of doing so. I had no original formula for the campaign. I went up to Obersalzberg. At 4:00 in the morning, I was already awake, and I realized at once what I had to do. That same day I composed a whole series of posters. I decided to overwhelm the adversary under the weight of its own arguments. And what weapons he supplied us with.²⁷

Before the Nuremberg Party Rally, he regularly retreated to "the mountain" for several weeks to work out his long speeches. As the deadline drew near, his adjutants urged him to begin the dictation. They kept everyone and everything away from him so that he would not be distracted from his work, but Hitler postponed the task and reluctantly set to work on it only under extreme pressure. By then it was usually too late to compose all his speeches; and during the Rally, Hitler had to stay up nights to make up for the time he had squandered at Obersalzberg. When the Rally was over,

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 176.

he often returned to the Obersalzberg to relax from the strenuous experience at Nuremberg.²⁸

During the hours of socializing at the Obersalzberg, Hitler scarcely ever said anything about the Jews or the necessity of concentration camps. Perhaps such topics were left out deliberately because they would have been out of place amidst the prevailing trivia.²⁹

Bormann, however, was a bloodhound for Jews. Hitler, for a time, took pleasure in the visits of a blond child, the daughter of a former officer who wore the iron cross. She was recognized and welcomed by the Berghof staff. Bormann discovered from zealous party members that the little girl had Jewish blood and forbade her mother to bring the child to see the Fuehrer any more. He even went so far as to try to confiscate copies of a propaganda book in which the child's picture had appeared. Hitler heard the account of why the girl no longer came to visit him from his photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, because it was his book that Bormann wanted to keep from being sold. Hitler did nothing to rescind Bormann's action.³⁰

The subjects of Jews and concentration camps were not completely taboo. Hoffmann, for example, had a whole

²⁸ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 88.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 94.

³⁰ Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, p. 104.

repertoire of jokes about Dachau that he told around the Berghof and which greatly amused Hitler.³¹

In late June, 1943, Baldur von Schirach, leader of the "Hitler Youth," and his wife, Henriette, were visiting the Fuehrer at the Berghof. They were mild mannered and sensitive people who could be disturbed by brutality. When they were seated to eat dinner, Frau von Schirach sat next to Hitler. Having known Hitler since she was a young child--she was the daughter of Heinrich Hoffmann--she told the Fuehrer how revolted she had been when she saw from her hotel window in Amsterdam a deportation of Jewish women who were driven onto trucks amid shrieks and blows. Schirach was already in disfavor with the Fuehrer for supporting an art exhibit in Vienna that had shown the work of painters proscribed in the Reich. Hitler coldly informed Frau von Schirach that she was sentimental, and he wanted to hear no more of the story which she had naively believed would be news to him. He then got up and left the table without saying a word to his guests.³²

As for Schirach, Hitler turned savagely against him on this occasion and everything Schirach said irritated

³¹Gun, Eva Braun, p. 175.

³²Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, p. 305.

him to the point of fury. Goebbels, who was staying at the Berghof, wrote in his diary that he felt sorry for the Fuehrer whose many burdens were only increased by Schirach's blundering.³³

During this same visit, Schirach ventured to speak to Hitler about the great cultural tradition of Vienna and his hopes for the refurbishment of the city when the war was over. Everything he said antagonized Hitler; the Fuehrer shouted that Vienna could never compete with Berlin, that it was a city of second rank and would stay that way. Goebbels wrote that Frau von Schirach had tears in her eyes as all their hopes for a dazzling future for Vienna, and no doubt for themselves, were dashed. It was morning when Hitler went to bed, and the Schirach's, who had retreated to the Eagle's Nest, left that afternoon without seeing him again. Schirach never came back into favor. Rumors circulated that he was to be dismissed from his post.³⁴

There were not many genuine relationships developed at the Obersalzberg. The one between Albert Speer and Dr. Fritz Todt was the exception. Speer became the fourth Obersalzberger, along with Hitler, Goering, and Bormann, toward the end of May, 1937, when he and his family moved

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 306.

into a house he had designed and which Hitler had Bormann build.³⁵ The Todts lived in a small, unpretentious dwelling on Hintersee, a lake located in one of the obscure areas of Berchtesgadenerland. No one would have guessed that the famous roadbuilder and creator of the Autobahn lived there.³⁶

Speer and Todt had much in common. Both came from prosperous, upper middle class circumstances, and both had technological backgrounds. They loved nature, life in the Alpine shelters, and ski tours, and they shared a strong dislike for Bormann. Todt had repeatedly had serious conflicts with Bormann, protesting against his spoiling the landscape around Obersalzberg. Speer and his wife had frequently been Todt's house guests. He was a modest man with an unassertive personality--a man who could be relied upon, and who steered clear of all intrigues. He lived a quiet, withdrawn life, had no personal contacts with party circles, and very rarely appeared at Hitler's dinners. His retiring attitude enhanced his prestige; whenever he did appear he became the center of interest.³⁷

³⁵Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 84.

³⁶Ibid., p. 193.

³⁷Ibid.

Speer and Todt were, in a manner of speaking, competitors. Both were in charge of construction projects. Todt actually headed three ministries which were jointly called the Todt Organization. When Speer took over Todt's duties, upon the latter's death, he did so with a sense of a great personal loss. The two men had spent much time together at the Obersalzberg, where they planned their construction projects.³⁸

Intrigues within the upper ranks of Hitler's staff were not unusual at the Obersalzberg. Bormann was always discrediting members of Hitler's entourage, but there were also subtle intrigues aimed against Bormann. On March 1, 1943, Speer was invited to Goering's Obersalzberg villa for a discussion primarily aimed at discrediting Bormann, but which also involved a conspiracy against Lammers and Ribbentrop. During the conversation, in which Goering agreed that Bormann's power and influence had to be lessened, it was decided that Goebbels, who had previously expressed alarm over Bormann's growing influence, would come to the Obersalzberg the next day to concur. During the conversation the next day, Goering, Goebbels, and Speer agreed that the personnel of the Council of Ministers for the Defense of the Reich should be broadened. They also talked about the necessity for

³⁸Ibid., pp. 190-195.

replacing Ribbentrop, who was nothing more than "Hitler's mouthpiece." They concurred that Hitler had not "seen through" Lammers and pledged themselves to undermine all three officials. Later in the day, Goering and Speer walked in the vicinity of the Obersalzberg as they discussed the conspiracy further. Goering maintained that Bormann was aiming at nothing less than the succession to Hitler. Goering assured Speer that he would take every opportunity to outmaneuver Bormann. The exact plans for the conspiracy against Bormann were not revealed; but whatever they were, they failed.³⁹

In addition to the personal vendettas, there were several attempts on Hitler's life. During Hitler's midday monologue on May 3, 1942, he discussed one of the earliest attempts. The assassin, a Swiss, had stalked Hitler for three months in the vicinity of the Berghof, but had failed to get to the Fuehrer. He continued his efforts in Munich where he was discovered by a railroad official. The man apparently had traveled beyond Munich with a ticket from Berchtesgaden to Munich, and the official asked for an explanation. The story, that he had been in Berchtesgaden for several months trying to deliver a letter to Hitler, aroused the suspicion of the official. He held the Swiss for interrogation. When the

³⁹Ibid., pp. 259-264.

Swiss was searched, a sealed envelope addressed to Hitler was found, but it was empty. This led to a full confession.⁴⁰

On another occasion, sometime in early 1944, a young man, whose name is unknown, obtained access to the conference room, in the Berghof, in which Hitler was to address a gathering of senior officers. It was the would-be assassin's intention to employ the simple and direct method of the pistol; and although officers were required to remove their holsters before entering, he succeeded in concealing the weapon in the pocket of his pants. The conspirator's rank was not sufficiently eminent to bring him within the rows of seats provided for the distinguished members of Hitler's audience. As a junior staff officer, he had to stand at the back of the hall under the scrutiny of the Fuehrer's fanatical SS guards. Under such conditions, the young officer could not carry out his mission.⁴¹

On June 3, 1944, the last important social function took place on the Obersalzberg. Eva Braun's sister, Gretl, and Hans Georg Otto Hermann Fegelein, an SS general and liaison officer between Himmler and Hitler, were married.

⁴⁰Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 426.

⁴¹John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics 1918-1945 (London: Macmillan Company, Ltd., 1964), p. 590. There were other and more important attempts to assassinate Hitler at the Obersalzberg, but they are dealt with later. See Chapter V.

Following the wedding, Hitler invited the Braun and Fegelein families and about fifty other guests to lunch at the Berghof. Then the whole party went up to the Eagle's Nest for a celebration, the only one that ever took place in this mountain structure. Eva hired a small band for the occasion, and for the first time guests were allowed to dance in Hitler's presence. Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer, was present, and he saturated the press with photos taken during the festivities. Hitler retired early; but for the others, it was an all night affair, in which large amounts of schnapps and champagne were consumed. Some guests made the occasion a week-long festivity.⁴²

There was another aspect of life at the Obersalzberg--the official conferences, diplomacy, and affairs of state. This official aspect caused the world to focus its attention upon the mountain retreat and gave it prominence in history.

⁴² Baur, personal interview, April 9, 1959, Traunstein, Germany. The affair was one of the few events which took place at the Obersalzberg and known by Berchtesgadeners at the time.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY, 1933-1938

In the Reichstag election of July 31, 1932, the Nazis won two hundred and thirty seats, making them the largest party in the Reichstag, but far short of a majority. More significantly, this was the largest number of seats held by any party during the early Weimar government. They also had won thirty-seven percent of the vote. Hitler, encouraged by this victory, was impatient to get the chancellorship and, on August 4, met with General von Schleicher to press his demands. His terms were: the chancellorship for himself; and, for his party, the premiership of Prussia, the Reich and Prussian Ministries of the Interior, the Reich Ministries of Justice, Economy, and Aviation, and a new ministry for Goebbels. As a concession to Schleicher, Hitler promised him the Defense Ministry. Furthermore, Hitler said he would demand an enabling act from the Reichstag authorizing him to rule by decree for a specified period.¹

Hitler left the meeting convinced that he had won Schleicher to his program, and the next day hurried to

¹Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 166-167.

the Obersalzberg to wait out the situation. Konrad Heiden substantiated this air of confidence when he wrote:

On August 6, 1933, Hitler gathered together the civilian functionaries of the party at his residence in Obersalzberg. He led his group in goosestep along the narrow mountain path to one of the surrounding summits and there addressed them in a short but violent speech of which the gist was more or less as follows: "Below you is Germany, and Germany is yours. . . ." ²

All was not as well as Hitler thought; the party was threatening to take power in Berlin by force. On August 9, Strasser, Frick, and Funk arrived at the Obersalzberg with discouraging news. Schleicher was changing his views, now insisting that if Hitler got the chancellorship he must rule with the consent of the Reichstag. Funk reported that Schleicher's business friends were worried about the prospects of a Nazi government, and a messenger from Schacht confirmed it. The following day, a message was sent to the Obersalzberg that the SA was in a state of armed readiness and was establishing a stronger ring around Berlin. Hitler could stand the waiting no longer, and, on August 11, he set out by car to Berlin for a meeting with Papen and Schleicher. ³

²Konrad Heiden, Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Howard Fertig, 1968), p. 723.

³Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 167.

The meeting took place August 13, and it was a stormy one. Schleicher had changed in his position of the week before and now supported Papen as Chancellor. He told Hitler that the most he could hope for was the vice-chancellorship. Hitler was outraged; he must be Chancellor or nothing. The meeting terminated with the final decision to be left up to President Paul von Hindenburg.⁴

During the late afternoon, Hitler met with Hindenburg at which time Hindenburg made it clear that he could not risk transferring the power of government to a new party such as the National Socialists, but he was ready to accept Hitler and representatives of his movement in a coalition government. He could not, however, give exclusive power to Hitler alone. Hitler was adamant in refusing to put himself in the position of bargaining with leaders of the other parties. The discussion ended without agreement, but not before the aging President delivered a stern lecture to the Nazi leader concerning the violent activity of the National Socialists. The reprimand was given wide publicity--the situation looked rather hopeless for the party comrades.⁵

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., pp. 168-169.

As usual, the Fuehrer retired to the Obersalzberg to ponder his future. Hermann Rauschning, then Nazi leader in Danzig, found Hitler brooding sullenly in the Berghof. "We must be ruthless," Hitler told him, and launched into a tirade against Papen. He had not lost hope, and at times he spoke as if he were already Chancellor. "My task is more difficult than Bismarck's," he said. "I must first create the nation before even beginning to tackle the national tasks before us." Hitler then spoke of his great confidence in himself and disclosed his ideas of conquering Europe.

Without Europe we must perish. Germany is Europe . . . but we must have Europe and its colonies. Germany is only a beginning. No European country today is a complete whole. But Europe is for us. Whoever conquers it will press his seal on the coming age. We are the chosen. If we fail, we shall die out, as all European nations will degenerate.⁶

Abruptly Hitler asked Rauschning whether Danzig, a city-state under the administration of the League of Nations, had an extradition agreement with Germany. Rauschning did not at first understand the question, but later it became evident that Hitler was looking for a place that might serve as an asylum should the Nazis be suppressed by a military dictatorship under Papen and Schleicher.⁷

⁶Rauschning, The Voice of Destruction, pp. 23-25.

⁷Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 169.

Hitler remained in the solitude of the Berghof despite fears that his party might be outlawed. Except for occasional spells of depression, he remained confident that he would achieve his goal--not by force and scarcely by winning a parliamentary majority, but by means which had carried Schleicher and Papen to the top--by intrigue.⁸

On August 25, Goebbels conferred with the Fuehrer at his Obersalzberg villa and told him that the Center Party had been contacted, if for no other reason than to bring pressure against opponents of National Socialism. This proved to be a wise move on the part of the Nazis, because when the chamber convened in Berlin, on August 30, the Centrists joined the Nazis in electing Goering President of the Reichstag. For the first time, a National Socialist was in the chair when the Reichstag reconvened on September 12, to begin its working session. This was the beginning of Hitler's successful bid for the chancellorship which culminated in his appointment to that position, January 30, 1933.⁹

After being appointed Chancellor, there was a brief period in which Hitler's visits to the Obersalzberg were less frequent and less lengthy. While at the Obersalzberg, during the summer, he issued the "Law to

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 170.

Supplement the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of 20 July, 1933." This was the Reich Chancellor's first action against the Communists, whom he had come to hate as well as fear during his life. The law stated that officials who had belonged to the Communist Party or to communist auxiliary or collateral organization, or who had been active in furthering the aim of Communism were to be discharged from the civil service. Discharge was not necessary, however, for officials who, before January 30, 1933, had joined a party or organization which had placed itself behind the government of the national revolution. Officials would not be discharged who had distinguished themselves exceptionally in the national movement. The document stated further that officials who were active for Marxism in the future would be discharged.¹⁰

There were two laws enacted shortly after Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor that were most important to the Fuehrer's future. The first, the "Enabling Act" of March 24, 1933, in effect gave Hitler authority to enact laws and to deviate from the constitution. The second was passed August 1, 1934, a few hours before

¹⁰Office of the United States Chief of Council for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: U. S. Government Printing House, 1946), III, Document 1398-PS, 986-987. Hereinafter referred to as NCA.

Hindenburg died, and combined the Offices of President and Chancellor. Before his death, Hindenburg drew up a political testament as well as a personal letter to Hitler. On August 3, it was reported that no political testament could be found; yet, on August 15, one was published. What transpired is not clear.¹¹

Papen reported that when he returned from Hindenburg's funeral, August 7, Hitler telephoned him asking whether a political testament existed, and if so, he would like it as soon as possible. Oskar von Hindenburg, the ex-President's son, placed the testament and the letter in sealed envelopes in the hands of two of Papen's secretaries, on August 12. Three days later, Papen went to the Obersalzberg and gave both envelopes to Hitler in Constantin von Neurath's presence.¹² Papen was accompanied by his secretary, Fritz-Gunther von Tschirschky. He and Papen arrived at the Berghof shortly before lunch, and the documents were immediately turned over to Hitler. Upon reading them, he grew very pale and stammered something about being in favor of the monarchy, but not just yet. The letter, he added, was addressed to him personally

¹¹Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 116-120.

¹²Franz von Papen, Memoirs, trans. by Brian Connell (New York: Dutton and Company, Inc., 1953), pp. 333-334. See also Wheaton, The Nazi Revolution, pp. 506-509.

and concerned him alone. Tschirschky interrupted Hitler at one point and told him that publication was essential. After lunch he likewise spoke freely to Hitler about the brutality of concentration camp life, which he had experienced following the Roehm purge. The political testament, which praised Hitler and called on the country to be loyal to him, was published, but the letter was not. Its contents, which most likely were critical of Hitler and called for the continued separation of the presidency and chancellorship, are not known for certain today.¹³

By unanimous vote of his ministry, Hitler became President as well as Chancellor, and the armed forces took their oath of loyalty to him. Once the oath was taken, the army was his, and the officer corps was bound to him in the unconditional obedience it owed the head of state.¹⁴

Tschirschky, following this episode, was constantly harassed by the Gestapo on the pretense of evidence he could give connected with the Roehm affair. He answered invitations to testify by saying that he was willing to make statements, but because of his position in Papen's ministry he was unable to leave his post. In December, 1934, Papen visited Hitler at the Berghof. Papen was

¹³Die Neue Zeitung, Munich, November, 1945, p. 5.

¹⁴Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, p. 213.

told at this time of accusations the Gestapo had drawn up as a means of getting rid of Tschirschky. Papen asked Hitler to issue instructions for Tschirschky to be properly tried before a court of law. The order was not given. Finally, under continued harassment, Tschirschky resigned his position.¹⁵ It may have been that his difficulties were related to his presence at the Obersalzberg when Hindenburg's envelopes were delivered and read, although there is no concrete evidence to support such speculation.

In the autumn of 1936 and lasting throughout the war, there began a series of conferences, decisions, and acts, which point to the true character and significance of the Obersalzberg.

Toward the beginning of September, 1936, David Lloyd George met with the Fuehrer at the Berghof. When Lloyd George arrived Hitler met him saying, "I am exceptionally pleased . . . to be able to welcome to my house the man whom we in Germany have always regarded as the actual victor of the world war." Lloyd George responded, "And I deem myself lucky . . . to meet the man, who, after defeat, has united the whole German people behind him and led them to recovery." Looking out of

¹⁵Papen, Memoirs, pp. 365-367.

the big window, Lloyd George remarked, "What a splendid place you have found up here."¹⁶

The two men sat down at a table near the window and here they talked. Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter, viewed the conversation as one beginning with small talk in which the two men were feeling each other out. Finally, the conversation drifted into politics and both agreed on the dangers of multilateral alliances as proved by the World War. Lloyd George turned to social measures and his interest in the social experiments begun by National Socialism. Hitler quickly pointed out that they were not experiments, but well worked out plans. With enthusiasm the Englishman spoke of German measures for abolishing unemployment, of health insurance, welfare, and holidays. He was impressed by what was being done on the labor front.¹⁷ As the meeting closed Lloyd George explained the purpose of his visit.

I did not come to Obersalzberg for politics. I only wanted to study your social measures, and above all, your solution to the unemployment problem which is a menace in England too.¹⁸

This conference was significant in that Lloyd George was so impressed with Hitler that Winston Churchill later

¹⁶Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, ed. by R. H. C. Steed (New York: Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 56.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁸Ibid.

noted, "No one was more completely misled than Mr. Lloyd George, whose rapturous accounts of his conversation make odd reading today."¹⁹

A month later, on October 18, Hitler, while at the Berghof, entrusted the administration of the Reich's "Four-Year Plan" to Hermann Goering. The plan called for,

a generous utilization of German ability and inventive spirit, the creation of numerous new industries, a comprehensive and systematic directing of the economy and last but not least an education of the entire nation for responsible economic conduct in all big and little matters of daily life.²⁰

Goering went about the accomplishment of these tasks with his characteristic energy. On October 24, the Voelkischer Beobachter published the "First Decree by Prime Minister Goering on the Execution of the Four Years Plan," which contained the necessary organizational preparations as to the method and distribution of the work.²¹ As the plan developed, its basic objectives were to increase iron and steel production, to expand synthetic fuel and rubber development, and to increase Germany's independence from foreign suppliers of such raw materials as industrial fats.²²

¹⁹Ibid., p. 58.

²⁰NCA, V, Document 2827-PS, 474.

²¹Ibid., pp. 475-478.

²²David Schoenbaum, Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939, Anchor Books (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 128.

Before the end of the year, Goering had come into conflict with Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, Reich Minister of the Economy. Schacht went to the salon of the Berghof to report on the differences between the two ministers. Guests were seated on the adjacent terrace, and the window to the salon was wide open. Hitler shouted at his finance minister in extreme excitement. Schacht replied firmly in a loud voice. The dialogue grew increasingly heated on both sides and then ceased abruptly. Furiously, Hitler came out on the terrace mumbling about his disobliging and very limited minister.²³

The conflict between the ministers raged for another year. Throughout the summer of 1937, there were exchanges between them. Finally, Schacht wrote a dispatch to Goering in which he was critical of his basic policies, particularly concerning Goering's unusual foreign exchange policy. Goering, at the Obersalzberg with the Fuehrer, wrote a lengthy reply, on August 22, 1937, in which he defended his policies in the areas of finance, foreign exchange, and production. The communique concluded with caustic words. Goering reminded Schacht that he had promised Goering his loyal support and cooperation and that he had repeatedly renewed this promise even after the first differences had occurred. Goering went on to

²³Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 97-98.

say, "I deplore all the more having the impression recently . . . that you are increasingly antagonistic toward my work. . . ." After a few other stinging remarks, he called for Schacht's support for the good of the Fuehrer's goals and the welfare of Germany.²⁴

After receiving Goering's communique, Schacht traveled to the Obersalzberg in late August to submit his formal resignation to Hitler. The Fuehrer was loathe to receive it in view of the unfavorable reaction, both at home and abroad, which the departure of Schacht would almost certainly provoke. The finance minister was adamant, and Hitler finally agreed to release him at the end of two months. On September 5, Schacht went on leave.²⁵ On November 16, Schacht dispatched a letter of resignation to the Obersalzberg, where Hitler was resting. He used the letter as an opportunity to strike another blow at Goering.²⁶ His resignation was officially accepted December 8.²⁷

Four days before Goering was entrusted with the "Four-Year Plan," a law originating from the Obersalzberg

²⁴NCA, VII, Document EC-493, 552-564.

²⁵Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 310.

²⁶NCA, VII, Document EC-495, 566-567.

²⁷Ibid., Document EC-494, 566.

was passed establishing the principles for promoting Reich and provincial officials. To be promoted, the official, in addition to fulfilling his duties satisfactorily, had to prove that, since January 30, 1933, he had supported the National Socialist State, that he and his spouse were of German or related blood, and that his achievements and abilities fulfilled the demands of the higher office.²⁸

Ever since Hitler visited Italy in June, 1934, he had distrusted Italians and Italian policy, but not Mussolini. As late as the autumn of 1935, Hitler was seen pacing back and forth in his garden at the Obersalzberg mumbling,

I really don't know what I should do. It is a terribly difficult decision. I would by far prefer to join the English. But how often in history the English have proved perfidious. If I go with them then everything is over for good between Italy and us. Afterward the English will drop me, and we'll sit between two stools.²⁹

Hitler had chosen to ally with Italy.

Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and Foreign Minister, made the first of his several visits to the Berghof on October 24, 1936. He found Hitler in a friendly and expansive mood. Upon greeting the Foreign Minister, Hitler declared, "Mussolini is the leading

²⁸Ibid., IV, Document 2326-PS, 1034-1035.

²⁹Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 71.

statesman in the world to whom none may even remotely compare himself."³⁰ The meeting between the two men on this occasion was extremely significant in that it set the tone for all future relations between the two men.

Ciano began the conversation by stating that Italian policy toward Britain was not intentionally anti-British. Italy could not, however, be blind to Britain's anti-Italian preparations. He believed Britain was attempting to encircle Italy, and, should this be her policy, Italy would react immediately and violently. He warned Hitler of Britain's hostility toward Germany, which was not directly evident, because England needed time to complete her rearmament. Ciano presented Hitler with documents from il Duce, one a telegram from Sir Eric Phipps in which the English Ambassador expressed the opinion that the German Reich was composed of dangerous adventurers. After a moment's silence Hitler reacted violently and proposed that Italy and Germany not remain passive, but go over to the attack by becoming strongly anti-Bolshevik. By so doing, they could deceive their enemy into uniting against the Bolsheviks and thus

³⁰ Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 298.

neutralize their adversaries while Italy and Germany prepared for war.³¹

Hitler was convinced that even if England continued to plan offensively against the Axis, they could beat them at their own game. Germany was rearming at a much more rapid rate than England, and England had the additional burden of psychologically preparing her people for war. He further observed that Germany would be ready for war in three years. The Fuehrer voiced optimism over progress being made with his Japanese agreements, but indicated concern over Polish relations. He asked Ciano to give assurance to Yugoslavia and thus draw her away from French influence and frustrate the British anti-Italian activity in Belgrade.³²

Ciano informed Hitler of Italy's military preparedness and noted that the Fuehrer was pleased. He assured Hitler of Mussolini's intention to collaborate for peace, but at the same time to prepare for war. Hitler spoke only superficially of France. In his opinion, France had ceased to be an active factor in foreign policy.³³

³¹Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, ed. by Malcolm Muggeridge, trans. by Stuart Hood (London: Odham Press, 1948), pp. 56-58.

³²Ibid., p. 58.

³³Ibid., pp. 59-60.

In many ways, 1937 was the calm before the storm in German politics. In early October, Hitler received the Duke and Duchess of Windsor at the Berghof. This turned out to be primarily a social visit. During their conversation, the Duke expressed admiration for German industrial development and social progress, the latter being the principal subject. Hitler made every effort to be amiable toward the Duke who had previously expressed friendship toward German ex-servicemen organizations. Hitler had suspected the Duke of sympathizing with the ideology and practices of the Third Reich; his conversation did not indicate this one way or the other. The Duke was frank and friendly toward Hitler, but he discussed no politics.³⁴

Lord Viscount Halifax, then Lord President of the Council, arrived at the Berghof during the afternoon of November 18, 1937, as a part of Neville Chamberlain's efforts to establish good relations with Germany. Hitler showed Halifax over the house, after which they settled down to an inconveniently low table in Hitler's study. Halifax had brought no new proposals from London, but he had come primarily to discuss issues of mutual interest to England and Germany. Hitler was visibly upset, and Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter, expected him to sulk and

³⁴Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 75.

refuse to talk. In spite of his annoyances Hitler presented his wishes in the form of categorical demands. Hitler complained bitterly about the British press which, in his opinion, had tried to torpedo Halifax's visit by publishing alleged German demands. Halifax replied by upholding the freedom of the British Press. The Fuehrer proceeded to demand the union of Austria and the Reich which had been desired by the Austrian people since 1919. Furthermore, the Czechs could no longer be allowed to suppress the Sudeten Germans. Hitler expressed the belief that Germany must be free to expand economic relations with southeastern and eastern Europe for they served as a natural complement to the German economy. He claimed that the western powers were constantly putting obstacles in his way in southeast Europe, and they repeatedly attributed political ambition to him which he had never entertained.³⁵

Halifax stated England's willingness to consider any solution to the Austrian and Czech problem that was not based on force. Hitler became excited over this response and immediately moved to assure Lord Halifax that there would certainly be no force against Austria, because the will of the people was clear. Hitler turned to the question of Danzig and the Polish Corridor, and again

³⁵Ibid.

Halifax assured him of England's willingness to negotiate the problem.³⁶

During the conversation, Hitler stressed at length Germany's desire for peace, and Halifax seemed impressed by his sincerity. When the conversation turned to fundamental ideas, the two men were at cross purposes. Hitler's racial theories were just as foreign to Halifax as the latter's religious concepts of neighborly love were to the Fuehrer. Conversation continued over dinner, but it brought nothing new. Both men had established their respective positions on topics of mutual importance.³⁷

Halifax seems to have been taken in by Hitler. In a report to the foreign office he wrote,

The German Chancellor and others gave the impression that they were not likely to embark on adventures involving force or at least war.³⁸

Halifax reported to Chamberlain that Hitler was not bent on early adventures, partly because they might not be profitable, and partly because he was building up Germany internally. Goering had assured him that not one drop of German blood would be shed in Europe unless Germany was forced to do it. Halifax had been given the impression

³⁶Ibid., p. 76.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 77-78.

³⁸Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, cited, p. 303.

that the National Socialists intended to achieve their aims orderly.³⁹

Hitler had for most of his adult life dreamed of seeing Austria become a part of greater Germany. The Austro-German Treaty, of July 11, 1936, seemingly discouraged the fulfillment of that dream. Shortly after the signing of the treaty, Hitler received the leader of the Austrian Nazis, a Captain Leopold, at the Obersalzberg. He told the Captain that the new agreement was to be taken seriously, and the Austrian Nazis must behave in a disciplined fashion. The Anschluss problem was to be regarded as an internal Austrian affair to be solved within the framework of Austrian politics. The Fuehrer's order was not to Leopold's liking, but he did not debate the issue. The wording of the agreement and the interpretation placed upon it by the Austrian Government, at the time, made it clear that it was not to be regarded as the first step toward union with Germany. It was on this point that the Austrian and Nazi interpretation diverged.⁴⁰

There had been considerable friction over the 1936 treaty. On February 13, 1938, the New York Times published news of a sudden and highly secretive meeting

³⁹Ibid., p. 322.

⁴⁰Papen, Memoirs, p. 376.

between Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg, Chancellor of Austria, and Hitler at the Obersalzberg. According to the report, the aim of the conference was to establish the complete independence of Austria.⁴¹ The next day the Times was filled with optimistic accounts from all over the western world of what had happened at the Obersalzberg. The lead article reported that the meeting was the first step toward a general European settlement. It was believed that Germany and Austria had made an agreement that would insure peace for a while.⁴²

What actually took place at the conference gave very little reason for the optimism expressed by the press. The meeting between the two leaders was arranged for February 12. Franz von Papen, Hitler's Minister to Austria, went to Berchtesgaden a day early to meet the Austrian entourage and to accompany them to Hitler. Papen spent the night in "the hotel" (Probably the Berchtesgadener Hof). There he met one of Ribbentrop's secretaries who

⁴¹New York Times, February 13, 1938, p. 1. The secretiveness of the meeting is reflected by an entry made in Ciano's diary, February 11, "The meeting between the Fuehrer and Schuschnigg will take place at Berchtesgaden tomorrow. It is an event of great interest. For the present it is secret--really secret. Nothing has leaked out yet, but it proves that the Fuehrer's intentions toward Austria have not altered for the worst recently. . . ." Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Hidden Diary: 1937-1938, trans. by Andreas Mayer (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1953), p. 73.

⁴²New York Times, February 14, 1938, p. 1.

told Papen that Ribbentrop was staying with Hitler at the Berghof and would be present for the meeting. Also staying at the hotel were General Wilhelm Keitel who was a fixture in Hitler's closest circle, General Walter von Reichenau, Commander of the Munich military district, and General Hugo Sperrle, the senior German Air Force officer in Bavaria.⁴³

At breakfast the next morning, Papen was surprised to see the Austrian National Socialist, a Dr. Muehlmann, and to find that he was fully informed about Schuschnigg's visit. During breakfast, the two conversed about prospects for the meeting and their hopes for a satisfactory settlement of the Austrian problem.⁴⁴

At eleven o'clock, Papen met the Austrian party, Schuschnigg, Guido Schmidt, the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, and an adjutant, who appeared to be cheerful and confident. When they asked Papen whom they would meet in Hitler's villa, he mentioned that the party included three generals. This seemed discouraging to the Austrians.⁴⁵

Within half an hour they were at the entrance to the Berghof. Hitler and his entourage, including the

⁴³Papen, Memoirs, pp. 412-413.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 413.

⁴⁵Ibid.

three generals, greeted the guests. The Fuehrer was wearing the brown tunic of the Storm Troop uniform with the swastika armband and black trousers. The greeting was friendly and formal. After a brief introduction of their mutual staffs, Hitler led Schuschnigg into his study where they had a private conversation until lunch.⁴⁶

Schuschnigg attempted to ease into the business at hand, but Hitler was rather abrupt and said, "We did not get together to speak of the fine view or weather."⁴⁷ Hitler then violently attacked Austrian politics and made numerous accusations against Schuschnigg. He made no precise demands of Austria, but threatened to solve the so-called Austrian problem one way or the other. Toward the conclusion of the morning meeting, Hitler said:

But now I give you once more, and for the last time, the opportunity to come to terms, Herr Schuschnigg. Either we find a solution now or else events will take their course. And we shall see whether you like these events. . . . I can only wait until this afternoon. . . . I don't believe in bluffing.⁴⁸

While this conference was taking place, the other guests talked about the problem under discussion. Papen, Ribbentrop, and Schmidt went to a corner for a

⁴⁶Robert E. Herzstein, Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), p. 120.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 124-125.

private talk. After a few empty exchanges, Ribbentrop produced a document which he handed to Schmidt, saying that it contained the German suggestions for a final settlement of relations with Austria. Ribbentrop emphasized that the contents had been approved by the Fuehrer, who would insist on their acceptance. It was evident that what had been referred to as "suggestions" was in reality an ultimatum. After Schmidt read the document, it was handed to Papen who read with amazement that the Austrian Government was called upon to recognize National Socialism as compatible with Austrian aspirations; that Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart should be appointed Minister of the Interior; that another Nazi, Dr. Hans Fischboeck, should be appointed Minister of Finance for the purpose of integrating the economies of the two countries; and that two Austrian officials, who were responsible for the press, should be replaced. The document further stipulated that the measures would be implemented by February 18. Schmidt raised objections to virtually all the points on a constitutional basis and their interference in questions of Austrian sovereignty.⁴⁹

At lunch the generals, who had stayed in the background, were introduced to the guests.⁵⁰ Hitler

⁴⁹Papen, Memoirs, p. 414.

⁵⁰Keitel's most important assignments before the war were appearances in an actor's role at two meetings

was polite and calm, and the main topics of conversation were the war in Spain, new types of aircraft, and political gossip. After lunch the conversation concentrated on Hitler's demands.⁵¹

The second talk began during which Schuschnigg refused to meet Hitler's demands. Hitler finally presented an ultimatum and threatened to march into Austria if his demands were not accepted. When Schuschnigg left the study to confer with Schmidt, Hitler could be heard shouting behind the open door for Keitel. Keitel came hurrying up. Then he presented himself and asked for orders. Hitler grinned and responded that there were no orders. He just wanted him there.⁵²

Since a deadlock had been reached, Schuschnigg and Schmidt asked Papen to intervene. He reasoned with Hitler and then, with the Fuehrer's permission, thrashed out a suitable compromise with the Austrians. Schuschnigg

of foreign statesmen, one of which was this one. Keitel's presence was intended to impress Schuschnigg with Germany's determination to march if the Austrian Chancellor refused to sign the agreement prepared for him. See Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, p. 332.

⁵¹Papen, Memoirs, pp. 415-416.

⁵²Ibid., p. 417. Hitler later recalled this scene in a conversation with Albert Speer and insisted that by a pretended bit of passion he had made Schuschnigg realize the gravity of the situation and finally had forced him to yield. The scene was staged. See Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 97.

went to see Hitler again, only to find him adamant once more. Papen took it upon himself to break in on the meeting and found Hitler in a tirade. He intervened in behalf of the Austrians. Again, the two leaders parted in order to give Schuschnigg time for further reflection. When they were rejoined about half an hour later, the ice was broken and the way was clear for a solution. It was late at night before the various differences were resolved and the agreed text signed.⁵³

Among other things, the text stipulated that Seyss-Inquart was to be named Minister of the Interior and Fischboeck was to be named to a high economic post that would smooth the way for union with Germany. Schuschnigg agreed to reinstate all Nazi officials and officers who had been relieved of their duties and, in Article VI, to declare everyone free to profess the National Socialist Creed and to admit National Socialists with equal status to the "fatherland front." There they would be permitted to develop legal activities, although the Nazi Party remained illegal. It was only a matter of time now.⁵⁴

In his affidavit at the Nuremberg trials, Schuschnigg insisted that he went to the Obersalzberg

⁵³Ibid., pp. 417-420.

⁵⁴Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, pp. 451-452.

under false pretense--that the conditions under which he told Papen he would go were not met.⁵⁵ Papen has categorically denied that he misled Schuschnigg, and it is doubtful that he had control over the conference once it began.⁵⁶ Hitler evaluated the conference when he remarked:

On Saturday, February 12, 1938, Germany won the war, and dictated in Berchtesgaden a peace treaty to make the treaty of Versailles look like one of the great documents of the ages.⁵⁷

The Fuehrer spent most of late spring and summer of 1938 at the Obersalzberg, where he carefully plotted action against Czechoslovakia. The weekend which began Friday, May 20, developed into a critical one and was later remembered as the "May Crisis." During the forty-eight hours which followed, the governments in London, Paris, Prague, and Moscow were panicked into the belief that Europe stood nearer to war than it had experienced since 1914. This was due to plans for a German attack on Czechoslovakia, drawn up for Hitler by the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) and presented to him on that Friday, being leaked out. It was believed in Prague and London that Hitler was about to launch aggression against Prague. In this belief the Czechs mobilized, and France, Britain,

⁵⁵NCA, V, Document 2995-PS, 709-713.

⁵⁶Papen, Memoirs, p. 409.

⁵⁷Dorothy Thompson, Let the Record Speak (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), p. 166.

and Russia displayed a firmness and a unity that was not to be shown again for some years.⁵⁸

On Friday, May 20, General Keitel dispatched to Hitler at the Obersalzberg a new draft of "Case Green," the plan for invading Czechoslovakia, which he and his staff had been working on since the Fuehrer laid down the general lines for it in their meeting, on April 21. Shortly after noon, May 20, the German minister in Prague sent an urgent wire to Berlin reporting that the Czech Foreign Minister, Frantisek Chvalkovsky, had informed him that his government was disturbed over reports of German troops in Saxony. He requested that he be informed of any anticipated action.⁵⁹ That same afternoon following an emergency cabinet session presided over by Eduard Benes, President of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs decided on partial mobilization. The Czech government, in contrast to Austria, two months earlier, did not intend to give up without a fight.⁶⁰

Although the Czech mobilization was only partial, it sent Hitler into a fit of fury, and his anger was not

⁵⁸Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 361.

⁵⁹Whatever the situation may have been, there has been no evidence of a sudden buildup of German forces at this time. Ibid., p. 363.

⁶⁰Ibid.

lessened by dispatches that arrived at Obersalzberg telling him of continued calls by the British and French ambassadors warning Germany that aggression against Czechoslovakia meant a European war. As the Fuehrer paced in the study of his mountain villa, he felt humiliated by the Czechs and by support given them by London, Paris, and Moscow. His fury was intensified because he was accused, prematurely, of being on the point of committing an aggression which he indeed intended to commit. During that very weekend, he had gone over the new plan for "Green," but now it could not be carried out. Hitler ordered the foreign office in Berlin to inform the Czech envoy on Monday that Germany had no aggressive intentions toward Czechoslovakia and that reports of troop concentration on her border were without foundation. Europeans breathed a sigh of relief.⁶¹

After sulking at the Obersalzberg for a few more days during which his rage grew, Hitler swore to get even with Czechoslovakia, particularly Benes. He was of the opinion Benes had deliberately humiliated him.⁶²

Hitler left the Obersalzberg on May 28, and appeared in Berlin. Calling his ranking officers to the Chancellery he announced, "It is my unshakable will

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 363-365.

⁶²Ibid., p. 365.

that Czechoslovakia shall be wiped off the map!" "Case Green" was again brought out and revised.⁶³

Hitler continued his stay at the Obersalzberg throughout most of the summer. He was constantly planning and anticipating the day his German armies would move against Czechoslovakia. Somewhat isolated at his retreat, he had not yet heard the rumblings of dissent among the upper echelons of the Army General Staff. The opposition to the Fuehrer's plans for aggression was led by General Ludwig Beck, Chief of the Army General Staff, who worked, throughout July and early August, to convince the General Staff to openly oppose the Fuehrer. He had little success.⁶⁴

On August 10, the army chiefs and the head of the Luftwaffe groups, together with General Alfred Jodl and certain others of the OKW, were summoned to the Berghof. The Fuehrer made an after dinner speech on the subject of his political theories which lasted three hours. Following the speech, several of the generals spoke of their apprehension at the prospects of war and their anxiety at the inadequacy of German military preparedness. Hitler grew more and more indignant; and when General Gustav von Wietersheim quoted General Wilhelm Adams, who

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 366-369.

was not present, that the west wall could not be held for longer than three weeks, the Fuehrer's anger blazed.⁶⁵

Hitler screamed at Wietersheim,

That position can be held not only for three days, but three weeks, three months, and for three years. The man who does not hold his fortification is a scoundrel.⁶⁶

He proceeded to give the group a lecture on defeatism and morals, accusing them of lack of "vigor of the soul," because they did not believe in the genius of the Fuehrer. Recognizing that his opposition to Hitler was useless, Beck resigned as Chief of the Army General Staff, on August 18.⁶⁷

The preparatory machinery for "Case Green" continued relentlessly toward "X" day. The generals in charge of the operation, Gerd von Rundstedt and Walter von Reichenau, were now apprehensive for its success in the event of outside intervention. They urged the Commander in Chief of the Army, General Walter von Brauchitsch, to make their representations to Hitler. On September 3, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Schmundt conferred with the Fuehrer in preparation for "Green." At the conference, it was decided that field units would be transferred to exercise

⁶⁵NCA, IV, Document 1780-PS, 364.

⁶⁶Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, p. 403.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 404.

areas, on September 28, where they would be prepared to move against Czechoslovakia. There was considerable disagreement among the group, but Hitler announced, toward the conclusion of the proceedings, that western fortifications would be developed.⁶⁸

Another military conference was held at the Berghof, September 9, which included the personnel who met on September 3, plus General Franz Halder, the newly appointed Chief of the Army General Staff. This conference lasted from ten o'clock at night until three-thirty the next morning. Brauchitsch pointed out some of the difficulties with which they were confronted in an anticipated invasion of Bohemia and Moravia. He urged that if there were the least danger of intervention by Britain and France, the operation should be abandoned. This resulted in an outbreak of rage by Hitler who accused his generals of faint-heartedness and lack of confidence. Keitel followed with a passionate tirade, insisting that he would not tolerate "criticism, scruples, and defeatism." The reason for the generals' lack of confidence, he continued, was basically one of jealousy; they still saw in Hitler the corporal of the World War, and not the "greatest politician" since

⁶⁸NCA, III, Document 388-PS, Item 18, 334-335.

Bismarck. Hitler failed to see the growing dissention among his generals.⁶⁹

Hitler continued his plans for a clash with the Czechs. Still at his mountain villa, he decreed the "Reich Defense Law of September 4, 1938." The following is a partial listing of the provisions of this law:

1. The Leader and Reich Chancellor could decree for the Reich territory or its parts a "state of defense."
2. The Leader and Reich Chancellor could decree mobilization.
3. The Chief of the Army and the Commanders of the Army had, upon declaration of the state of defense, the authority to exercise executive power in the operational territory.
4. Commanders exercising executive powers could promulgate laws, institute courts, and issue directives.
5. Boundaries of operational territories were determined by the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.
6. If the German people were attacked, the Leader and Reich Chancellor declared the state of war.
7. The task of the Reich Defense Council in time of war was determined by the Leader and Reich Chancellor, who served as chairman.⁷⁰

Neville Chamberlain wrote in his diary, September 11, 1938, that he had a plan for peace, but did not

⁶⁹Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, p. 419.

⁷⁰NCA, IV, Document 2194-PS, 845-851.

specify what the plan was.⁷¹ The plan was revealed on the evening of September 13, when Chamberlain sent Hitler a message telling the Fuehrer that he would like a personal meeting with Hitler in an effort to find a peaceful solution to the Czechoslovakia problem. Chamberlain received a positive reply, and a conference was set for September 15, at the Obersalzberg.⁷²

Chamberlain flew to Munich and traveled by special train to Berchtesgaden where he was met by a cheering crowd. He and his entourage drove to the Berghof in the rain. As they approached the villa, the drive was lined by eighty smartly dressed guards who saluted as the cars drove by.⁷³ Hitler received his guests at the foot of the steps leading up to the house. After their mutual greetings, hand shakings, and introductions, they sat down around the tea table in the large conference room.⁷⁴

The opening conversations were trivial, centering around the bad weather, the size of the room, and the possibilities of Hitler's visiting England. Abruptly,

⁷¹Francis L. Loewenheim, ed., Peace or Appeasement? Hitler, Chamberlain, and the Munich Crisis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 20.

⁷²Ibid., p. 21.

⁷³New York Times, September 16, 1938, p. 12.

⁷⁴Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 91.

Chamberlain asked if they could speak alone or if Hitler wanted his advisors to be present. All guests were excused except for Herr Schmidt, who acted as interpreter for both Chamberlain and Hitler.⁷⁵

The actual conference, which is probably the most famous ever held in the Berghof, took place in Hitler's study on the first floor. Hitler began rather quietly with the usual complaints which included a discourse on the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations, disarmament, economic difficulties, unemployment, and National Socialist reconstruction. In rising tones, he reproached the attitude of the British toward Germany and Britain's interference with German affairs, especially in southeast Europe.⁷⁶

Chamberlain remained calm, answering individual points brought up by the Fuehrer. Then, looking Hitler straight in the eye, he emphasized that he was prepared to discuss every possibility of righting German grievances, so long as force was not used. The Reich Chancellor quickly responded:

Force . . . who wants force? Herr Benes applies force against my countrymen in the Sudetenland, Herr Benes mobilized in May, not I. . . . I shall not

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

put up with this any longer. I shall settle the question in one way or the other. I shall take matters into my own hands.⁷⁷

Chamberlain, becoming excited, retaliated:

If I have understood you right . . . you are determined to proceed against Czechoslovakia in any case. . . . If that is so, why did you let me come to Berchtesgaden?⁷⁸

Schmidt observed that if Hitler wanted war, now was the time; but Hitler recoiled from his position.

Hitler responded to Chamberlain by suggesting that if the British were willing to apply the principle of self-determination to the Sudeten Germans, they could continue their discussion on that basis. Chamberlain hesitated and then asserted that he would have to consult his colleagues before giving an answer on the matter. He suggested that they terminate their conference in order for him to return to England immediately for consultation. He secured a promise from Hitler that the Germans would take no aggressive action against Czechoslovakia, if no atrocities were suffered by the Sudeten Germans until the next conference.⁷⁹

As the two leaders ended their discussion, they agreed on a brief press communique with regard to their

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 92.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 93-94.

meeting. The press release stated,

The Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor had a conversation with Mr. Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, on the Obersalzberg today, during the course of which there was a comprehensive and frank exchange of views on the present situation. The Prime Minister is returning to England tomorrow to confer with the British Cabinet. In a few days a new conversation will take place.⁸⁰

Chamberlain left the Berghof confident that his conversation with the Fuehrer had been successful.⁸¹ He spent the night at the Berchtesgadener Hof and left the next day for England. While en route Hitler gave the order to line up the German forces on the Czech border and to keep the railroads prepared for moving troops, September 28.⁸²

Later came conferences at Bad Gotesberg and Munich, at which times Chamberlain sought a peaceful solution to the Sudetenland problem. Hitler's demands had been made known at the Obersalzberg, and the other conferences did not change his position. In the end, the Sudetenland was

⁸⁰Loewenheim, Peace or Appeasement?, p. 27.

⁸¹Chamberlain wrote a letter to his wife on the 19th, in which he shared with her his feeling of confidence. See Loewenheim, Peace or Appeasement?, pp. 27-28. Ciano was reserved in his evaluation of the meeting. Writing in his diary on the 16th he said: "Interpretations of the Hitler-Chamberlain conversation vary--so therefore do tendencies toward optimism or pessimism. In general, there is a feeling that the atmosphere has been cleared. . . ." Ciano, Ciano's Hidden Diary, p. 156.

⁸²NCA, IV, Document 1780-PS, 366.

occupied as evidenced by a communique sent October 28, by Hitler, at the Obersalzberg, to Commander in Chief of the Army, Brauchitsch, in Berlin:

The occupation of the Sudeten-German territory has been completed, the operation being carried out by sections of the Army, the air forces, the police, the military SS, the SS and SA. Placed under protection of the armed forces, three and a half million of German compatriots have returned to the Reich once and for all. . . .⁸³

The Fuehrer turned next to Poland. Poland, long a source of antagonism for Hitler, would emerge as the source of a new European war in less than a year. Again, the Obersalzberg was important to the proceedings which developed.

⁸³NCA, III, Document 388-PS, Item 51, 376.

CHAPTER IV

DIPLOMACY AND WAR, SEPTEMBER, 1938-MARCH, 1941

German designs on Czechoslovakia had not been completed when Hitler invited the Polish Ambassador Josef Lipski to the Berghof for a conference.¹ Lipski was received by the Chancellor at 4:00 P. M., September 20, 1938, and the conversation lasted more than two hours. Hitler opened the conversation by reviewing the Sudetenland problem. He gave special emphasis to the "May Crisis," which had "compelled him to accelerate rearmaments and fortifications in the west." The Fuehrer remarked that he had been surprised by Chamberlain's proposal to come to Berchtesgaden, and under such circumstances it had been impossible for him not to receive the British Prime Minister. He had expected Chamberlain to declare Britain's readiness to march against Germany if Hitler did not resolve his demands with the Czech Government.²

Lipski and Hitler discussed the Czechoslovakian affair at length before moving to other problems. Hitler

¹Josef Lipski, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, ed. by Waclaw Jedrzejewicz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 405-406.

²Ibid., pp. 408-409.

stressed that in the event of conflict between Czechoslovakia and Poland over Teschen, Germany would take the Polish side. He suggested, however, that the Poles should undertake action only after Germany should have occupied the Sudeten Mountains. Hitler also stressed that Poland was an important factor safeguarding Europe against Russia. Lipski brought up the problem of Polish-German relations. He suggested the possibility of a Polish-German agreement to stabilize the shaky situation in Danzig. Hitler mentioned that the 1934 agreement was not enough; that rather than a single renunciation of force between them, there should be a definite recognition of frontiers. Their conversation closed with Hitler accepting the suggestion that he meet with the Polish Foreign Minister, Josef Beck, should a situation develop that warranted it. There was nothing in the conversation that appeared less than cordial.³

With the Czechoslovakian problem resolved, Hitler again invited Lipski to the Obersalzberg for a meeting with the German Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, on October 24, 1938. The German Foreign Ministry memorandum described the meeting as one in which problems in the Danube Basin were discussed and prerequisites for good German-Polish relations were proposed. According to the proposals,

³Ibid., pp. 410-412.

the free state of Danzig was to be returned to the German Reich, and an extra-territorial highway and a railroad, owned by Germany, were to be constructed across the Polish Corridor. Similarly, Poland was to obtain an extra-territorial road, a railroad, a free port in the territory of Danzig, and a guaranteed market for her goods. The two nations were to recognize and guarantee their common frontiers. Finally, the German-Polish treaty was to be extended ten to twenty-five years, but the two nations were to agree to an additional clause calling for consultations in the event of further problems.⁴

Lipski took note of the proposals made by Ribbentrop. He was to confer with the Polish Foreign Ministry and report to Ribbentrop. In the report to Warsaw, Lipski included several items that did not appear on the German memorandum.

As a possible sphere for future cooperation between the two countries, Ribbentrop specified joint action in colonial matters, the immigration of Jews from Poland, and a joint policy toward Russia on the basis of the Anti-Comintern Pact.⁵

⁴Royal Institute of International Affairs, Documents on International Affairs, 1936-1946, Vol. I, Selected and edited by members of the Survey Department, Royal Institute of International Affairs under the direction of Arnold J. Toynbee (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 87-88. Lipski, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, is not as complete on this and subsequent meetings as the documents cited above. See pp. 453-458.

⁵Ibid., p. 89.

Following Lipski's meeting with Hitler, King Carol of Rumania was invited to the Berghof. After the initial greetings and trivia on November 24, 1938, the King asked the Fuehrer for his view of the European situation. Hitler replied that with the solution of the Sudeten question, the Central European crisis had ended; with the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, Germany had obtained her ethnographic frontiers. There was no obstacle in the way of establishing sensible, neighborly relations between Germany and the rest of Europe. He pointed out that Europe was in a phase in which peace was desired on all sides, but everyone believed that peace could be guaranteed only through maximum rearmament. Germany had no alternative but to rearm correspondingly, even though it had the strongest army and air force in the world.⁶

King Carol emphasized that Rumania desired good relations with all powers, but desired especially to maintain good relations with the Reich. He enumerated Rumania's objectives, which were:

1. Good commercial relations with Central Europe, especially with Germany.
2. A secure line of communications with Central Europe.
3. It was important for Rumania to know Germany's attitude toward Hungarian desires on Rumania.

⁶ Herzstein, Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich, pp. 138-139.

4. The King was interested in the German attitude on the Carpatho-Ukrainian question.⁷

Hitler responded to each of Rumania's objectives. He, too, desired as much trade as possible and pointed out their mutual trade benefits. As for a line of communication with Central Europe, Hitler was opposed to the construction of any highway through Czechoslovakia which might be used by Russia for aggression against Germany. The Fuehrer asserted that he constantly advised Hungarian revisionists to moderate their views, and, should conflict develop between Rumania and Hungary, Germany would remain neutral. Finally, Hitler emphasized that Germany had no direct interests in the Carpatho-Ukrainian question.⁸

Toward the conclusion of the meeting, King Carol asked for an opinion on Russia's attempts to further its world revolution by military means. Hitler's response was as vague as the question--he did not consider it impossible. Ribbentrop, who was also involved in the meeting, commented that Russia had reorganized the propaganda of the Comintern during the past several weeks, which proved that they were continuing to press for world revolution. On this note, the conversation ended without any important accomplishments.⁹

⁷Ibid., p. 139.

⁸Ibid., pp. 139-140.

⁹Ibid., p. 141.

Meanwhile, relations between Germany and Poland had deteriorated. For that reason the Polish Foreign Minister, Beck, came to the Berghof on January 5, 1939, for talks with the Fuehrer. Beck immediately pointed out that a third party, the League of Nations, was involved in any discussion of the Danzig question. Other problems that had to be solved from the Polish point of view were the necessity of guaranteeing Polish frontiers adjacent to Czechoslovakia and German recognition of Polish interest in the Carpatho-Ukrainian area.¹⁰

Hitler responded to Beck, suggesting that a Polish settlement be made in the spirit of the 1934 Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact, a spirit from which Germany had never departed. Hitler emphasized that Germany had no interest in what happened on the other side of the Carpathian Mountains. He further suggested that the two states formulate a treaty which would deal with one problem at a time and that each problem be resolved before moving to the next.¹¹

The problems of Danzig and the Corridor directly affected German-Polish relations. The fact that Germany felt so keenly on the matter made it extremely difficult

¹⁰Documents on International Affairs, 1936-1946, I, 98.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 99-100.

to find a solution. With regard to Danzig, Hitler proposed that an agreement be reached, whereby, in conformity with the will of its inhabitants, the city be reincorporated into the German nation politically, but remain with Poland economically. The Corridor, however, presented serious problems for Germany, because connections with East Prussia were as vital to the Reich as connections with the sea were for Poland. Without being specific, Hitler suggested that a "novel solution," honoring the interests of both sides, be concluded. He hurriedly pointed out that such a solution of the Corridor would not be easy, because it would be resisted by his fellow countrymen. As a "practical politician," however, Hitler believed an honorable solution was best, and it was something only he could do.¹²

Herr Schmidt observed:

Standing by the large window in Hitler's room at the Berghof, Beck agreed to an examination of the questions as a whole, but with the clear implication that the Polish attitude would be negative.¹³

Before Hitler could be too brazen in his attitude toward the Polish Government, he needed a pact with Russia which would neutralize its position should hostilities develop between Germany and Poland. Throughout

¹²Ibid., pp. 101-102.

¹³Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, pp. 120-121.

the summer of 1939, such an agreement was sought through diplomatic channels, while Hitler schemed at the Obersalzberg. Toward the end of June, it was evident that Russia distrusted the Reich, prompting Hitler to dispatch a wire from the Obersalzberg on June 29, ordering talks with the Russians broken off.¹⁴

By early August, the situation in Danzig had, in the opinion of the Fuehrer, reached a crisis, and war with Poland seemed inevitable. On August 7, Hitler summoned Albert Foster, the Nazi Gauleiter to Danzig, to the Obersalzberg and told him that he had reached the limit of his patience with the Poles. Two days later, Hitler warned the Polish Government that further aggravation in Danzig would lead to a highly critical situation for which the German Government would disclaim all responsibility. The Polish Government responded on the next day, stating that any intervention by the Reich Government in Danzig would be considered an act of aggression.¹⁵

On August 11, Carl Burckhardt, the League of Nations High Commissioner, came to the Berghof where

¹⁴Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Series D, 1937-1945 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1949), VI, 810.

¹⁵Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 499.

Hitler's anxieties over Poland were readily evidenced. Hitler informed Burckhardt that his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Baron von Weizsacher, had told Lipski that time was up and a new hour had struck. If the slightest thing were attempted by the Poles, Germany would strike with all the arms at her disposal. Burckhardt feared this would lead to a general conflict to which the Fuehrer responded that he had rather it be today than tomorrow. Hitler made it clear, that unlike William II, he had no scruples about using every weapon in his arsenal. The Reich Chancellor was sure he could rely on his Italian and Japanese alliances. He asserted that with about sixty divisions and fortifications he could hold the western front and with the rest of the army he could defeat the Poles in three weeks. He estimated Britain's air force to consist of 135,000 men, France's, of 75,000, and Germany's in peace time to be 600,000 and in the time of war 1,000,000.¹⁶

Hitler then gave an exposition on Germany's need for living room if she were to survive, and he suggested that Poland was a part of that concept. Burckhardt indicated that it was the western powers' desire to negotiate a solution to the Danzig problem. Hitler

¹⁶Documents on International Affairs, 1936-1946, I, 346.

responded by asking that if that were true why they had stirred up the Poles. Hitler added that if the Poles left Danzig alone he would cease any interference in the free city. He could wait if the German minority were no longer molested in Poland.¹⁷

Part of Hitler's uneasiness and irritation may be attributed to the difficulty he was having with two of Germany's allies. Both Hungary and Italy feared the prospects of being drawn into Hitler's war with Poland. The Fuehrer had received a letter, dated July 24, from Count Paul Teleki, Premier of Hungary, which emphasized that Hungary could not on moral grounds take armed action against Poland. On August 8, Count Istvan Csaky, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, was received at the Obersalzberg. Hitler opened the conversation by stating that he had been shocked at the Hungarian Prime Minister's letter. He emphasized that he had never expected help from Hungary, or any other state, in the event of a German-Polish conflict. To Hitler, the Count's letter was impossible. He reminded Csaky that it was due to Germany's generosity that Hungary had been able to regain so much territory at the expense of Czechoslovakia. Were Germany defeated in war, Hungary would be smashed, too. Commenting further, Hitler insisted that Poland presented no military problem

¹⁷Ibid., p. 347.

at all for Germany. As for the Russians, they would never fight against Germany. Hitler was so convincing that Count Csaky finally requested that Hitler disregard the letter he had received.¹⁸

Mussolini had been fretting for some weeks about the danger of the Fuehrer dragging Italy into war. He had proposed a peaceful policy for both countries and called for a solution of German-Polish and Italian-French problems through international negotiations. To resolve their differences, Ciano met with Hitler at the Berghof on August 12 and 13. During their conversations it became apparent that the Fuehrer was planning to invade Poland.¹⁹ Hitler began the conversation by summarizing Europe's state of military preparedness. Germany, in the past, had been vulnerable at three specific points which Hitler had taken precautions to defend: (1) at the Luxembourg and Belgian borders up to the Dutch border; (2) attack through the Netherlands; (3) blockade by the British. Hitler indicated he had also built strong fortifications in the East. The Fuehrer pointed out Britain's vulnerability from the air. Their anti-aircraft defense

¹⁸Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 507-508.

¹⁹Documents on International Affairs, 1936-1946, I, 172-184, passim. See also NCA, IV, Document 1871-PS, 508-517.

was badly out of date. Even though Britain had decided on a new type of anti-aircraft weapon within the past year, Hitler was confident, from Germany's own rearmament experience, that it would be at least two years before they could be placed in mass production. Britain's present weapons could not defend against German high altitude bombers; nor had Britain increased her sea power significantly. Only 60,000 British had been called since the introduction of compulsory military service. If Britain maintained her defenses at home, she could place at the disposal of the French only two infantry divisions and one armored division. Germany's immediate attack on Britain would render British aircraft useless to France. After the conquest of Poland, Germany could assemble a hundred divisions on the west wall forcing France to concentrate all her forces on her own Maginot Line.²⁰

Hitler moved next to the Danzig question, pointing out to Ciano that he could not yield on this point for several reasons. First, the Baltic countries had always been Germany's uncontested sphere of interest. Secondly, Danzig was an old German city of sentimental and psychological interest to all Germans. Finally, Danzig

²⁰Ibid., pp. 172-174.

was the largest Baltic port, amounting to forty percent of Hamburg's tonnage.²¹

Ciano voiced great surprise over the seriousness with which Hitler viewed the Danzig problem, because in past conferences this attitude had not been so pronounced. He was quite concerned that a war with Poland would grow into a general European war. Ciano proceeded to outline reasons why he and il Duce would prefer to postpone war for several years. Italy had been in a state of war since the Abyssinian conflict, and its supply of raw materials was exhausted. Italy's fleet was poorly prepared, its long coastline was impossible to defend, and Italy was vulnerable in its colonies. Ciano emphasized that Italian plans for an economic autarchy would be realized in a few years, making even a prolonged war economically feasible. Mussolini was enthusiastic about the World's Fair scheduled in Italy for 1942, which would bring in large amounts of currency. Ciano concluded his arguments by stating il Duce's belief that the unity of the western democracies would end in discord in a few years if the Axis kept quiet and continued to make gestures of peace.²²

²¹Ibid., p. 174.

²²Ibid., pp. 175-179.

The Fuehrer responded to Ciano's temporary plea for peace by insisting that no time could be lost in solving the Polish problem. In the autumn, military operations became impossible in east Europe. He declared that the Danzig problem would have to be solved one way or the other by the end of August. He stated that he would use the next political provocation by Poland to attack her within forty-eight hours.²³

A telegram from Moscow and one from Tokyo were handed to Hitler during this exchange of opinions. Hitler's conversation with Ciano was interrupted briefly, and Ciano was informed of the contents of the Moscow telegram. The Russians agreed to the sending of a German political mediator to Moscow.²⁴ According to a later version of the telegram, negotiations between Germany and Russia were not to be rushed, but undertaken by degrees.²⁵ After the Fuehrer and Ciano discussed the communique further, they agreed to consider the proposals that had been made and to resume their talks the next day.²⁶

²³Ibid., pp. 180-181.

²⁴NCA, IV, Document 1871-PS, 517.

²⁵Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 513.

²⁶NCA, IV, Document 1871-PS, 517.

Upon resuming their discussion on August 13, Hitler informed Ciano that he had arrived at some conclusions concerning the Polish situation. In the event of any further provocation, he would attack immediately. If Poland did not clearly state her political intentions, Germany would force her to do so. He further stated that the best way to neutralize the western democracies was to attack Poland immediately before they had time to react to German moves. He pointed out clearly that a solution to the Polish problem would have to be found by the last of August. Hitler projected that the complete operations against Poland could be carried out within fourteen days, and the final liquidation would take no more than another four weeks.²⁷

Hitler's interpreter, Schmidt, observed that Ciano, throughout the talks, kept returning to the theme of Italy's weakness and unpreparedness, bluntly telling Hitler that Italy could not remain in a war for more than a few months at most.²⁸

Ciano reflected upon the conversations he had with Hitler at the Berghof in his diary. He described Hitler as cordial, but impassive and placable in his

²⁷Documents on International Affairs, 1936-1946, I, 181-184.

²⁸Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 132.

decision. His evaluation of Hitler, the impending situation, and the fate of Italy causes one to feel a sense of pity for him.

I realize immediately there is no longer anything that can be done. He has decided to strike, and strike he will. All our arguments will not . . . stop him. He continued to repeat that he will localize the conflict with Poland, but . . . he . . . leads me to believe once more that he is acting in bad faith.

He listens with a faraway and impersonal interest to what I tell him about the bad effects a war would have on the Italian people. Actually, I feel that as far as the Germans are concerned, an alliance with us means only that the enemy will be obliged to keep a certain number of divisions facing us, thus easing the situation on the German warfronts.

They care for nothing more. The fate that might befall us does not interest them in the least.²⁹

Ciano described the second meeting as being briefer and concise, and that even Hitler's gestures revealed his will to action. He continued,

I return to Rome completely disgusted with the Germans, with their leader, with their way of doing things. They have betrayed us and lied to us. . . . I don't know whether to wish Italy a victory or Germany a defeat.³⁰

On August 14, Hitler ordered the commanders in chief of his armed forces to the Berghof for a secret

²⁹Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943, ed. by Hugh Gibson (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946), p. 118.

³⁰Ibid., p. 119.

military conference.³¹ Hitler announced to his listeners that the great drama was approaching its climax. It was a war message. He was confident that neither Britain nor France would fight to save Poland. Hitler could not keep Britain off his mind, and consequently emphasized its strengths and weaknesses; Britain would not allow herself to blunder into a war lasting for years. He observed that Britain might talk "big," recall her ambassador, perhaps put an embargo on trade, but the Fuehrer was confident that Britain would not resort to armed intervention. Poland, therefore, could be taken on alone, but she would have to be defeated within a week or two so that the world could be convinced of her collapse and not try to save her.³²

Hitler was not ready to tell his generals just how far he was going to make a deal with Russia, but he did tell them enough to "whet" their appetites. He explained that loose contacts had been made with Moscow for a trade treaty. Another statement hinted at a more far-reaching agreement, but it was vague enough to enable the Fuehrer

³¹Only one record of this conference was ever found, and it was from the unpublished diary of General Franz Halder, Chief of the Army General Staff. Written in Gabelsberger shorthand, the diary has never been published. See Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 515.

³²Ibid., pp. 515-516.

to withdraw gracefully from any commitment should things not work out with Russia.³³

Throughout most of August, Hitler was preoccupied with thoughts about an arrangement with Russia as he walked about the Obersalzberg. On one occasion, Hitler, Albert Speer, and other Nazi dignitaries drove up to the Eagle's Nest. They walked through the tunnel, damp with moisture, and stepped into the elevator. As they rode up the long shaft, Hitler said abruptly as if talking to himself,

Perhaps something enormously important will happen soon. Even if I have to send Goering. . . . But if need be I would even go myself. I am staking everything on this card.³⁴

No one knew what he meant.³⁵

On the morning of August 16, Ribbentrop appeared at the Berghof to inform the Fuehrer that, according to a communique from Russia, Molotov had hinted at the possibility of a non-aggression pact between their two states. By early afternoon, Ribbentrop and Hitler had drawn up a reply in which the Nazi dictator accepted the Russian suggestions unconditionally. He agreed to conclude a non-aggression pact that was irrevocable for twenty-five

³³Ibid., p. 516.

³⁴Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 161.

³⁵Ibid.

years if the Russians so desired; Germany was ready to guarantee the Baltic States jointly with the Soviet Union; and Germany was prepared to work for the improvement of Russo-Japanese relations.³⁶

The next day, Hitler and Ribbentrop waited impatiently for a response from Moscow. By noon they had wired Schulenburg in Moscow, requesting confirmation of their earlier telegram and inquiring when Ribbentrop could expect to be received by the Russians. The reply received at the Obersalzberg was only that he was to meet with Molotov at eight that evening. When the meeting occurred, the Russians told the German ambassador that the prerequisite for a non-aggression pact was the conclusion of a trade and credit agreement. Upon receiving Schulenburg's report the following day, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to send another urgent telegram instructing the ambassador to arrange an immediate meeting with Molotov and to impress upon him the urgency of the German situation. Schulenburg was told to emphasize that German-Polish relations grew worse by the day, and the pact was necessary to the security of Germany at that time. He was further instructed to inform the Russians that a trade agreement was at that moment being concluded in Berlin. To attack

³⁶Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 520-522.

the second stage, the non-aggression pact, Ribbentrop proposed to depart immediately for Moscow with full powers from the Fuehrer to work out all details.³⁷

When the Russian reply was received at the Obersalzberg on the twentieth, the Russians agreed to receive Ribbentrop on the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh. The target date for the invasion of Poland was September 1, and a meeting that late made the Nazi plans impossible.³⁸ At this crucial point, the Fuehrer himself intervened with Stalin and virtually begged the Soviet dictator to receive his Foreign Minister at once. His telegram to Stalin was rushed to Moscow at 6:45 P. M. on Sunday, August 20. In the telegram he accepted Molotov's draft of the non-aggression pact and emphasized the deteriorating condition of German-Polish relations. He even went so far as to say that a crisis might arise at any time. He stressed the urgency of receiving Ribbentrop on August 22, or at the latest August 23. He specified that Ribbentrop would have full powers to draw up and sign the pact.³⁹

During the next twenty-four hours, the Fuehrer was in a state bordering on collapse. He could not sleep.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 522-524.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 525-527.

³⁹Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, pp. 156-157.

In the middle of the night, he telephoned Goering to tell of his worries about Stalin's reaction to his message. Hitler spent the day, Monday, August 21, nervously pacing in his Berghof study. Finally, around 10:30 P. M., while the Berghof guests were finishing dinner, Hitler was handed a note which he scanned. He then stared into space, and jubilantly exclaimed, "I have them! I have them!"⁴⁰ Nothing more was said about the incident during the meal. After dinner he called his entourage together and showed them a telegram from Stalin agreeing to a non-aggression pact. With great excitement the group then watched film depicting Russian military power, after which the entire group expressed delight at this power being neutralized.⁴¹

Now assured of the pact with Russia, Hitler could fulfill his scheduled invasion of Poland on September 1. He called his commanders in chief to the Obersalzberg for the now famous "Obersalzberg Conference." Speaking to the gathering, Hitler related to his commanders reasons for his decision to invade Poland. He reminded them that relations with Poland had become unbearable because of her hostile attitude toward Germany. War with Poland was inevitable, and the historic moment linking Hitler and

⁴⁰ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 161.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 162.

Mussolini dictated that it begin immediately. The Fuehrer emphasized that no one else would ever have the confidence of the German people as he did at that moment, nor would any man in the future have as much authority. His life was a decisive factor, and so was Mussolini's. Without il Duce, the Italian alliance would be impossible.

Hitler also pointed out that there were no outstanding leaders in Britain nor France, and both nations were militarily weak. In his opinion, the world political situation was favorable to Germany. There was tension between Britain and Italy in the Mediterranean, and in the East tensions were increasing between Britain and Japan. The Fuehrer then reminded his audience that Britain emerged from the last war weakened rather than strengthened. As a final point, Hitler announced that the non-aggression pact with Russia would be signed the next day, August 23.⁴²

In the afternoon of the same day, Hitler delivered a call to action to his commanders in chief. He called for unification, courage, and a confidence in victory. Their first aim should be to advance to the Vistula and Narew rivers. A war of attrition was to be pursued, and the complete destruction of Poland was to be their military

⁴²NCA, III, Document 798-PS, 581-586.

aim. He advised the group that the order to invade would probably come on Saturday, August 26.⁴³

The British Government was aware that the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact, to be signed in Moscow by Ribbentrop on the twenty-third, would lead to German aggression against Poland. Prime Minister Chamberlain made every effort to make the British position clear should such aggression take place. Just after 1:00 P. M., on August 23, the British Ambassador to Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, delivered a letter from Chamberlain to Hitler. When the Fuehrer finished reading its contents, he flew into a rage that could be heard throughout the Berghof. The letter stressed Chamberlain's concern that the non-aggression pact suggested that Hitler did not believe Britain would intervene in Poland's behalf if she were molested by Germany. He emphasized that no greater mistake could be made because Britain had repeatedly stated publicly her obligation to Poland. Chamberlain suggested that World War I might have been avoided if Britain had stated her position more clearly. She would not make the same mistake twice.

If the need should arise, His Majesty's Government is resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at its command, and it is impossible to⁴⁴ foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. . . .

⁴³Ibid., III, Document 1014-PS, 665-666.

⁴⁴Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, p. 141.

Chamberlain combined his warning with a proposal for a truce in the German-Polish controversy and called for immediate direct negotiations.⁴⁵

Hitler was uncompromising. His language was violent and exaggerated with regard to both Britain and Poland. Britain, he stormed, was responsible for Poland's intransigence, just as it had been responsible for Czechoslovakia's unreasonable attitude the year before. The Fuehrer emphasized that tens of thousands of German people in Poland were being persecuted; there were even six cases of castration, a subject that appeared to obsess him. He could tolerate no more. Further persecution by the Poles would bring immediate action. Henderson contested every point, and he kept calling Hitler's statements inaccurate; but its only effect was to launch the dictator on another tirade.⁴⁶

Finally, Hitler agreed to give a written response to the Prime Minister's letter in two hours. Later in the afternoon, Hitler sent for Henderson and handed him his reply. The Fuehrer was now quite calm and never raised his voice. Hitler told Henderson he was fifty years old and would prefer war at that moment rather than five or ten years later. He reminded Henderson that

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 142.

Britain would do well to realize that as a former front-line soldier he knew what war was--he would utilize every means available. The Fuehrer took cognizance of the Prime Minister's assurance that Great Britain would honor its commitments to Poland, and he assured Henderson that

It can make no change in the determination of the Reich Government to safeguard the interests of the Reich. . . . Germany, if attacked by England, will be found prepared and determined.⁴⁷

That evening, Goebbels officially announced by radio in Berlin the signing of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact. Hitler was listening at the Berghof. Later that night, he stood on the terrace of his villa marveling at a rare natural spectacle. Northern lights of unusual intensity reflected brilliantly on the legendary Untersberg across the Berchtesgaden Valley. Abruptly, Hitler turned to one of his military adjutants and said, "Looks like a great deal of blood. This time we won't bring it off without violence."⁴⁸

Shortly after Henderson's visit to the Berghof, Hitler left for Berlin where he waited out the events of the ensuing week. He had hoped to deviate from the original date of the invasion against Poland and order his forces to action on August 26. As events turned out,

⁴⁷Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 546.

⁴⁸Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 162.

the order was given as originally planned. On August 31, the German armed forces were ordered to move at 4:45 A. M., September 1, 1939. Contrary to the Fuehrer's belief that neither Britain nor France would come to the aid of Poland, both declared war against Germany on September 3. Following a lengthy conference with his General Staff in Berlin on November 23, in which they discussed the war on the western front, Hitler invited General Franz Halder to the Berghof. During their visit there, Hitler remarked to his general:

If we come through this struggle victoriously--and we shall come through victoriously--our time will enter into the history of our people. I shall stand or fall in this struggle. I shall never survive the defeat of my people.⁴⁹

Until the late spring of 1940, Hitler made only very brief visits to his Obersalzberg villa. During those brief stays, usually only overnight, he rested and reflected upon his war. He was at the Berghof when his next great decision was made--the invasion of Belgium and the Netherlands. On May 9, he empowered Keitel to issue the final orders, and Hitler, along with Jodl departed from Finkenkrug for the Obersalzberg, arriving there in the early hours of May 10. Keitel issued the order, "A-Day, May 10; X-Hour, 05:35." Hitler anxiously awaited

⁴⁹NCA, III, Document 789-PS, 318.

the outcome of his latest decision where he had made so many others.⁵⁰

During the early summer, peace feelers emanated through the United States, Sweden, and the Vatican, calling for Britain to make peace with Germany. Hitler was confident that the British would recognize that they could not be victorious and would accept a peace offer. As late as early July, the German high command had no plans for continuing the war against Britain. The Fuehrer could not understand the British position, and in turn could not make a decision regarding their fate.⁵¹

Finally, on July 11, Hitler began assembling his military chiefs on the Obersalzberg to get their feeling about the British matter. Admiral Erich Raeder, whose navy would have to carry the invading forces across the Channel, had a lengthy conversation with Hitler. Neither of them would come to grips with the problem. Hitler was in a subdued mood. Raeder advised a concentrated bombing attack on Britain. He reminded the Fuehrer that the RAF was heavily damaging such major German naval bases as Wilhelmshaven, Hamburg, and Kiel. On the question of invasion, the admiral advised that it be done only as a

⁵⁰Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, p. 496.

⁵¹Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 750.

last resort to force Britain to seek peace. He was convinced that Britain could be made to ask for peace simply by cutting off her import trade by means of submarine warfare, air attacks on convoys, and heavy air attacks on her main industrial centers. Raeder then gave an exposition of the difficulties involved in such an invasion.⁵²

Hitler's generals arrived at the Berghof on July 13. They found the Fuehrer still confused by the British unwillingness to sue for peace, but now the answer emerged. Britain was placing her hope in Russia; therefore, she would have to be compelled to make peace. Hitler did not like that prospect because in his opinion the disintegration of the British Empire would benefit everyone except Germany.⁵³

On the same day, Hitler wrote Mussolini saying, among other things:

I have made to Britain so many offers . . . , even of cooperation, and have been treated so shabbily that I am now convinced that any new appeal to reason would meet with similar rejection. For in that country at present it is not reason that rules.⁵⁴

Six days later, July 19, the Chancellor in a speech before the Reichstag, made one last appeal for peace with Britain.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid., pp. 751-752.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 752-753.

⁵⁴Documents on German Foreign Policy, X, 209-211.

⁵⁵Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 753.

The Fuehrer again summoned his military chiefs to his Obersalzberg villa on July 31. Raeder, Keitel, Jodl, Brauchitsch, and Halder were in attendance. Raeder, who was not in a very hopeful mood, did most of the talking. September 15, he said, would be the earliest date for Operation Sea Lion (the invasion of Britain announced in Directive 16, July 16, 1940) to begin, and then only if there were no weather complications. Admiral Raeder continued by giving a lecture on the weather factor which indicated his expertise on the subject. Except for early October, weather in the Channel was generally bad; a light fog came in the middle of the month followed by heavy fog at the end. Furthermore, the operation had to be carried out when the sea would be calm. Turbulent seas would sink barges and larger ships would be unnavigable. The admiral also pointed out that even if the first wave of landings were successful, there was no guarantee that the weather would remain satisfactory for landing the second or third. There was the possibility that a German Army might be stranded on the British beaches without supplies or reinforcements. Raeder also stated the need to restrict the invasion to the area between the Dover Straits and Eastbourne because of the shortage of German ships. Then he delivered his

"block-buster"; all things considered, the best time for the Operation was May, 1941.⁵⁶

Hitler preferred not to wait that long. Recognizing the problem of weather, he pointed out that there was a danger in losing time. The British army was, in Hitler's opinion, in poor shape, but given eight to ten months it could have from thirty to thirty-five divisions which would be a considerable force at the proposed invasion site. The Fuehrer and Raeder decided that they would make an attempt to prepare for the operation for September 15, but the decision to begin then or in May, 1941, would be made after a week's intensive bombing of southern Britain.⁵⁷

The following day, August 1, 1940, Hitler issued Directive No. 17, which called for an intensification of the air and naval war against Britain. The German Air Force was to overcome the British Air Force by every means at its disposal, and after gaining local air superiority the war was to be carried out against harbors. The directive ordered the Luftwaffe to "stand by" in preparation for "Operation Sea Lion." Hitler reserved for himself the decision on terror attacks. The intensified air war was

⁵⁶Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 764.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 765.

to begin August 6, and the navy was authorized to begin its attack at the same time.⁵⁸

On October 28, two hours before Hitler was to meet with Mussolini in Florence, Italy, Italian troops crossed the Greco-Albanian border. Three weeks later, they were returning across the border in defeat, demoralized by winter rains and constant ambush by Greek mountain troops. It was shortly after this debacle that Ciano visited Hitler at the Berghof on November 18, 1940. Ciano described the atmosphere as heavy. Hitler was pessimistic and considered the situation much compromised by what had happened in the Balkans. Ciano described the Fuehrer's criticism as "open, definite, and final." He tried to talk with Hitler, but he was unable to proceed. Only after Ciano and Hitler agreed to negotiations for an alliance with Yugoslavia did the conversation become cordial. The Italian Foreign Minister described Hitler as being excited over the idea of an alliance with the Slavic State. The Fuehrer's pessimism had at first been black, but at the close of the conversation his optimism seemed too rosy.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Documents on German Foreign Policy, X, 390-391.

⁵⁹Ciano, The Ciano Diaries, p. 312.

King Leopold of Belgium was invited to the Berghof, November 18 and 19, 1940, as a consequence of his sister's requesting such a visit when she was at the Berghof some weeks earlier. She had voiced concern over the food situation in her native country and as the Crown Princess of Italy, Hitler could ill afford not to honor her request. Leopold was uncertain of the frosty welcome given him by the Fuehrer. Hitler evidently recognized the uneasiness of the King and tried to improve the atmosphere by apologizing for the circumstances under which they met. He then asked if there were any personal wish he could grant the King. Leopold responded that he had no personal wishes, implying therein that he did have some of a non-personal nature. Trying to improve the Fuehrer's disposition, he thanked him for what he had already done by returning Belgian refugees and expressed his personal appreciation for allowing his children to return home from Spain.⁶⁰

The major portion of the conversation centered around the question of Belgian independence and neutrality after the war. Hitler went into one of his lengthy discourses on the subject, but at the same time evaded a direct answer. Leopold stuck to his original point,

⁶⁰Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, pp. 200-201.

asking for a precise statement on Belgian independence. Hitler became annoyed with Leopold's persistence and insisted that in the future Belgium must orient herself politically and militarily toward Germany. Leopold took this to mean that Belgian independence would only be recognized by Germany if she entered into a military and political agreement with the Reich. He then stressed Belgian historic love of independence. Therefore, when the war was over, Belgium would turn to the side which guaranteed her independence under all circumstances. Hitler was visibly upset by the King's stubbornness and refused to grant any further request of Leopold. Eventually, the conversation degenerated into meaningless shouts.⁶¹

Their conversation continued at tea, on the afternoon of the nineteenth, at which time Hitler tried once more to get Leopold to agree to collaboration with Germany. The King, however, sat as if completely oblivious to the conversation. After the conclusion of this meeting, Hitler never again talked with Leopold.⁶²

The new year had hardly begun when Hitler summoned the chiefs of the three services to the Berghof on January 8 and 9, 1941. During the two-day meeting, Hitler reviewed what could be done for Italy and ordered a force

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 201-203.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 204-205.

of two and one-half divisions to be made ready for service with the Italians in Albania. Hitler was obviously anxious to do what he could to aid Mussolini. The Fuehrer's mood was one of confidence. He was convinced that the situation in Europe could no longer develop unfavorably for Germany, even if it lost North Africa. The British could win only if they beat Germany on the continent, a situation Hitler described as impossible. In Hitler's estimation Britain went on fighting because she hoped for American and Russian intervention. He described Stalin as a coldblooded black-mailer who would, if expedient, repudiate any written treaty at any time. A German victory had become unbearable for Russia; therefore, Russia had to be humbled as soon as possible.⁶³

Ten days later, Mussolini visited the Berghof. He was reluctant to make the journey because of his embarrassing debacle in Greece several months earlier. Ciano and several Italian generals accompanied il Duce, and to their surprise Hitler behaved with tact and was quite cordial. They spent two days, January 19 and 20, as Hitler's guests. On the second day of the visit, Hitler made a two-hour speech on his coming intervention in Greece. His exposition ranged over the whole of Europe,

⁶³Bullock, Hitler, p. 626.

Africa, and the Middle East. Demonstrating his points with expressive gestures on the map, Hitler impressed upon his audience the picture of a master strategist who had the situation under control. The Fuehrer saw no great danger coming from America even if she did enter the war, but he did see Russia as a grave danger. He did not conceal his distrust of his ally.

Though we have very favorable political and economic agreements with Russia, I prefer to rely on powerful means at my disposal. Very considerable parts of these are therefore tied down on the Russian frontier. . . . As long as Stalin lives, there is probably no danger; he is intelligent and careful. But should he cease to be there, the Jews, who at present only occupy second and third-rank positions might move up again into the first rank. It therefore behoves us to be careful. The Russians are continually trying to work out new demands which they read into the agreements. . . . It is therefore necessary to keep a constant eye on the Russian factor and to keep on guard, by means of strength and clever diplomacy.⁶⁴

Mussolini returned to Italy without knowing that plans for war against Russia were already being made. He was elated by what he had heard and witnessed while at the Berghof.⁶⁵

Among the Balkan countries, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria had joined the Tripartite Pact which gave them satellite status with Germany. In the middle of

⁶⁴NCA, VI, Document C-134, 942-946.

⁶⁵Bullock, Hitler, p. 627.

February, the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Dragisha Cvetkovic, and Foreign Minister, Tsitkovitch, went to the Obersalzberg, followed on March 4 and 5, by Prince Regent Paul. Hitler offered the Prince Regent Salonika as a bribe for entering the Pact, and it was accepted. On March 25, Tsitkovitch signed the Pact in Vienna. Hitler's delight over his accomplishment was short lived. An anti-Axis group of Yugoslav officers carried out a coup d etat against the government. Hitler was so outraged at this event that he doomed any prospects for a successful invasion of Russia by delaying it for four weeks while he mercilessly laid seige to Yugoslavia.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 634-635.

CHAPTER V

WAR AND THE OBERSALZBERG

While Hitler was deep in thought about plans for the invasion of Russia, one of the most bizarre incidents in Nazi history took place. Rudolf Hess, Deputy to the Fuehrer, was the most trusted of Hitler's assistants. In addition to being an excellent organizer and administrator, he was a capable pilot. Hitler, who was afraid of flying, preferred that Hess not fly, but the Deputy refused to abide by the Fuehrer's wishes. In April, 1941, Hess asked Hans Baur, Hitler's personal pilot, for a map of the forbidden air zones. Baur had a copy of the map, which showed zones over which even German planes were not allowed to fly, but it was marked "Top Secret." Because of this, Baur refused to give Hess the map. When his refusal failed to satisfy Hess, Baur suggested that Hess might request a map from Field Marshal Erhard Milch. Because of the Deputy's prominent position, Milch gave the map to him. Only later did Baur realize that the map was to be used in assisting Hess in his secret flight to Scotland.¹

¹Hans Baur, personal interview, Traunstein, Germany, April, 1959.

Hess had confided in his adjutant, Karl Heinz Pintsch, and, on May 10, had given Pintsch a report which he was to deliver to Hitler at the Berghof. At 6:00 P. M. of the same day, Hess took off from an Augsburg air field, and after waiting two hours, Pintsch left for the Munich train station. At the station, he requested that Hess's sleeping car be made available for a trip to Berchtesgaden, and he arrived at the small village around 7:00 A. M. on Sunday, May 11. Pintsch telephoned Albert Bormann, Hitler's adjutant and brother of Martin Bormann, and explained that he had an important message from Hess to the Fuehrer. He also informed Bormann that it was urgent that he see Hitler immediately. Pintsch was told that Hitler had a full day of conferences, but a car would be sent for him.²

It was still early morning when Pintsch arrived at the Berghof. Bormann chatted with the uneasy adjutant and ironically asked if Hess were still flying, to which Pintsch replied, "Yes, he's still flying."³ Pintsch was kept waiting more than two hours. At approximately 10:00 A. M., Speer arrived for his eleven o'clock

²James Leasor, The Uninvited Envoy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962), pp. 90-93.

³Ibid., p. 93.

appointment.⁴ Pintsch explained to Speer that he had a special sealed dispatch to the Fuehrer, and it was important that it be delivered at the earliest possible moment. Speer told Pintsch to proceed him. As they talked, Hitler descended from his room upstairs. Speer and Pintsch stood up, clicking their heels at attention. They were acknowledged by the Fuehrer's slight nod. Pintsch took a step forward and explained that he had a message for the Fuehrer from Hess. Hitler replied that Speer had an appointment; therefore, Pintsch would have to wait. Pintsch then told the Fuehrer he had explained the importance of the letter to Speer and that Speer was willing for the letter to be presented first.⁵

Hitler took the letter and invited Pintsch into the study. The Fuehrer walked across the room and turned to face Pintsch. After reading the first few lines, he looked up at Pintsch and asked where Hess was then, to which Pintsch replied that Hess had flown to Scotland the evening before to see the Duke of Hamilton. The

⁴Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 174. There is considerable confusion over the details of this incident. Leason, The Uninvited Envoy, p. 93, says that Dr. Todt had the appointment with Hitler. Gun, Eva Braun, p. 111, is in error altogether. He places the scene at the Teahouse. Neither Bullock nor Shirer gives the details, except that the incident took place at the Berghof. Speer appears to provide the most reliable account.

⁵Leason, The Uninvited Envoy, pp. 93-100.

Fuehrer remarked that Hess was on a dangerous escapade, and then pressed a buzzer, whereupon an adjutant appeared. He was told to find Reichmarshals Goering and Ribbentrop, and to get them to his study immediately.⁶ Hitler read the letter a second time aloud, but in little more than a whisper:

. . . and if this project--which I admit may have only a small chance of success--ends in failure and the Fates decide against me, this can have no detrimental results either for you or Germany. It will always be possible for you to deny all responsibility. Simply say that I was crazy. . . .⁷

Hitler lowered the letter and turned away from Pintsch and gazed at the mountains toward Salzburg. Eva Braun entered and announced that lunch was ready. The Fuehrer placed the letter in his coat pocket, and without dismissing Pintsch, Hitler walked out. At that moment, Bormann appeared and asked Pintsch what was happening. Pintsch briefly explained the situation and Bormann muttered that no one better involve him.⁸

⁶Ibid., pp. 101-102. Leasor's account is based on interviews he had with Pintsch, who was released from a Russian prison in 1955. Leasor's description of Hitler's reaction differs from Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 174. Speer writes, "I suddenly heard an articulate, almost animal outcry. Then Hitler roared, 'Bormann, at once! Where is Bormann?'" Paul Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter, observed that, "It was as though a bomb had struck the Berghof." NCA, Supplement B, p. 103.

⁷Leasor, The Uninvited Envoy, p. 103, claims that this statement was memorized by Ilse Hess and made available to him.

⁸Ibid., p. 104.

The Fuehrer and his guests dined in the usual manner. Finally, Hitler took a last drink of mineral water, stood up, and bent over to kiss Eva's hand, the signal that the meal was over. As Hitler started to leave, he paused behind Pintsch's chair, and then moved on to Bormann whom he touched on the shoulder and nodded toward the door. Bormann left and returned shortly with two young captains of Hitler's personal guard. They marched across the room and stood behind Pintsch's chair. Bormann cleared his throat and said,

Karl Heinz Pintsch, you are under arrest. You will be under house arrest at Obersalzberg until a court of inquiry can be held into your part in the events of today. . . .⁹

There was general agreement among Hitler's closest associates at the Berghof that Hess had done only what the Fuehrer had wanted and planned. What bothered Hitler was that it was carried out without his knowledge at the time. The problem was to cover Hitler and his staff if the mission failed. Everyone realized that Hitler wanted peace with England in order to carry through with his plans for war in the east. If Hess's peace mission were successful, he would be a national hero; but if he failed, the Nazis must not be embarrassed. Hitler, consequently, waited with mounting impatience and irritation for news from Britain.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 129-130.

A phone call was placed to Berlin to check flight conditions. Hitler was assured, because of a side wind, that Hess's plane would probably be blown past England and into the sea. The Fuehrer, not satisfied with the report, consulted with Goering, who believed Hess had a fifty-fifty chance of succeeding. He advised the Fuehrer to issue a communique before Britain did.¹¹ Finally, at noon, Monday, Hitler decided that he could wait no longer. He ordered Otto Dietrich, the press adviser, to draft a loosely worded communique, which would make reference to mental disorders. After several drafts, one was decided upon, and the news was released by radio that night. According to the broadcast, Hess had suffered from mental illness for several years and was subject to hallucinations. Under these conditions, he set out on a flight from Augsburg, from which he had not returned, and it was assumed that Hess had either jumped from his aircraft or had met with an accident.¹²

In Rome, Ciano was skeptical of the news, and on May 12, wrote, "I cannot conceal my skepticism . . . I even doubt whether he's [Hess] dead at all. There's something mysterious about it. . . ." On the following

¹¹ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 175-176.

¹² Leason, The Uninvited Envoy, p. 137.

day, Ciano was even more dubious when Ribbentrop suddenly appeared in Rome. Ciano described Ribbentrop as discouraged and nervous. Ribbentrop explained to him that Hess was sick in mind and body, a victim of pacifist hallucinations, and went to England to facilitate peace negotiations. Ciano wrote after Ribbentrop's visit, "His conversation is a beautiful job of patching things up. The Germans want to cover themselves before Hess speaks. . . ." ¹³

Ilse Hess did not know about her husband's flight until Monday afternoon when one of Hess's aides appeared at her home and excitedly told her "Brotherr" (Bread man) had crashed into the sea in his plane. Frau Hess immediately placed a call to the Berghof. She gave her name to the operator at the Berghof and expected to be put through directly to Hitler. She was informed that the Fuehrer was not to be disturbed and would speak to no one. Frau Hess then asked for Bormann. He informed the anxious wife that he knew nothing, and she would have to wait until further news was received at the Berghof. Bormann also told her that he was sending a member of his staff to see her, and she should cooperate with him. Then the line went dead. ¹⁴

¹³Ciano, The Ciano Diaries, pp. 350-351.

¹⁴Leasor, The Uninvited Envoy, pp. 141-143.

The Hess incident came at an inopportune time for the Fuehrer, who had looked forward to an invasion of Russia since the meeting of his military staff at the Berghof July 31, 1940. At this meeting, called to discuss English resistance to peace feelers, Hitler called attention to Russia as Britain's one hope for victory. In view of that consideration, Russia had to be liquidated in the spring of 1941. As the Fuehrer elaborated on his plans, it became obvious that he had been anticipating a maneuver, despite his preoccupation with fighting in the west. His aim was to shatter Russia with one great blow. Winning only a small amount of territory would not suffice. There would be two initial drives: one in the south to Kiev and the Dnieper, and the second in the north through the Baltic states and then toward Moscow. There the two armies would converge, or make a junction. A separate operation would be used, if needed, against the Baku oil fields. The German armies would annex the Ukraine, White Russia, and the Baltic States. Finland's territory was to be extended to the White Sea. The Fuehrer allotted one hundred and twenty divisions for the entire operation, with sixty divisions reserved for the western campaign. The attack beginning in May, 1941, would require five months for its

completion, but by winter, the entire operation would be successful.¹⁵

A number of subsequent conferences were held to work out the details of "Operation Barbarossa," the invasion of Russia. On June 9, 1941, Hitler, while at the Berghof, ordered the commanders of army groups, armies, naval, and air commanders to a meeting in Berlin on June 14, at which time reports on the operation were to be made.¹⁶ At 3:30 A. M. on June 22, 1941, Germany attacked Russia on a front hundreds of miles long.¹⁷

Five months had passed, and Hitler's armies were far from victory when Speer met with Todt, December 27, 1941, at the latter's house on Hintersee, near Obersalzberg. Todt had just returned from a long inspection tour on the eastern front. He had seen stalled hospital trains in which the wounded had frozen to death. He witnessed the misery of the troops in villages cut off by cold and snow. Todt had been struck by the discouragement and despair of German soldiers. Deeply depressed himself, he concluded that Germans were both physically incapable of enduring such hardships and psychologically doomed to

¹⁵Documents on German Foreign Policy, X, 373-374.

¹⁶NCA, VI, Document C-78, 909-911.

¹⁷Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 849.

destruction in Russia. Todt was convinced that the struggle with Russia was one in which the "primitive Russians" would prove superior. In Todt's opinion, the Russians could endure everything, including the harshness of the climate, whereas the Germans were too sensitive and were bound to be defeated. Todt's attitude was that of a defeatist.¹⁸

Under such depressing circumstances, the courage of the German people needed bolstering. On April 29, 1942, Hitler and Mussolini met in Salzburg, Austria; and as previously, during their meetings there, they journeyed to the Obersalzberg for informal, social activities. On this occasion, when the party arrived, which included the two dictators, Keitel, Jodl, Kesselring, and Ciano, a radio commentator appeared for interviews. Kesselring informed the commentator:

The discussions between the two chiefs of government were carried out in the spirit of close alliance and inseparable brotherhood of arms of the two peoples and their leaders. The discussions resulted in agreement of opinions about the situation. . . . The iron determination of Germany and Italy and their allies to assure final victory, with all means at their disposal, was expressed anew.¹⁹

The Fuehrer remained confident of victory throughout the summer. In the late autumn of 1942, he

¹⁸ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 185-186.

¹⁹ NCA, V, Document 3054-PS, 847.

announced during a situation conference that the Russians were sending their cadets into combat, and that was proof that the Russians were hard pressed. In Hitler's opinion, a country sacrificed the next generation of officers only when it had nothing else. A few weeks later on November 19, the first reports of the Russian winter offensive reached the Fuehrer, who had withdrawn to the Obersalzberg only days before.²⁰ An urgent telephone call from General Kurt Zeitzler, the new Chief of the Army General Staff, reported alarming news. During an attack which began at Serafinov, a Russian armored force had broken through the Rumanian Third Army. South of Stalingrad, other Russian forces were attacking strongly against the German Fourth Ranger Army and the Rumanian Fourth Army and threatening to pierce their fronts. The Russian offensive, which culminated nine weeks later in the defeat of German forces at Stalingrad, had begun.²¹

Hitler tried at first to explain the disaster by making slurs on the fighting qualities of his allies, but shortly afterwards, Soviet troops overwhelmed German divisions as well. The front was beginning to crumble. Zeitzler urged Hitler to permit the Sixth Army to withdraw

²⁰ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 247.

²¹ Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 925-926.

from Stalingrad to the Don bend. The suggestion threw the Fuehrer into a rage. "I won't leave the Volga! I won't go back from the Volga!" he shouted.²² Hitler paced back and forth in the large hall of the Berghof:

Our generals are making their old mistakes again. They always overestimate the strength of the Russians. According to all the front-line reports, the enemy's human material is no longer sufficient. They are weakened; they have lost far too much blood. But of course, nobody wants to accept such reports. Besides, how badly Russian officers are trained! No offensive can be organized with such officers. We know what it takes! In the short or long run, the Russians will simply come to a halt. They'll run down. Meanwhile, we shall throw in a few fresh divisions; that will put things right.²³

In the peaceful atmosphere of the Berghof, Hitler did not realize the gravity of the situation, which would eventually lead to a disastrous defeat of an army. Three days later, as the bad news kept pouring in, the Fuehrer rushed back to his eastern headquarters in Rastenburg.²⁴

By late spring, 1943, it was evident that the German war economy needed strengthening. On June 8, Field

²²Ibid., p. 926.

²³Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 247.

²⁴Ibid. During the twenty months from July 28, 1941, to March 20, 1943, Hitler interrupted his stay in Rastenburg four times, for a total of fifty-seven days. Beginning on March 20, 1943, he went to the Obersalzberg for a three-month vacation and then worked for the next nine months in Rastenburg. After this, completely exhausted, he spent four months after March 16, 1944, at the Obersalzberg and in Berlin. Ibid., p. 294.

Marshal Keitel and General Zeitzler met with the Fuehrer at the Berghof to discuss the prospects of increasing Germany's foreign labor supply. Hitler suggested that captured Russians be brought to Germany to take the place of German laborers who could then be released from industry for service in the military. Hitler emphasized that the loss of Jews had created a critical shortage of labor in the various trades, because Jews had been the best tradesmen. The suggestion was made that Ukrainians be used to fill the needs of the trades. Hitler's most immediate concern was for the coal industry. He suggested that deserters from the various foreign armies who sought asylum in Germany be utilized in that industry. The Fuehrer also expressed concern that the time would come when Germany could not produce ammunition, explosives, nor submarines in sufficient quantities to carry out the war aims.²⁵

Hitler was still at the Berghof wrestling with problems associated with the economy when he received from Fritz Saukel a report on foreign laborers in Germany. Although not received until June 23, the report was a complete analysis of the status of foreign laborers through April 15. Saukel pointed out that an additional 450,000 workers from the western area would be in Germany by the beginning of summer. He projected that with another

²⁵NCA, III, Document 1384-PS, 959-960.

150,000 expected from Poland, it would be possible to place 500,000 to 600,000 workers at the disposal of German agriculture. In addition, Saukel believed that 1,000,000 additional workers would be placed at the disposal of the armament industry by early summer. Saukel reported that during the year he had been the director of labor, 3,638,056 new foreign laborers had been added to the German work force, and he believed they had produced satisfactorily. In addition to foreign labor, 1,622,829 prisoners of war had been employed in the German economy.²⁶

Saukel's report also indicated that he had been responsible for transferring 5,000,000 Germans from peacetime businesses and industries to the war economy. Of the men available for the work force, only 32.5% were qualified; the remainder were too old or sick. In addition to transferring personnel from one segment of the economy to another, some non-essential industries were phased out which should have released 74,644 people for jobs in the war industries. Only about one-third of the number were physically qualified. Saukel's report was not altogether reassuring for the Fuehrer, but it disclosed Saukel's plans to acquire 1,000,000 workers from the east in the near future.²⁷

²⁶NCA, III, Document 407-V, 391-392.

²⁷Ibid., 392-393.

In April, 1944, Speer attempted to resign his position with the Reich. The Fuehrer, who was at the Berghof for an extended rest, was annoyed by the impertinence demonstrated by such a move. Goering telephoned from the Obersalzberg to inform Speer that only the Fuehrer could dictate when a minister might depart from his service. After Speer and Goering argued back and forth, they agreed that Speer should prolong the illness from which he was recuperating and slowly fade out of his position. On April 20, a group of industrialists pleaded with Speer not to resign and put industry at the mercy of the other cronies who would succeed him. A few hours later, Field Marshal Erhard Milch and other Nazi dignitaries called on Speer. They had driven directly from the Obersalzberg to assure Speer of Hitler's continued esteem for him. These two factors caused Speer to fly to the Obersalzberg to confer with his leader.²⁸

No sooner had Speer arrived at the Obersalzberg than Hitler's adjutant invited him to join the circle at teatime, but Speer declined because he wanted a more personal conversation with the Fuehrer. Shortly thereafter, Speer was given an appointment to see Hitler at the Berghof. When Speer arrived at the Berghof, Hitler had donned his uniform cap and, gloves in hand, posted himself officially

²⁸Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 338-340.

at the entrance to the Berghof. He conducted Speer into the salon like a formal guest. As they discussed the various sources of friction which had caused Speer to offer his resignation, Hitler gave in on every point and assured Speer that construction would remain under his direction. Hitler was most cordial, and it was evident that the Fuehrer was attempting to regain Speer's confidence. When they finished their conversation, the Fuehrer led Speer to the door as he did any formal guest. That evening Speer sat in the group at the fireplace, as in the past, with Hitler, Eva Braun, and the Fuehrer's court. The conversation trickled along monotonously. Bormann suggested that a record be played, and a Wagnerian aria was put on.²⁹

During the next several weeks, Speer traveled to and from the Obersalzberg several times. Toward the middle of May, Speer talked with Hitler again and told him of a personal rivalry he had with Bormann, who opposed his work. Hitler had once more conferred a distinction upon Speer by inviting him into his wood paneled study on the second floor of the Berghof. In this room, he held only extremely personal and intimate discussions. In low tones, almost like an intimate friend, Hitler advised Speer to avoid doing anything that would arouse Bormann's wrath.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 341-343.

He pointed out that Bormann's power should not be underestimated. The Fuehrer was well aware of his Gauleiter's shortcomings, but he was loyal. Bormann would have to be taken as he was. Speer felt that Hitler was not going to let Bormann influence him in his attitude toward Speer.³⁰

On May 12, 1944, 935 daylight bombers of the American Eighth Air Force attacked several fuel plants in central and eastern Germany, leaving them in rubble. Until that attack, Germany had managed to produce nearly as many weapons as the armed forces needed in spite of their losses; but with the loss of these plants, a new era in the air war began, and it meant the end of German armament production.³¹

A week later, May 19, Speer flew to the Obersalzberg where Hitler received him in the presence of Keitel. Speer described the situation as critical. He pointed out that Germany had been hit at one of its weakest points, and if the bombings continued, the country would have virtually no fuel. The nation's one hope was that the enemy might have an air force general staff as scatterbrained as Germany's. Keitel, playing his usual role, tried to smooth over the situation by saying he would be

³⁰Ibid., pp. 343-344.

³¹Ibid., p. 346.

able to bridge the fuel gap with his reserves. Keitel also reminded the Fuehrer of the many difficult situations they had survived. Turning to Hitler, he said, "We shall survive this one too. . . ." ³² This time Hitler did not share Keitel's optimism.

Four days later, Speer, Goering, Keitel, Milch, and four industrialists waited in the foreboding entrance hall of the Berghof while Hitler conducted a conference in the salon. Several high-ranking military men, participants in a preceding conference, rushed by the group. Speer and the others were called into the salon by one of Hitler's adjutants. Hitler shook hands with each of the men and asked them to be seated. He announced that the meeting was called in order to be informed about the consequence of the latest air raids. Speer had previously instructed the industrialists to be candid and honest in their reports. They were. Germany's productive potential appeared dismal. Goering and Keitel tried to minimize the seriousness of the situation, but this time Hitler abruptly began to urge them to be objective. At the end of the conference Hitler spoke:

In my view the fuel, Buna rubber, and nitrogen plants represent a particularly sensitive point for the conduct of war since vital materials for armaments

³²Ibid., p. 347.

are being manufactured in a small number of plants.³³

The conference participants were dismissed. Chauffeured cars appeared to take the guests to the Berchtesgadener Hof. Hitler disappeared briefly while his regular entourage waited in the vestibule. He took his cane, hat, and black cape; the daily walk to the Teahouse began. There they were served coffee and cake. The fire crackled in the fireplace. In the cozy atmosphere of the Teahouse, there was no war; there was no reality.³⁴

Hitler spent the remaining days of the month of May in the quiet seclusion of the Obersalzberg contemplating over the allied invasion of the continent which was expected at any time. There had been eighteen days during the month when the weather, the sea, and the tide were right for a landing, but General Dwight Eisenhower had not taken advantage of them. On the twenty-seventh, Hitler received the Japanese Ambassador, Hiroshi Oshima, at the Berghof.³⁵ On May 30, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, the Commander-in-Chief in the west, reported

³³Ibid., pp. 347-348.

³⁴Ibid., p. 348.

³⁵NCA, VI, Document 3785-PS, 655. The conference lasted for nearly two hours, but the document only records that Hitler advised Oshima that the Japanese should hang, not shoot, American "terror pilots."

to Hitler that there was no indication that the invasion was immediately imminent. As late as June 4, the air force meteorologist in Paris advised that because of inclement weather, no allied action could be expected for at least two weeks.³⁶ On the basis of these facts, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel drew up a report on the morning of June 5 to Rundstedt indicating that he was confident there was no danger of an immediate invasion. In his report, Rommel spoke of his urgent need to speak personally to the Fuehrer at the Obersalzberg. The Field Marshal left by car for his home at Herrlingen on the morning of June 5, intending to go by the Obersalzberg before returning to the front. Upon speaking to the Fuehrer, Rommel planned to convey to him the limitations of German land power and material inferiority on the western front. He also planned to request two additional panzer divisions and other reinforcements at Normandy. The invasion took place, however, before Rommel could get to the Obersalzberg; in fact, once the invasion began, he hurried straight back to the front from his home.³⁷

³⁶Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 1037.

³⁷Erwin Rommel, The Rommel Papers, ed. by B. H. Liddell Hart and trans. by Paul Findlay (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1953), p. 470.

Not until eleven minutes past 1:00 A. M., June 6, did the leaders of the German Seventh Army at Normandy realize that two American and one British airborne divisions had landed in its midst, and it was 1:30 A. M. before the general alarm was sounded. Even at this late hour, Generals Speidel and Rundstedt were not convinced that this was the long anticipated invasion, but instead, felt that this was a diversionary tactic. There had been a number of conflicting intelligence reports during the past several weeks concerning the planned invasion site. Hitler, however, had been confident that the invasion would take place at Normandy.³⁸

During the early hours of June 6, Speidel and Rundstedt telephoned OKW, which was then located at its headquarters building in Berchtesgaden. Hitler had previously given a standing order that no panzer divisions were to be employed in any situation without the specific order of the Fuehrer. When Speidel and Rundstedt requested permission to rush two tank divisions to Normandy, Jodl contacted Hitler, who refused to grant the permission because he wanted to see what developed first.³⁹

³⁸Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 1037-1038.

³⁹Ibid., p. 1038. What happened at the Berghof during the early hours of the invasion is not clear. Shirer leads one to believe Hitler was awake when news of

When the Fuehrer appeared sometime in the early afternoon for a conference in his salon, he maintained that Normandy was not the major thrust of the invasion. This was a complete change from his opinion of two days before. Misled by a correct report, Hitler now rejected his original accurate view that the Normandy coast was the probable focus of the invasion.⁴⁰ Finally, at approximately 4:55 P. M. Hitler decided to deploy OKW reserves against the Anglo-American bridgehead. He also issued the order that the bridgehead should be annihilated by that evening, and the beachhead was to be cleaned up by no later than nightfall.⁴¹ There was no panic nor fits of rage at the Berghof during this crisis. Hitler and his

the invasion first arrived and later went to bed. Ibid., p. 1038. Gun, Eva Braun, p. 174, relates that Hitler and his mistress were together when they were awakened during the morning, June 6, and Hitler received the news jubilantly. The Fuehrer was about to rush down to the conference room when Eva reminded him that he was still wearing his night shirt. Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 354, says that he arrived at the Berghof at 10:00 A. M. and was told that Hitler had not yet been awakened, and that the Fuehrer would receive the news after he had eaten breakfast. Since Speer was not at the Berghof when the invasion began and because his information was given by one of Hitler's adjutants, his account may not be completely accurate. By the same token, Shirer has failed to cite his source covering the events of the Berghof.

⁴⁰Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 354-355.

⁴¹Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 1038.

staff restrained themselves, and a sense of calmness prevailed.⁴²

On June 19, as the invasion front continued to deteriorate for the Germans, Hitler met with Rundstedt and Rommel on the front. Not satisfied with the results of this meeting, the two generals again met with Hitler at the Berghof on June 29. They found the Fuehrer in a confused state of mind. Hitler gave his evaluation of the invasion in which he noted the enemy command of the air, the effect of the enemy's naval artillery, and the inflexible conduct of operations on the part of the British. The Fuehrer then issued a directive for the continuation of the struggle, which specified that the first concern was to bring the enemy attack to a halt as a precondition for cleaning up the bridgehead. The Luftwaffe was to create a constant state of unrest over the enemy by the use of the latest types of aircraft. One thousand fighter planes, taken from new production, were to achieve air supremacy over a limited area.⁴³ The navy was to

⁴²Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 355.

⁴³Hitler had repeatedly talked of these fighters, even before the invasion. They were to be jets, although at this time, they were not yet ready for action. In fact, these aircraft were never used in quantity, but 1,988 were produced by German industry before the end of the war. See Rommel, The Rommel Papers, p. 480.

employ all available naval units, and mining of the sea was to continue.⁴⁴

After receiving the directive, Rundstedt and Rommel gave their views on the war. A heated argument developed between the Generals and Hitler which was climaxed by Rommel's asking Hitler how he imagined the war could still be won. Partially as a consequence of this argument, Rundstedt was shortly thereafter relieved of his post and succeeded by Field Marshal Guenther Hans von Kluge. Rommel retained his position a little longer.⁴⁵

On June 26, about a hundred representatives of the armaments industry gathered in the coffee room of the "Platterhof" for a scheduled speech by Hitler. Speer, having had continuous association with these men, told the Fuehrer that his speech should include certain items which the industrialists wanted to hear. Among the items he was to cover were such things as government aid in the critical period ahead, protection against interference by party authorities, the affirmation of the inviolability of private property, and assurance of a free economy after the war. Hitler made his speech and, by and large, took up these points. While he was speaking,

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 479-480.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 480.

he sounded as if he were suffering from some impediment. He made frequent slips of the tongue, fumbled for words, broke off sentences midway, neglected transition, and sometimes became confused. It was evident that he was near a state of exhaustion.⁴⁶

The Fuehrer's speech began very philosophically by upholding the superiority of private capital and private property, and he repudiated communism as the wave of the future. He emphasized that as man moved toward evolutionary perfection, the more individualized achievements would become. After the war, which the "Fatherland" would win, the German economy would enjoy its greatest era in history. He then thanked the industrialists for helping to meet Germany's wartime tasks.⁴⁷

Hitler received hardly any applause during his speech. This shocked all the party dignitaries who were present. Hitler, visibly upset by the lack of response he had received thus far, changed the tone of his speech to one of threats. He spoke of the consequences should Germany lose the war. Private business would not survive; it would be directed by the state. Finally, if the war were lost, the industrialists were told, their concern

⁴⁶ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, pp. 358-359.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 359-360.

would not be over saving private enterprise, but how to stay out of Siberia. Hitler's speech, intended to bolster production of war materials, ended on a note of mockery with faint undertones of contempt for the bourgeoisie.⁴⁸

There were two conspiracies planned against Hitler during 1944 which involved the Obersalzberg. The first was an unbelievably bizarre plot. Early in May, 1944, General Ludwig Beck, the leader of the conspirators, sent to Allen Dulles, Chief of the United States Office of Strategic Services, a detailed offer for simultaneous action by Anglo-American forces and the conspirators. The objective was to facilitate the occupation of Germany and, at the same time, hold the Russians on the eastern front. Under this plan, the center of the Putsch was to be Munich, from which reliable German troops were to be dispatched to isolate the Obersalzberg and to seize Hitler and other leading Nazis in the Berghof. This operation was to coincide with the descent of three airborne Anglo-American divisions in the Berlin area where local military commanders who were members of the conspiracy would neutralize resistance. At the same time, large-scale landings were to be made on the French coast and on the German coast around Bremen and Hamburg in all of which areas the German military commanders in the west

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 360-361.

would be instructed to give full cooperation. This remarkable offer, the last to be made by the conspirators before the allied invasion, was forwarded to the governments in London and Washington, who were unreceptive.⁴⁹

The second and most important conspiracy was "Operation Valkyrie," a bizarre plan for quickly assembling units and soldiers in the event of uprisings led by foreign domestic workers. The plan was originated by the conspirators as a means of taking over key areas when Hitler might be assassinated. To give the plan legitimacy, however, it had to have the approval of Hitler; and approval was acquired under the pretense of organizing a home guard for domestic protection. The first conference for officially approving the plan was held at Obersalzberg June 7, 1944. A second meeting was held July 7, and continued on July 8, in the salon of the Berghof. All the major conspirators were there, including Quartermaster General Eduard Wagner; General Erich Fellgiebel of the Signal Corps; General Fritz Lindemann, aide to the Chief of Staff; General Helmut Stieff, Chief of the Organizational Section in the OKH; and Colonel Klaus von Stauffenberg. During the proceedings, Hitler listened attentively as Stauffenberg explained the plan for mobilizing the home guard, and he

⁴⁹Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, p. 620.

approved most of the proposals. He was not aware that he was sanctioning a plan for his own demise.⁵⁰

After considerable deliberation during the ensuing days, the conspirators decided that Colonel Stauffenberg should be the man actually to kill Hitler. An English-made bomb was placed in his briefcase, and he was to place the bomb near Hitler at the most opportune time. The conspirators decided that the plot was to be implemented only when Himmler, Goering, and Hitler were together. Stauffenberg was summoned to attend a military conference on Wednesday, July 11, at the Berghof. He decided that he would implement the plot at this meeting. He flew to Berchtesgaden and was driven to the Berghof by a co-conspirator, Lieutenant Werner von Haeften. Stauffenberg planned to present his report, carefully touch off the fuse to the bomb in his briefcase, and then leave the case in the conference room. Haeften remained in the car in order that the two men could make a rapid escape, while Stauffenberg went inside for the conference. When Stauffenberg reappeared, he was still carrying his briefcase. When the conference opened, he had noticed that Himmler was not present so he abandoned the attempt.

⁵⁰ Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 378.

The plan was foiled, but another attempt would be made July 20.⁵¹

Following the near successful "July 20 plot," the days followed each other in monotonous succession at the Berghof. The Fuehrer made fewer and fewer appearances at his Alpine retreat. Not only had the war and prospects of a German defeat brought a change to life at the Obersalzberg, but it had also brought changes to Hitler. He had aged greatly, his hands trembled, and his eyesight was dimming. Since the middle of 1943, Hitler's health had failed rapidly, and the assassination attempt of July 20 aggravated his condition further. His left hand was virtually useless, and he suffered constant headaches. He grew hard of hearing, and a physician who was called in discovered that both membranes of his ears were damaged. Surgery was necessary and was successfully undertaken. Hitler went through frequent and long periods of depression and became listless and disinterested in what was taking place. In the opinion of his close associates, he was only a ghost of his former self.⁵²

⁵¹Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, pp. 632-633. Gun, Eva Braun, p. 180, relates that another attempt was planned for July 15, when Stauffenberg was again ordered to the Obersalzberg, but Hitler changed his mind and flew to Rastenburg. Had the Fuehrer remained at the Berghof, Stauffenberg planned to place the bomb under the dining table between Hitler and Eva Braun.

⁵²Hans Baur, personal interview, Berchtesgaden, Germany, June, 1959.

Hitler had planned to spend both Christmas, 1944, and his birthday, April 20, 1945, at the Obersalzberg. Because of the military situation, he was at the Chancellery in Berlin on both occasions.⁵³

Hitler's last birthday was not actually celebrated. With Berlin under Russian attack, Hitler held a situation conference in his bunker located underneath the Reich Chancellery. Considerable discussion took place concerning the necessity for the Fuehrer's escape to the Obersalzberg where he could command the final defense of Germany. Hitler decided that he would remain in Berlin and suffer the same fate as the city. At once, everyone began clamoring that it was essential to shift the headquarters to the Obersalzberg where the "Alpine Redoubt" could be established.⁵⁴

Goering insisted that the last escape route to Berchtesgaden would be cut off at any time, and there were

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid. According to Baur, until Hitler announced that he would stay and fall with Berlin, plans called for the final defense of Germany to be made from the Obersalzberg. An Austrian, who had all the physical characteristics of Hitler, was found and brought to Berlin. He was to be shot and his body partly burned, just prior to Hitler's flight from Berlin to the Obersalzberg. When the charred body of the Austrian might be discovered, the Russians, it was expected, would identify it as Hitler's. After Hitler announced he would stay in Berlin, this plan was canceled, but Hitler's "double" was shot in order to make certain the plan was not revealed.

pressing matters he needed to attend to at the Obersalzberg. Upon this pretense, Goering left the doomed city of Berlin for the Obersalzberg.⁵⁵

Until two weeks before Hitler ended his life, the Fuehrer had anticipated leading the final struggle in the Alpine Redoubt, although there is no evidence that the redoubt was anything like what had been envisioned by Eisenhower and his staff.⁵⁶ As early as March 11, 1945, SHAEF intelligence had warned Eisenhower that the Nazis were planning to make an impregnable fortress in the Bavarian mountains and that Hitler would command its defenses from his villa at Obersalzberg. According to propaganda released by Goebbels, the redoubt was practically impenetrable and would be defended by the most efficient secret weapons yet invented. Armaments were to be manufactured in bomb-proof factories, food and equipment were to be stored in vast underground caverns, and a selected corps of young men were to be trained in guerilla warfare so that a whole underground army was to be organized and directed to liberate Germany from the occupying forces.⁵⁷

The American news media also popularized the idea of the Alpine Redoubt. An article in the New York Times

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 465.

⁵⁷Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 1105-1106.

reported:

The entire area between Berchtesgaden and Hallturm and Gmain has been cleared of its civil population . . . and the personal bodyguards of the Fuehrer have been billeted in their cottages. Officers live in hotels. Nothing has been spared to make the area impregnable. Russian and Polish prisoners of war have blasted the natural caves of the Untersberg, a mile away from the Berghof, converting them into a fortress.⁵⁸

The article continued to describe the fortress. The Untersberg was accessible only by helicopter or by an entrance blasted half way up a "sheer drop of rock 3,000 feet in height which led to a small rock platform." In the caves, huge stores of water, food, tools, arms, and ammunition had been accumulated. Each cave would quarter sixty people, and they were air conditioned. As a further precautionary measure, the entire district, to a depth of fifteen miles and twenty-one miles in length, was mined and could be ignited by pushing a button located on Himmler's desk located in the Berghof bunkers.⁵⁹

Whatever the plans there may have been for an Alpine Redoubt, they were not of the scope anticipated by SHAEF. As events turned out, the redoubt was a myth.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Harry Vossler, "Hitler's Hideaway," New York Times, Magazine Section, November 12, 1944, p. 36.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Rodney G. Minott, The Fortress That Never Was: The Myth of Hitler's Bavarian Stronghold (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), pp. 156-157. Minott presents adequate proof that there never was a sophisticated plan

On April 22, Hitler again announced his plans to stay in Berlin, but he did not compel anyone to share his fate. He specifically ordered Bormann to leave for Berchtesgaden. Bormann was confronted with a terribly personal dilemma. His family was at the Obersalzberg, and should the end come, it would certainly be easier to escape and go into hiding from there than from Berlin. Funds were available to finance Bormann's disappearance. Bormann's adviser for economic affairs, Dr. Helmut von Hummel, had been given in Berchtesgaden a box containing 2,200 gold coins worth a fortune. They had been requisitioned from the salt mine in Berchtesgaden by Hummel's agent. To leave Hitler and go to the Obersalzberg without him meant abandoning the source of Bormann's power. To stay or leave for the Obersalzberg was a matter of choice for Bormann. He chose to remain in Berlin.⁶¹

of defense for the redoubt area. The author makes some misleading statements regarding the Obersalzberg and Berchtesgaden. He refers to the "Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden" as "Hitler's private retreat," p. 17. He later refers to the Eagle's Nest and that "there was no fanatical defense of Hitler's private retreat," p. 123. Nowhere does he mention the Berghof. This leads the reader to conclude, as Minott no doubt has, that the Eagle's Nest was Hitler's retreat, which is wholly untrue. Minott also has not discriminated between Berchtesgaden and the Obersalzberg.

⁶¹McGovern, Martin Bormann, pp. 91-92. McGovern's explanation of the gold coins is not clear. The problem is whether they were taken from the owners of the salt mine, or whether the coins had been hidden there by Hummel and requisitioned for Bormann's disappearance, if escape became necessary. The latter explanation is assumed by the writer.

Goering had arrived safely at the Obersalzberg. He sent for Lammers, the State Secretary of the Reich Chancellery, who was in Berchtesgaden, and asked him to get a copy of the Fuehrer's decree of June 29, 1941. The decree was quite clear. It stipulated that, if Hitler died, Goering was to be his successor; and that if the Fuehrer were incapacitated, Goering was to act as his deputy. Lammers agreed that by remaining in Berlin to die, cut off in his last hours from both the military commands and government offices, Hitler would be incapacitated from governing, and Goering's clear duty under the decree was to take over. Goering carefully drafted a telegram to Hitler to make certain of the delegation of authority.⁶²

Goering explained that since the Fuehrer had chosen to remain in Berlin, he wanted to take over the leadership of the Reich according to the provisions of the June 29, 1941, decree. If he received no reply by 10:00 P. M., August 23, Goering would assume Hitler was incapacitated, and the conditions of the decree would be fulfilled. Upon receiving Goering's telegram, Hitler, enraged, sent notice to Goering that he was stripped of all rank and honors which had been given him and that

⁶²Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 1111.

only his long and faithful service to Hitler kept him from being shot.⁶³

By 7:00 P. M., April 23, an SS detachment had surrounded Goering's chalet on the Obersalzberg. The SS knocked on the door, and it was opened by Robert Kropp, Goering's valet. Brushing by the valet and with revolvers drawn, the SS leaders took Goering into custody. He was forbidden any communication with his family or the outside world. The former Reich Marshal and successor to the Fuehrer did not hear the Berlin radio announce the next day that he had resigned from his office for reasons of health.⁶⁴ Bormann, still in Berlin, wanted to make sure that Goering was eliminated if Hitler died. He sent a radio message to the SS headquarters at the Obersalzberg:

If Berlin and we should fall, the traitors of April 23 must be exterminated. Men, do your duty! Your life and honor depend on it.⁶⁵

This was an order to murder Goering and his airforce staff, whom Bormann had already placed under SS arrest.⁶⁶

In vain, Bormann kept urging Hitler to leave Berlin for the still untouched surroundings of the

⁶³Baur, personal interview, Berchtesgaden, Germany, June, 1959.

⁶⁴McGovern, Martin Bormann, p. 98.

⁶⁵Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 1127.

⁶⁶Ibid.

Obersalzberg. On April 25, beginning at 10:00 A. M., two waves of allied bombers attacked Hitler's mountain retreat for the first time. The Berghof was destroyed during an unopposed raid.⁶⁷

Goering sat in the bunker of his own nearby chalet as explosives rained down and demolished it. He not only survived, but persuaded his SS guards to take him to an Austrian castle, which he owned in Mauterndorf, a three-hour drive from Berchtesgaden. The raid also destroyed Bormann's Obersalzberg home. His wife and children then left the Obersalzberg in a bus painted with the emblem of the International Red Cross. When French and American soldiers entered the Berghof on May 4, they found a deserted, still smoldering wreck, surrounded by a landscape of rubble. Intelligence officers who followed the combat troops searched the Obersalzberg area for traces of Hitler and Bormann. The agents were not certain, in the confusion of the time, that the two had not come there from Berlin. Hitler was not found, and the search of Bormann's ruined house, near the Berghof, yielded only a cache of rare wines, albums of classical music, and a large number of children's toys.⁶⁸ Of the entire complex

⁶⁷McGovern, Martin Bormann, p. 98.

⁶⁸Ibid.

of property on the Obersalzberg consisting of eighty-seven buildings, only the Eagle's Nest was untouched by bombs.⁶⁹ The 506th Parachute Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division occupied Berchtesgaden on Saturday, May 5. Within a few days, the Berchtesgaden area yielded Julius Streicher, Dr. Robert Ley, Fritz Sauckel, Franz Ritter von Epp, Hitler's sister, Paula, his personal physician, Morell, most of his household, and a score of generals and other important persons, and tons of documents.⁷⁰

There was very little resistance offered when the allied troops approached Berchtesgaden. The SS General at the Obersalzberg was true to his word that he and his men would withdraw without opposing the occupying forces. There were never any unusual fortifications installed at the Obersalzberg. Hitler's final stand at the Obersalzberg would have been only an attempt to prolong the war.⁷¹ Had he escaped to the Obersalzberg, Hitler would have died where he had lived some of the most eventful hours of his life.

In the end, it was learned that the entire complex of property on the Obersalzberg, including the Berghof,

⁶⁹Personal observations.

⁷⁰Felix Gilbert, Hitler Directs His War: The Secret Records of His Daily Military Conferences (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. ix-x.

⁷¹Baur, personal interview, Berchtesgaden, Germany, June, 1959.

was officially owned by Bormann.⁷² In order to settle Bormann's personal estate, the Berchtesgaden Amtsgericht (local court) on January 30, 1954, ruled that Bormann had died in Berlin at midnight, May 2, 1945.⁷³ At last, "the mountain over the salt" returned to farmers and tourists, but it was never to be the same again.

⁷²McGovern, Martin Bormann, p. 99.

⁷³Ibid., p. 146.

CHAPTER VI

GUIDE TO TEACHING THE UNIT

As a case study in National Socialism, the preceding narrative has concentrated on the Obersalzberg as a means of "bringing to life" people and events of the Hitler era. The unit provides a unique framework within which the history of Germany, from 1923 to 1945, including the Second World War, may be examined. Not to be considered an end within itself, the unit serves as a point of departure from traditional inquiries into the era. A number of broad topics are introduced in the narrative, but are not carried to their completion, thereby affording opportunity for classroom discussion and further investigation. The narrative and the media prepared by the writer for his own use should motivate students to seek additional insights into the topics and issues that are revealed as the unit is studied.

The primary objective to be obtained in using the unit is to provide students with a means whereby they may experience history vicariously. Vicarious, in this instance, is defined as something shared or experienced by imagined participation in another's experience. The

Obersalzberg "story" presents an excellent opportunity for the student to have such an experience through the narrative, photographs and slides, and recordings. From the study, students should not only feel a sense of "being there," but they should also acquire an appreciation for the people involved, their problems, aspirations, motives, and their enthusiasm for the Nazi movement. With such an experience, students should gain a clearer insight into the broad support given Hitler by the German people.

More specific and measurable objectives include:

1. READING

To practice the variety of reading skills necessary to learning.

To read for identification of significant persons, events, terms, and ideas.

To read for review and recall.

To become familiar with literature of the Nazi era.

2. GEOGRAPHY

To locate the major geographic features which formed the setting of the era and its subsequent activities.

3. IDENTIFICATION

To identify in discussions and writing the persons, events, forces, and ideas which shaped the Nazi movement and World War II.

4. ANALYSIS

To determine in reading, discussions, and writing the essential features of key issues in the Nazi era and their subsequent effect upon western Europe.

5. CORRELATION

To draw a direct line of relationship in reading, discussion, and writing between major political, economic, social, and intellectual forces in the Nazi era and their consequences or impact upon the same general time period.

6. CRITICISM

To cultivate an increasingly critical quality of mind which attempts to evaluate, in listening and reading, the point of view of the speaker and the writer, and the motivation and qualifications of that person for his interpretation.

To demonstrate in discussions and writing the results of a positive effort to develop a critical intellect.

7. VOCABULARY

To use the dictionary to learn the meanings of unfamiliar words in lectures, discussions, textbooks, and other sources.

To demonstrate in discussions and writing a conscious effort to acquire a more specific vocabulary.

8. WRITING

To write an essay, without notes, upon an assigned topic, the essay to be graded upon knowledge of the subject matter, the evaluation of the issues, and correctness of grammar and spelling.

To complete a research project, chosen by the student, and evaluated on the basis of quality of research, organization, logical presentation, and correctness of grammar and spelling, if applicable.

Prepared primarily for use with classes in western civilization, the study should be made available to students for their own reading. Ideally, six 50-minute class meetings should be allocated for the unit, with the first session devoted to a brief survey of Germany's political, economic, and social conditions following the World War. The second session should be used introducing the Obersalzberg and life there (Chapters I and II of the study). Slides used in conjunction with a taped narrative would increase the sense of "being there." A number of slides and photographs illustrating the setting for, and life at, the Obersalzberg have been collected by the writer and are listed in the section concerned with media. At the third class meeting, attention should be focused on politics and diplomacy from 1932 through the Munich agreement in

September, 1938 (Chapter III). Attention should be called to the significance of the Reichstag election of 1932 and events leading to Hitler's appointment to the Chancellery. A series of slides which highlight this period also have been collected by the writer and are listed in the media section. Events leading to German aggression against Poland and the Second World War through March, 1941, should be the object of concentration during the fourth class meeting (Chapter IV). A variety of films are available, and a selected listing has been compiled and is found in the media section. During the fifth and sixth class meetings, the period from May, 1941, to May, 1945, should be discussed (Chapter V). A host of questions should emerge from these sessions, and the instructor should make his plans flexible enough to accommodate student inquiries. During the final session, a well-planned summary calling attention to the myth of the Alpine Redoubt and the contest for Berlin is desirable. A selected listing of commercial films covering this period is found in the media section, along with a list of photographs and documents collected by the writer.

As previously emphasized, both the instructor and students should seek additional information concerning the issues and topics which emerge from the study. Student response to the unit should determine how deeply the issues

are probed, and whether they are handled as discussion or research projects. If student interest is sufficiently enthusiastic, it is preferable that research topics be chosen and students be given a supervised, elementary exercise in research. During the past several years, there has been a proliferation of literature on Nazi Germany, allowing easy access to numerous avenues of research. Students have an abundance of secondary sources from which to work, and this should encourage basic research of a variety of topics. A list of suggested topics, which may be narrowed if desirable, follows. Accompanying each topic is a selected and briefly annotated bibliography suitable for freshman and sophomore students.

I. Hitler's Youth and Early Manhood

Heiber, Helmut. Adolf Hitler: A Short Biography. Translated by Lawrence Wilson. London: O. Wolff Company, 1961.
A brief biography of Hitler, emphasizing his youth and early years.

Jenks, William A. Vienna and the Young Hitler. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
Discusses the cultural, economic, and social conditions of Vienna and their affects upon Hitler during his lengthy visit before World War I.

Jetzinger, Franz. Hitler's Youth. Translated by Lawrence Wilson. London: Hutchinson and Company, 1958.
Traces Hitler's family tree and proceeds to cover the first eighteen years of his life.

Smith, Bradley F. Adolf Hitler: His Family, Childhood, and Youth. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution, 1967.

A study of Hitler's early years through 1913, when at the age of twenty-four, he left Austria for Germany.

Stein, George H., ed. Hitler. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968.

A collection of materials which trace Hitler's life from youth to manhood and to power.

II. Hitler's Rise to Power and Origins of National Socialism

Abel, Theodore. The Nazi Movement: Why Hitler Came to Power. New York: Atherton Press, 1966.

Traces the intellectual, cultural, and economic conditions which allowed Hitler's rise to prominence and power.

Allen, William S. The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1930-1935. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965.

A factual report of how the Nazis conquered a small German town in the former state of Hanover, and how they consolidated their control.

Bossenbrook, William J. The German Mind. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1960.
Provides a discussion of the intellectual foundations of the German mind and how they contributed to the development of National Socialism.

Fraser, Lendley. Germany Between Two Wars. London: Bush House, 1944.

Discusses the National Socialist view of the origin of World War II.

Heiden, Konrad. A History of National Socialism. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935.

History of Hitler and National Socialism to August 19, 1934, when the Fuehrer was endorsed by 38,360,000 voters.

Heiden, Konrad. Hitler: A Biography. Translated by Winifred Ray. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936.

A critically interpretive biography which brings Hitler's career to 1934.

- Holborn, Hojo. Germany and Europe. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970.
Ten essays set various periods in German history in the context of western history. One excellent essay deals with the origin and political character of Nazi ideology.
- Hoover, Calvin B. Germany Enters the Third Reich. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933.
Discusses Hitler's rise to power in terms of National Socialism, compares nationalism and capitalism, and discusses why capitalism failed.
- Mosse, George L. The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich. Universal Library. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, Inc., 1964.
Reveals how the ideology of the Nazi era was deeply embedded in German history and existed long before Hitler.
- Neumann, Franz. Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944. Harper Torchbooks. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.
A scholarly and thorough study of the National Socialist system. A difficult study to read with understanding, but a rewarding experience.
- Olden, Rudolf. Hitler the Pawn. Translated by Walter Ettinghausen. London: Victor Gollancz, 1936.
An unfriendly account of Hitler's life to 1935, written by an Austrian who detested his subject.
- Roberts, Stephen H. The House That Hitler Built. New York: Harper and Row, 1938.
Author's aim was to summarize Nazi Germany without prejudice. In addition to being an objective political study, Roberts interprets the lives of leading Nazis such as Goering, Goebbels, Himmler, Schacht, and Hess.
- Stern, Fritz. The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the German Ideology. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.
Focuses on the revolution which found its fulfillment in the Third Reich. Roots of Nazism are traced to the writings of Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck.

Strasser, Otto. Hitler and I. Translated by Gwenda David and Erich Mosbacher. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940.

Written by an associate of Hitler who broke with him and who was, for years, a leader of the secret forces working against the Fuehrer. Combines a character sketch of Hitler, an account of the early development of the Nazi movement, and Strasser's own adventures.

III. The Anschluss, The Munich Agreement, and The Policy of Appeasement

Brook-Shepherd, Gordon. Anschuluss: The Rape of Austria. New York: Lippincott, 1963.

A study of the events during the first three months of 1938, when Austria swung from concession to Hitler's demands, to resistance, and back again.

Eden, Anthony. The Reckoning. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965, pp. 7-8, 12-14, 32-40, 52-63.

Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden from his resignation as Foreign Secretary in Chamberlain's government to the end of World War II. Emphasis is on the appeasement policies of the democratic powers.

Eubank, Keith. Munich. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.

A study of the Munich Agreement, problems surrounding it, the events which transpired, and reasons for the agreement. Explains why the phrase "another Munich" can damn a policy as cowardly surrender.

Gehl, Jurgen. Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, 1931-1938. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

A study of the Austrian problem beginning with the Austro-German customs union project of 1931, and which concludes with the takeover by Germany in 1938.

Gilbert, Martin and Gott, Richard. The Appeasers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963.

A history of British policy toward Nazi Germany and of the men who supported and opposed it. Shows in detail how British policy was formed, how it was carried out, and how it was misconceived.

Mosely, Leonard. On Borrowed Time. New York: Random House, 1969.

A history of the beginnings of World War II from the Munich Conference to the invasion of Poland.

Nagueres, Henri. Munich: Peace for Our Time. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965.

Reviewing the questions from the Anschluss to Munich, the author explores the sequence of events which led to war.

Namier, L. B. Diplomatic Prelude: 1938-1939. New York: Howard Fertig, 1971.

Tracing developments from the Anschluss to war, the author describes Europe's diplomatic conduct as a failure of European statesmanship.

Ripka, Hubert. Munich: Before and After. New York: Howard Fertig, 1969.

A fully documented account of the Munich Agreement and its repercussions.

Thompson, Laurence. The Greatest Treason: the Untold Story of Munich. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1968.

An account of Munich and how not to conduct international negotiations. Also concerned with myths of the agreement.

Wheeler-Bennett, John W. Munich: Prologue to Tragedy. Revised ed. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

A study of the Munich Agreement designed to establish a sense of perspective concerning the topic. Discusses terms of the agreement, the five years preceding it, and events leading to the Nazi march to Prague.

IV. The German War Economy, Armaments, Foreign Labor, the Four-Year Plan and Hjalmar Schacht

Beck, Earl R. Verdict on Schacht. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1955.

Author concludes that Schacht never condoned the Nazi atrocities, was totally opposed to war, and in his own way tried to aid the suffering Jews.

- Klein, Burton H. Germany's Economic Preparation for War. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959. Author concludes that the Nazi regime did not prepare effectively for war, and never really mobilized its resources for total war. A highly technical study.
- Kurzynski, Jurgen. Germany: Economic and Labor Conditions Under Fascism. New York: International Publishers, 1945. A study of the Nazi system in general and the development of labor conditions specifically during the period, 1933-1943.
- Manchester, William. The Arms of Krupp. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968. A study of one of the oldest industrial families in Germany and their relationships with Hitler and the armament industry.
- Milward, Alan S. The German Economy at War. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965. Studies the turning points in the German economic strategy in World War II, and the war production and its administration, set in a political background.
- Nathan, Otto and Fried, Milton. The Nazi Economic System. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1944. A study of the economic methods and techniques the Germans used in preparation for war.
- Peterson, Edward Norman. Hjalmar Schacht: For and Against Hitler. Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1954. Biography of Schacht, his plans to better the German economy, and his acquaintance with Hitler.
- Pool, Kenyon. German Financial Policies, 1932-1939. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939. Analyzes the financial aspects of Germany's attempts to raise production and employment above the low level of 1931. Does not consider the political implications of the economy.

Schacht, Hjalmar. Account Settled. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Ltd., 1949.
Account of Schacht's life as Reich's Currency Controller under Hitler and Schacht's ideas concerning economics and finance in Germany.

Schweitzer, Arthur. Big Business in the Third Reich. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.
Analyzes the Nazi war economy, policies toward, and relations with big and small businesses.

Stolper, Gustav. German Economy, 1870-1940. New York: Rynal and Hitchcock, Inc., 1940.
A survey of Germany's economic development from 1871 to 1939, and it gives an account of the economic structure of the Nazi state.

Sweezy, Maxine Bernard. The Structure of the Nazi Economy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941.
A pro-Nazi analysis of the German economy.

V. Russo-German Relations and the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact

Carr, Edward H. German-Soviet Relations Between the Two World Wars. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951.
A brief analysis of relations between the two states prior to World War II.

Freund, Gerald. Unholy Alliance. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1957.
A study of Russo-German relations from the treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the Treaty of Berlin.

Hilger, Gustav and Meyer, Alfred G. The Incompatible Allies. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953.
Describes relations between Russia and Germany between the two world wars and the extent of military collaboration between the two states.

Reitlinger, Gerald R. The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939-1945. New York: Viking Press, 1960.
Study begins with the negotiations for the non-aggression pact in 1939 and concludes with the German sponsored Russian liberation movement desperately conceived in the last months of Hitler's Reich.

Rossi, Angelo. The Russian-German Alliance, August 1939-June 1941. Translated by John and Micheline Allen. Boston: Beacon Press, 1951.
Discusses relations between the two states during the time the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact was viable.

VI. Invasion and Conquest of Poland

Hiscocks, Richard. Poland: Bridge for the Abyss. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.
A study of the bloody invasion which Hitler ordered into Poland and its aftermath.

Jazdzewski, Konrad. Poland. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965.
A history of Poland through its crushing defeat by the Germans.

Kaplan, Chaim A. Scroll of Agony. Translated by Abraham I. Katsh. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.
Personal diary of Kaplan which records the Nazi conquest of Poland and the bloody persecutions of the people.

Kennedy, Robert M. The German Campaign in Poland, 1939. Washington: Department of the Army, 1956.
United States Army bulletin which traces the initial invasion. Based upon captured documents.

Leonhardt, Hans L. Nazi Conquest of Danzig. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.
An early account of the Nazi capture of the free city of Danzig.

Mason, John B. The Danzig Dilemma: A Study in Peace-making by Compromise. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1946.
Primarily concerned with the Paris Peace Settlement of 1919, but treats the origins of conflict arising over Danzig.

Woods, William. Poland: Eagle in the East. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968.
Devoted primarily to conditions that existed during the war, the study explains why the Poles today loathe the Germans because of the invasion, slaughter, and humiliation that Hitler brought them.

VII. Anti-Semitism, Nazi Policy Toward the Jews, and Policy of Terror

Agar, Herbert. The Saving Remnant: An Account of Jewish Survival. New York: Viking Press, 1960. Informative study of the persecution of Jews during World War II and of their survival.

Flender, Harold. Rescue in Denmark. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963. Discusses Jews in Denmark who were subjected to Nazi policy by the German invasion and occupation.

Hannah, Arendt. Eichmann in Jerusalem. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

Hilberg, Raul. The Destruction of the European Jews. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961. A study of Nazi Germany's systematic destruction of more than 5,000,000 Jews. Concerns itself with the organizational machinery designed to rid Europe of the Jewish population.

Hoess, Rudolf. Commandant of Auschwitz. Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. New York: World Publishing Company, 1960. A naively honest biography of the Nazi official in charge of one of the largest concentration camps. Presents a terrifying picture of extreme anti-Semitism and exaggerated nationalism.

Kahler, Erich. The Jews Among the Nations. New York: Ungar Publishing Company, 1967. Clarifies what a Jew is and discusses the role of the European Jews during World War II.

Naumann, Bernd. Auschwitz. Translated by Jean Steinberg. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966. An objective, detached, condensation of the trial of twenty-two SS officials from the Auschwitz camp.

Pulzer, Peter H. J. The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964. Traces the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria in the nineteenth century and its growth through World War I.

Reitlinger, Gerald. The Jews in Europe. New York: Beechhurst Press, 1953.
Discusses Nazi attempts to exterminate the Jews in Europe during the years 1939-1945.

Schleunes, Karl A. The Twisted Road to Auschwitz. Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1970.
Discusses Nazi policy toward the German Jews and their plans for the final solution of the Jews.

VIII. Flight of Rudolf Hess, Motives, and What Happened in Scotland

Douglas-Hamilton, James. Motive for a Mission: The Story Behind Hess's Flight to Britain. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971.
Provides the fullest and most convincing explanation of why Hess came to make his flight to Britain.

IX. The Russian Campaign

Blau, George E. The German Campaign in Russia: Planning and Operation, 1940-1942. Washington: Department of the Army, 1964.
A United States Army bulletin based upon captured German documents. Objective and detailed.

Carell, Paul. Hitler Moves East, 1941-1943. Translated by Erwald Osers. Boston: Little, Brown Company, 1965.
A study of the first two years of the eastern campaign with emphasis upon strategy used by the Germans.

Clark, Alan. Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-1945. New York: W. Morrow, 1965.
Covers the entire Russian Campaign which, during the early months, was favorable to the Germans. Study traces Russian tactics once the contest was reversed.

Dallin, Alexander. German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945: A Study of Occupation Policy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1957.
A study of German policy toward the occupation of and retreat from Russia.

Petrov, Vladimir. June 22, 1941: Soviet Historians and German Invasion. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968.

A broadened published dissertation which studies Russian historians' views of the German invasion of Russia.

Schmidt, Paul K. Scorched Earth: The Russian-German War, 1943-1944. Translated by Erwald Osers.

Boston: Little, Brown Company, 1970.

A sequel to the Carell volume which takes the war to 1943.

Werth, Alexander. Russia at War, 1941-1945. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1964.

Covers the entire Russian campaign in a well-written and organized narrative.

X. The German Military

Liddell Hart, B. H. The German Generals Talk. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1948.

Contains statements made by captured German generals concerning their war years. Significant reflections on the schism within the military.

O'Neill, Robert J. The German Army and the Nazi Party, 1933-1939. London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1966.

A study which emphasizes Hitler's relationship with his military staff.

Robertson, E. M. Hitler's Pre-War Policy and Military Plans, 1933-1939. London: Longman's, Green and Company, Ltd., 1963.

A brief but incisive study of Hitler's warlike intentions before the invasion of Poland.

Stein, George H. The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966.

Discusses the role of Hitler's elite guard, the SS, during war.

Taylor, Telford. Sword and Swastika: Generals and Nazis in the Third Reich. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952.

Traces the period from Versailles to the German invasion of Poland, the rapid recovery of the German officer corps following defeat in World War I, the subversion of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler.

Warlimont, Walter. Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1963.

Reflects the conflict between Hitler and his military staff during World War II.

XI. Hitler and His Allies

Deakin, Frederick W. The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

Difficult in its presentation, but thorough in scope. The book is divided into three sections and gives a scholarly account of Mussolini's relationship with Hitler.

Wiskemann, Elizabeth. The Rome-Berlin Axis: A Study of the Relations between Hitler and Mussolini.

Revised ed. New York: Hillary House, 1966. Presents one of the better analyses of relations between the two dictators.

XII. The Russian Offensive and Stalingrad

Chuikov, Vasili I. The Battle for Stalingrad. Translated by Harold Silver. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964.

A grossly distorted and romanticized Russian account of the battle for Stalingrad.

Schroeter, Heinz. Stalingrad. Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. New York: Ballentine Books, Inc., 1958.

A German account of the defeat Germany suffered at Stalingrad. The work reveals nothing new and enforces previous German accounts blaming Hitler for the defeat.

Seth, Ronald. Stalingrad: A Point of Return. New York: Coward-McCann, 1959.
A rather objective account of the battle and its significance to the German defeat.

Werth, Alexander. Russia at War, 1941-1945. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1964, pp. 441-564.
Study covers the entire Russian campaign and considerable emphasis is placed on the battle for Stalingrad.

Ziemke, Earl F. Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1968.
Author places the German defeat at Stalingrad as the turning point of the eastern front, and thus assured a Russian victory.

XIII. Allied Invasion of Normandy

Baldwin, Hanson. Battles Lost and Won: Great Campaigns of World War II. Harper and Row, 1966, pp. 256-285.
Author analyzes eleven of the great battles of World War II, describes the Normandy invasion and places it in proper perspective.

Carell, Paul. Invasion: They're Coming. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1963.
Describes the Normandy invasion and the battle for France. Written from the German point of view, it helps explain why the invasion was an allied success.

Eisenhower Foundation. D-Day: The Normandy Invasion in Retrospect. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1971.
A collection of essays prepared by historians and key participants of the invasion in commemoration of its twenty-fifth anniversary. Provides a balanced view of the planning, action, and results of the invasion.

Fuller, J. F. C. The Second World War, 1939-1945. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949, pp. 289-305.
A strategical and tactical history of World War II. Author explains reasons for the allied invasion of Normandy and the tactics employed.

Howarth, David. D-Day: The Sixth of June, 1944. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959. Gives an impression of the invasion as it appeared to participants. Based on author's conversations with British, American, French, and German soldiers.

Ryan, Cornelius. The Longest Day. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959. An unbiased account of the invasion from the point of view of participants on both sides. Also presents the technical details of the invasion.

Speidel, Hans. Invasion 1944: Rommel and the Normandy Campaign. New York: Henry Regnery Company, 1950. Author who served as Rommel's Chief of Staff during the invasion discusses the campaign from the German point of view.

XIV. Conspiracies and Plots to Kill Hitler

Deutsch, Harold C. The Conspiracy Against Hitler. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1968. An account of the German opposition to Hitler in the "twilight war" of 1939-1940.

Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf, ed. July 20, 1944--Germans Against Hitler. Bonn, Germany: Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 1969. An attempt by numerous historians to examine the problems surrounding the resistance in the Third Reich, to explain the motives, and to describe the course of events and consequences of July 20, 1944.

Kramarz, Joachim. Stauffenberg. Translated by R. N. Barry. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967. A biography of Klaus von Stauffenberg, the architect of the famous July 20 conspiracy to assassinate Hitler.

Manvell, Roger and Fraenkel, Heinrich. The Men Who Tried to Kill Hitler. New York: Coward-McCann, 1964. Not the best, but a reliable account of the men who plotted to kill Hitler.

Rothfels, Hans. The German Opposition to Hitler. Hinsdale, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1948. An inquiry into the attitudes of the German people toward the Nazi regime and the meaning of the German resistance.

Sykes, Christopher. Tormented Loyalty. New York: Harper and Row, 1969. An account of a German aristocrat, Adam von Trott, who defied Hitler.

Zeller, Eberhard. The Flame of Freedom. Translated by R. P. Hiller and D. R. Masters. Coral Gables, Florida: The University of Miami Press, 1969. Detailed German account of the struggle against Hitler.

XV. The Last Days of World War II

Chuikov, Vasili I. The Fall of Berlin. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968. Written by the former supreme commander of the Soviet land forces, the study provides a distorted account of the fall of Berlin.

Kuby, Erich. The Russians and Berlin, 1945. Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968. Drawing upon memoirs, diaries, court records, letters, and interviews with combatants on both sides, the author reconstructs the events surrounding the Russian capture of Berlin.

Steinhart, Marlis G. 23 Days: The Final Collapse of Nazi Germany. New York: Walker and Company, 1969. A study of the chaos experienced by the Nazi regime during the final days of war.

Toland, John. The Last Hundred Days. New York: Random House, 1966. A study based on interviews with people involved in the last days of the European war.

Trevor-Roper, H. R. The Last Days of Hitler. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947. Still the best account of the last days of World War II and the fate of those in the Berlin bunkers.

Tully, Andrew. Berlin: Story of a Battle. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.
The alarm, the attack, and outcome of the battle for Berlin as written by a war correspondent for the Boston Traveler.

In addition to making use of the suggested books, the instructor also should utilize visual media during his presentation of the material. Of the visual media available, commercially produced films are the most accessible and the most widely used.

Films may be used in a variety of ways to stimulate student interest. They may be used to provide proper introduction to a new topic; to serve as a direct instructional aid in teaching the subject matter of the unit or to enrich or extend the unit by highlighting related topics; to summarize or review material which has been studied; or to provide a rapid survey of a broad field.

The instructor should become familiar with the film to be shown by previewing it. Notice should be taken of specific scenes to be emphasized when presented to the students. There should be a definite purpose for showing the film; and, if there is none, it is best that the showing of the film be canceled.

The way in which the film is introduced is especially important because it sets the perspective from which the students see and hear the film. The

instructor may refer to former topics which have a direct bearing upon the new material which the film is to present. Questions may be raised which will be answered in whole or in part by the film. On occasions, it may be desirable to explain new words introduced by the film. Still another method of focusing attention upon specific elements is that of making advance assignments related to information portrayed by the film. In certain instances, it may not be desirable to show the entire film, but only a few sequences.

A good film stimulates students to do something about what they have observed; to exchange viewpoints, to verify, to read and study, and to learn more about the new ideas presented. In the discussion which follows the film--and a discussion should always follow--the instructor has an opportunity to discover and guide those interests along profitable lines.

The visual media suggested for use with this unit consists of two parts: slides, photographs, and documents collected by the writer and commercially produced films available from rental agencies. They have been classified and placed in the proper sequence for maximum utilization in the suggested class session. When ordering films, the complete title and code number, if there is one, of the film should be given. To prevent repetition in citing

the film sources, addresses of the rental agencies are listed together, while each film is identified by the name of the agency only.

Film Booking Department
Media Center
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306

McGraw-Hill Films
Division of McGraw-Hill Book Company
330 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036

Audio-Visual Center
Office for Academic Affairs
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

The Audio-Visual Division
College of General Studies
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208

Learning Corporation of America
711 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10022

- I. First Class Meeting: Germany's Political, Economic, and Social Conditions Following the World War

From Kaiser to Fuehrer. 30 minutes, B+W. 618047 \$11.00

The story of the ill-fated Weimar Republic, set up by forward-looking Germans after World War I, and sent to its death in 1933 by a combination of depression, inexperience of the Germans at democracy, and the doubt of many of its adherents.
McGraw-Hill Films

- II. Second Class Meeting: Introduction to the Obersalzberg
Writer's Collection of Slides

View of Watzmann Mountain
View of Watzmann from the Berchtesgadener Hof

Street Scenes in Berchtesgaden with Twin Towers
 of Medieval Franciscan Church
 View of Village of Berchtesgaden
 View of Berchtesgaden
 Four Views of Salt Miners Annual Festival
 Two Salt Miners in Their "Sunday Best"
 Obersalzberg Area, Kehlstein, and Eagle's Nest
 from Berchtesgaden
 Example of Original Rural Environment at
 Obersalzberg
 Bavarian Farm Chalet with Stones on Shingles
 Typical Bavarian Entertainers to Which Hitler
 Made Numerous References
 Village of Berchtesgaden from Road to Obersalzberg
 The Berghof, Hitler's Villa
 Hitler and Eva Braun at the Berghof
 The "Fabled" Untersberg
 Untersberg Covered with Snow
 View from "Platterhof" of One of Hitler's Guest
 Houses Located Approximately One Hundred Yards
 from the Berghof. Untersberg in the Background
 "Platterhof," Guest House, and Hill Where the
 Berghof Was Located
 Bricked Entrance to "Platterhof" Bunker
 Remains of SS Barracks
 View from the Site of the People's Theatre of the
 Remains of Village "Klaus" with the Berchtesgaden
 Valley in the Background
 Three Views of the Remains of Village "Klaus"
 View of Eagle's Nest Midway Between Obersalzberg
 and Kehlstein Summit
 Terrain Through Which Road to Eagle's Nest Was
 Built
 Eagle's Nest at Tunnel Entrance
 Telephoto View of Eagle's Nest from Tunnel Entrance
 Three Views of the Eagle's Nest As It Appeared in
 1960
 The Peak of the Kehlstein in July
 Telephoto View of the Obersalzberg from the Eagle's
 Nest
 Two Views of Koenigsee
 Obersee, Where Fritz Todt's Residence Was Located

Writer's Collection of Photographs

Original Autographed Portrait of Adolf Hitler,
 1931
 Hitler Talking on the Telephone at the Berghof

Two Poses of Hitler Reading the Berchtesgaden
Newspaper at the Berghof
Hitler Standing at a Window in the Berghof
Two Photographs of Hitler with Members of the
Hitler Youth
Photograph of Bormann (partially hidden), Goering,
Himmler, and Hitler at the Berchtesgaden
"Bahnhof"
Hitler With His Dog, Blondi
Hitler and Johanne Langwieder, Hitler's First
Sergeant in World War I, Meet at Aeinring
Airport Near Berchtesgaden
View of the "Kampfhaus" Where Hitler Wrote Much
of the Second Volume of Mein Kampf
Berchtesgadeners Greet Hitler at the Market Platz
in 1936
Partial View of Berghof After Final Renovation
The Eagle's Nest as It Originally Appeared

III. Third Class Meeting: Politics and Diplomacy, 1932-
September, 1938

Writer's Collection of Slides

Hitler in Vienna Hotel Imperial
Entrance to Hitler's Berlin Residence
Chancellery Conference Room
Burgerbrau, "Old Fighters Meeting," 1938
1938 Berlin Auto Show
Hitler Riding Through Munich
Hitler Inspects the Navy
Hitler in Hamburg
Victory Parade of the Condor Legion
Munich Ludwigstrasse, Day of Art
Hitler Arrives at Haus der Kunst
Hitler at Art Exhibit
Hitler Leaves Haus der Kunst
Arrival of Mussolini
Berlin on Hitler's Fiftieth Birthday
Hitler Says "Farewell"

Commercially Produced Films

Rise of a Dictator. 33 minutes, B+W. CS587 \$7.25
Traces the rise of Hitler and the growth of the
Nazi movement in Germany. Shows the techniques
of intimidation and mass psychology used on the
German public. Indiana University

The Rise of Adolf Hitler. 26 minutes, B+W. CS923
\$7.25

Uses a dramatized "on-the scene" news type of interviewing and documentary reporting to present the story of the rise of Adolf Hitler to power. Summarizes the developments in Germany during the three years preceding 1936. Indiana University

Twisted Cross. 55 minutes, 2 reels, B+W. CS1025
\$12.25

Shows how turmoil and economic chaos in Germany, following World War I contributed to the success of Hitler and the Nazi Party. Uses extensive quotes to clarify Nazi philosophy and dramatizes party activities and tactics. Follows the course of events from the conquest of Austria in 1938 to the collapse of Germany and the death of Hitler in 1945. Indiana University

Benito Mussolini. 26 minutes, B+W. CS1512 \$7.25

Dramatically portrays the rise to power and subsequent death of Mussolini. Describes the amassing of power and establishment of Mussolini as dictator. Stresses his appeal to the common people of Italy. Depicts his relationships with Hitler. Indiana University

Hitler, Parts I and II. 52 minutes, B+W. \$5.65 each part

Part I: The Rise to Power. Deals with Hitler's boyhood and early life, his part in forming and leading the National Socialist Party to power in 1933 and the events which led to the beginning of World War II in 1939.

Part II: The Fall of the Third Reich. Despite the early German victories in World War II, the turn of the tide and the allied victories which toppled the power of the Nazis. Florida State University

Minister of Hate. 27 minutes, B+W. \$5.65

Examines the technique of mass thought control evolved by the brilliant and ruthless Goebbels. Describes how he fastened on the mind of the German people the disastrous myth of a master race. Florida State University

Goering. 26 minutes, B+W. \$5.75

A study of the man who started out as Hitler's showpiece and ended as his scapegoat. Florida State University

Crisis at Munich. 26 minutes, B+W. 618049 \$11.00

The story of the fearful days when Hitler was threatening war over the Sudetenland Germans, and the conference at Munich where Chamberlain and Daladier met Hitler and agreed not to support Czechoslovakia in resisting. McGraw-Hill Films

Second World War, The Prelude to Conflict. 29 minutes, B+W. EBF4011 \$4.00

Examines key events, conditions, and political forces that contributed to the outbreak of war, the failure of the Versailles treaty, the impact of the great depression, the political crisis, and the spread of isolationism in the United States. University of South Carolina

Hitler: Anatomy of a Dictatorship. 23 minutes, B+W. LC#78-704777 \$15.00

The documentary footage and narration that compose this film cover Hitler's career from 1923 to the end of World War II. This chronological, realistic approach to the story of Nazism makes Hitler appear frighteningly believable and almost inevitable. Learning Corporation of America

IV. Fourth Class Meeting: German Aggression Against Poland and the European War Through March, 1941

Commercially Produced Films

Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany. 18 minutes, B+W. CS206 \$5.25

Reviews the rise of Hitler, his broken promises, the invasion of Germany's neighbors, Germany's eventual defeat, and the allied occupation of Germany. Indiana University

Hitler Invades Poland. 27 minutes, B+W. \$6.00

September 1, 1939, the world gets a clear picture of Hitler's intentions as Nazi troops overwhelm Poland. Florida State University

The Week That Shook the World. 25 minutes, B+W.
618050 \$11.00

Records events of the period between August 23, 1939, when Russia and Germany signed their non-aggression pact, and Germany's march into Poland on September 1, 1939. McGraw-Hill Films

- V. Fifth and Sixth Class Meetings: The European War, May, 1941-May, 1945

Writer's Collection of Photographs and Documents

View of the Steps Leading to the Berghof Lying in Ruins
View of the Large Window in the Berghof Conference Room and Lying in Ruins
View of the Berghof Following the Bombings of May, 1945
Panoramic View of the Obersalzberg Area Lying in Ruins
View of Haus Goering Lying in Ruins
Ruins of Haus Bormann
Berghof Being Dynamited by the U. S. Army in 1952
Four Views of the "Platterhof" Ruins
Two Views of the SS Barracks in Ruins
Collection of Photographs Taken During Interviews with Hans Baur
Collection of Photographs Taken During Interview with Paula Wolf
Copy of Hitler's Certificate of Death Issued in Berchtesgaden October 25, 1956
Editorial Letter by Johanne Langwieder Protesting Criticism of Hitler
Letter from Hitler's Sister Signed "Paula Hitler"

Commercially Produced Films

The Nazi-Soviet War. 27 minutes, B+W. 618067 \$11.00
1939--Nazi Germany and the U. S. S. R. sign a thirty-year pact. They jointly attack and partition Poland. Russia demands Soviet rule over eastern Europe. Hitler attacks Russia and the Soviet citizens welcome the Nazi armies. Hitler makes one of his colossal blunders by ordering the mass extermination of the Slavs. The ensuing Nazi defeat is history. McGraw-Hill Films

Memorandum. 58 minutes, B+W. 408019 \$25.00

A profoundly disturbing film which probes the phenomenon of the Nazi concentration camp in flash-backs through the mind of a survivor of Bergen-Belsen as he visits the "new" Germany. First prize, Best Documentary, San Francisco Film Festival. McGraw-Hill Films

Total War. 26 minutes, B+W. LC#78-705155 \$15.00

Film depicts major events leading up to and during World War II. Starting with the memories of Flanders Field, it recalls the Europe of the 1930's, the discontent of the Germans, and their acceptance of Hitler. Surveying the destructive elements of the war, it shows the rape of Austria, the capitulation of the English and the suffering of civilians. Learning Corporation of America

D-Day. 27 minutes, B+W. 400415 \$11.00

June 6, 1944, allied forces land in Normandy. CBS "You Are There." McGraw Hill Films

Second World War, D-Day. 26 minutes, B+W. EBF9154
\$4.00

The viewer is exposed to actual footage covering the invasion of June 6, 1944, and the anxiety that filled the two million soldiers as they prepared for it. University of South Carolina

Trial at Nuremburg. 26 minutes, B+W. \$5.15

Shows the trial of the top twenty-one Nazis charged with crimes against the peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Both American and Russian films are used to document the eleven-month trial. Florida State University

In addition to media, the writer has several interviews that were not necessarily relevant to the Obersalzberg, but which are relevant to the broader study of the Hitler era. In an interview with Otto Widl, a witness to the Munich Putsch and an early Nazi, a spectator's view of the Putsch is recalled. He also related his impressions of the Fuehrer and his associates. During the interview

with Paula Wolf, she described their brother and sister relationships, life as children, their relationship after Hitler became chancellor, and life in Berchtesgaden following the war. Johanne Langwieder described Hitler's reaction to battle, the impression he made on other soldiers, and three meetings the two comrades had between 1932 and 1936. Hans Baur, in addition to many other things already referred to in this study, described Hitler's reaction to flying and his own first impressions of Hitler. Most important, Baur gave a day-by-day and almost hourly account of the last two weeks in the Berlin bunkers. He was, to the best of his knowledge, the last person to see Martin Bormann alive, and consequently theorized about what happened to Bormann. Each of these accounts are excellent for stimulating student interest in the unit.

After completing the unit, the instructor will want to evaluate the performance of his students. The process for evaluation should be left to the discretion of the instructor. Because the unit was developed to provide students with a vicarious historical experience, the writer prefers that interest not be discouraged by administering the traditional test. With that in mind, it is suggested that evaluation be based, rather subjectively, on individual response and enthusiasm, an essay of the students' own choice written in class and without notes,

and a completed research project. These suggestions should provide an adequate instrument for evaluation.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

As a case study, the Obersalzberg provides students with the unique opportunity vicariously to experience life in an area that was important to Adolf Hitler. Through that experience, students should have a greater appreciation for the German people who, before the war, viewed Hitler as the relaxed servant of the people. Indeed, this was the image he projected from his Obersalzberg villa during the early days of his political career.

Why Hitler chose the Obersalzberg as the area where much of the drama of his life would unfold is a matter for conjecture. He never specifically gave any reasons for choosing this location. During numerous discussions with his staff on the eastern front, the Fuehrer recalled, with fondness, the peaceful times he had spent at the Obersalzberg. There were numerous references to its beauty and climate. On occasions, he was despondent over the loss of the Obersalzberg's natural beauty as a result of the construction there. Hitler was a painter, of sorts, and appreciated beauty; but it is doubtful that the beauty of the Berchtesgaden area was the only factor which prompted

him to come to the Obersalzberg. The legend of Siegfried-Barbarossa may have been a factor. Not only was Hitler aware of the legend, but he stated that his appearance at the Obersalzberg, across from the Untersberg, was not accidental. Hitler was a mystic and had great faith in his own destiny.¹ The "Siegfried line," and code name "Barbarossa" appear to be evidence of an inclination toward a mystic faith. Beginning with the German defeat at Stalingrad, Hitler often made references to the belief that his generals "stabbed him in the back," an indication that he was comparing himself to the blond Siegfried, who could be killed only by a "stab in the back." Surely, the destiny of the German nation was not in the hands of a mystic who believed he was fulfilling a legend. There must have been other considerations.

An important reason why Hitler had chosen the Obersalzberg as a refuge during the early days of his political career was its proximity to the Austrian border. Having come to the Obersalzberg first in 1923 and again in 1925, Hitler was forbidden to speak publicly in most of Germany and was under the scrutiny of the Weimar Government, as well as the police. The location of the

¹For a study of mysticism in the Third Reich, see Stanly A. Haas, "Mystical Aspects of Hitler's Germany" (unpublished Master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, May, 1972).

Obersalzberg afforded a quick escape from Germany if it were to become necessary. After being accustomed to the seclusion of the area, Hitler probably, quite naturally, chose the Obersalzberg as his residence out of habit and personal preference.

This study has pointed out popular misconceptions and confusion surrounding the Obersalzberg, particularly with regard to the Berghof, Hitler's Teahouse, and the Eagle's Nest. These are three different structures, and each had a different function. The Berghof was Hitler's home where numerous conferences were held with his staff and with important personalities from all over the world. This is where the Fuehrer spent most of his time at the Obersalzberg and where he made many momentous decisions. The Teahouse was a brief walk from the Berghof and was used virtually every afternoon following lunch for relaxation and endless monologues. Only Hitler's most intimate guests and staff were invited to these sessions.

The third structure, the Eagle's Nest, is the greatest point of confusion. Referred to by writers as Hitler's Teahouse, Hitler's mountain eyrie, and as Hitler's mountain retreat, it was neither. The squat building, constructed of material resembling concrete blocks, was built by Martin Bormann and presented to Hitler on his fiftieth birthday. Situated at the peak of the Kehlstein

mountain, the Eagle's Nest is inaccessible from about the first of November to late spring because of snow. The Fuehrer was never at the structure more than five times, only three of which can be adequately documented. The earliest of these visits was October 17, 1938, when Francois-Poncet conferred with Hitler there. This visit, referred to earlier in this study, took place before the Eagle's Nest was finished. The French diplomat described his visit as a social one. Hitler led him to one of the bay windows in the main room to show the diplomat the view. The Fuehrer expressed regrets that Francois-Poncet was leaving his post in Berlin. They exchanged a few compliments and polite phrases. At Hitler's orders, tea was served in an adjoining salon. For two hours, they talked simply, informally, and frankly.²

Hitler's second known visit to the Eagle's Nest came in early August, 1939, when he drove up with Speer and other unnamed officials. No evidence has been found to indicate the nature of this visit.

The Fuehrer's third and longest visit took place at the wedding reception held at the Eagle's Nest for Hermann Fegelein and Gretl Braun, Eva's sister. Because of wide publicity given this affair by Hoffmann, Hitler's

²Francois-Poncet, The Fateful Years, pp. 285-286.

photographer, world-wide attention focused on the structure resulting in uninformed speculation about its importance.

There were two other occasions that Hitler may have visited the Eagle's Nest; when Bormann presented it to the Fuehrer, and when Schirach and his wife were there in June, 1943. These two visits may be assumed, but there is no substantial evidence to that effect. There is no evidence of a single military conference nor official meeting having taken place; nor is there any reason known for constructing the Eagle's Nest, except that Bormann himself often went there.

Whereas the importance of the Eagle's Nest has been grossly overemphasized, the importance of the Obersalzberg as a whole has been greatly underemphasized. In the introduction to this study, attention was called to statements made by Bullock which implied that Hitler's major function at the Berghof was that of a prophet. To be sure, Hitler did dream great dreams there, but he also translated many of those dreams into reality while at the Berghof. It was there that the Anschluss was realized; Hitler's position on the Sudeten question was unequivocally stated; the planning for, and news received of, the successful conclusion of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact; the planning and implementation of the invasion of Poland; the planning of "Operation Sea Lion" and "Operation Barbarossa";

news was received of Hess's flight to Scotland, of the Russian offensive which led to the German defeat at Stalingrad, and of the allied invasion of Normandy.

At the Berghof, the whole range of Hitler's personality characteristics are glimpsed. In his conversations with David Lloyd George, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Francois-Poncet, and Lord Halifax, Hitler was a personable host who displayed all the restraints and courtesies expected of a man in his position. Schuschnigg, Chamberlain, Lipski, Beck, Henderson, Burckhardt, and King Leopold of Belgium saw yet another aspect, that of a diplomatic intriguer. At the military conferences, the Fuehrer displayed characteristics of a strategist who intuitively determined moves of the German army without regard for his generals' advice.

At the Berghof, a group of conspirators, plotting to assassinate the Fuehrer, met with Hitler and ironically received his sanction of "Operation Valkyrie," and one serious attempt against his life was carried out prior to the "July 20 plot." Other unsuccessful attempts to assassinate the Fuehrer were planned for the Obersalzberg, but none as serious as "Valkyrie."

Toward the conclusion of the war, Hitler was expected to command Germany's last stand from the Obersalzberg as a part of the "Alpine Redoubt." So

thoroughly was Eisenhower's headquarters convinced of the redoubt plans, that it became a primary consideration in Eisenhower's decision to stop at the Elbe. General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, told a press conference on April 21, 1945, that the redoubt was something of which they were not sure. Intelligence, G-2, indicated a strong build up in the redoubt area, and bombings in the area indicated about eighty-five percent of the industries there were underground. They believed that when the redoubt area was taken, German forces in Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and other areas of Europe would surrender. Smith minimized the military importance of Berlin in the same press conference:

. . . it doesn't have much significance any more-- not anything comparable to that of the so-called national Alpine redoubt and a jumping off place from which later we can operate in Norway if we have to. . . .³

When one reporter asked Smith of the whereabouts of Hitler, Smith responded that he was "probably in Berchtesgaden organizing the defense."⁴ The fear of the redoubt was only one consideration in the decision to stop at the Elbe and to leave Berlin to the Russians. As a factor in that decision, the Obersalzberg takes on renewed significance.

³Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower and Berlin, 1945: The Decision to Halt at the Elbe (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 76-78.

⁴Ibid., p. 78.

Today, the Obersalzberg is a quiet Bavarian mountain community. Only the Eagle's Nest, the reconstructed Platterhof (General Walker Hotel), the old gestapo headquarters--now an inn--and the ruins of the SS barracks serve as reminders of the Hitler era. The bunkers, flooded with water, have been sealed off from the public, except for the Hitler bunkers, which are a tourist attraction. To those visiting the community today, it seems fitting that Hitler in of his pensive moods at the Berghof should have said,

There are two possibilities for me: to win through with all my plans, or to fail. If I win, I shall be one of the greatest men in history. If I fail, I shall be condemned, despised, and damned.⁵

⁵Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 101.

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