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The Complete HITLER

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

Max Domarus



Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc.
Wauconda, Illinois USA

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

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1932-1945

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Volume IV 1941-1945

MAX DOMARUS

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations
1932–1945

THE CHRONICLE
OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME TWO
The Years 1935 to 1938



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Abbreviations

BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BDM	= Bund Deutscher Mädel
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DBrFP	= Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1911-1939
DGFP	= Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945
DLV	= Deutscher Luftsportverband (German Air Sports Association)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
G.Kdos.	= Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HVBL	= Heeresverordnungsblatt (Army Decree Gazette)
IMT	= International Military Tribunal, 1945-1949
KdF	= Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through joy")
NS	= Nationalsozialistisch (National Socialist)
NSBO	= Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation (National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation)
NSDAP	= Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
NSDFB	= Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund, Stahlhelm (National Socialist German FrontLine Soldiers' Association)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSV	= Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization)
OKII	= Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKW	= Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
OSAF	= Oberster SA Führer (Supreme Commander of the SA)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
III,	= Politischer Leiter (Political Leader)
PO	= Politische Organisation (Political Organization)
RGBI	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RM	= Reichsmark
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
TU	= Telegraphenunion (Telegraph Union)
VB	= Völkischer Beobachter (Nationalist Observer)
WHW	= Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organisation)
WT13	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolffs Telegraph Bureau)

THE YEAR 1935

Major Events in Summary

The last crisis of the preceding year—in particular the tensions between the Reichswehr and the SS—continued to cast its shadow over the early months of 1935. Hitler was able, however, to play down this friction in a speech to “German leadership.”

The overwhelming outcome of the Saar plebiscite on January 13 then catapulted the entire population into such a mood of nationalistic euphoria that domestic problems seemed, at least temporarily, a thing of the past.

On the heels of the triumphant return of the Saar to the German Reich came measures instituted by Hitler which shattered the illusions many Germans had had. As early as March 9, the existence of a new German Luftwaffe was openly proclaimed, and on March 16, the day before “Heroes’ Memorial Day,” general conscription was reintroduced by means of a “Declaration to the German Volk.”

The Germans had barely begun to nourish hopes that, with the return of the Saar, things would settle down and a peaceful future was dawning. Hitler’s actions brought them up short. One must bear in mind that the dominant tendency in Europe at the time was to do away with regular armies and introduce defense-oriented militia systems in their stead. Standing armies based upon conscription service of several years were frowned upon.

Rumor had it at the time that general conscription—which existed in Great Britain, for instance, only during wartime—was also to be abolished in other countries. The German population at large regarded itself as particularly fortunate in this sense, for not only did the Treaty of Versailles not provide conscription duty; but it, moreover, stipulated only a professional army of 100,000 men, which meant that there were no obstacles to the introduction of a militia system based upon voluntary service.

On the basis of what Hitler had been stating in his speeches, the introduction of compulsory labor service was anticipated but by no means general conscription, for the latter was viewed as a clear indication of a country’s intention to conduct aggressive warfare.

Hitler was perfectly aware of the blow this measure had dealt to the German people and thus did not dare to schedule any elections or plebiscites during 1935—notwithstanding his repeated claim that a statesman's appointment should be confirmed anew each year by the people in elections.¹ As late as August of 1934, he had stated to Ward Price, "Every year I take one opportunity or another to present my powers to the German Volk."²

The reintroduction of general conscription caused less consternation to the Western Powers than had been expected. As noted above, they displayed a willingness to allow Hitler free rein as long as his actions could be justified as a claim to equal rights or as a principle of the *ius gentium*; they would, however, act immediately as soon as he fired the first shot.

Great Britain condoned the reinstatement of general conscription in Germany by dispatching its Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, and Lord Privy Seal Anthony Eden to Germany in March and subsequently concluding a naval pact in June which fixed German tonnage at one-third that of Great Britain's.

Hitler was hence in a position to legally step up rearmament. In the autumn of the year, those born in 1914 commenced their military service, the first to be drafted for duty.

On the Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg, three laws were proclaimed: the notorious anti-Semitic racial laws and—less known but at the time the most important one for Hitler—the "Reich Flag Act."

The compulsory labor service Hitler had propagated so enthusiastically in 1933 and 1934 finally did become law on June 26, but was limited to a mere six months.³ In the course of time, it was revealed to be what Hitler had always envisioned, namely a pre-stage to military service, which was thus extended, for all practical purposes, to two and a half years.

The SA was also assigned its new function in 1935: that of preparing German youth for military duty by training them for the SA Sports and Defense Badges.

The Stahlhelm, whose function as a so-called *Wehrverband* and militia-like organization had always irked Hitler, was finally dissolved on November 8, 1935.

Report and Commentary

1

On New Year's Day, Hitler issued a "Proclamation to the National Socialists and Party Comrades" which bore implicit witness to the existing animosity between the Party and the Reichswehr:⁴

The great reformatory work on the Volk and the Reich will go on. The battle against unemployment and social distress will go on.

The enemies and dreamers who have again begun to believe themselves capable of tearing the National Socialist German Volk and the German Reich asunder and overthrowing the regime they so despise by a flood of written lies and accusations will, in twelve months' time, be likewise disproved by harsh reality as was the case in the year now lying behind us.

Every attempt to do damage to Germany will ultimately be rendered unsuccessful by the discipline and loyalty of the National Socialist Party and its adherents as well as by the unshakeable will and perseverance of its leadership.

Yet our most fervent wish for this year 1935 is the return of that German territory which shall proclaim on January 13 with the voice of blood to all the world its indissoluble affinity with the German Reich.

Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our united German Volk and German Reich!

Munich, January 1, 1935

Adolf Hitler

The traditional New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps was given by the German Head of State in Berlin.⁵ Attired in a tailcoat, Hitler reciprocated the congratulations proffered by the Apostolic Nuncio, Orsenigo, with the following remarks:⁶

Your Excellency!

It is with sincere gratitude that I may accept the congratulations Your Excellency has extended to me and to the German Volk on behalf of the diplomatic corps and at the same time on behalf of your sovereigns and Heads of State at the beginning of the new year. You have spoken, Your Excellency, of humanity's fervent wish for the preservation of peace and have rightly stressed that, without the guarantee of peace, there is no hope of fruitful

January 1, 1935

progress in any area of human activity. You can rest assured that these words reflect the opinion of the entire German Volk.

No other country can be more deeply conscious of the need for peace than Germany, which has combined all its forces for an inner reconstruction after hard years full of misery and suffering, which wishes to perform the work of reconstruction in peace and which demands, for its own vital rights, merely the same recognition and respect from other countries which it in turn accords to them. Germany's policies, based unshakeable upon these principles, will make it always a dependable guarantor of peace.

Your Excellency, you have pointed out difficulties and troubles arising from the present situation; for my part, I adhere to your view that they are indeed solvable given the good intentions of all. I do not see any problem in the relations between peoples which would not be conducive to an amicable solution if handled with understanding! I also am not prepared to believe that these good intentions are lacking today in any responsible circles abroad. The German Volk and its government are determined, in any case, to make their contribution toward fashioning the relations between peoples in such a way that a genuine cooperation is ensured on the basis of equality of rights and that this alone will guarantee the welfare and progress of mankind.

May the new year bring us closer to this lofty aim! It is with this hope I may, on behalf of the German Volk and on my own behalf, extend to you, Your Excellency, and you, Gentlemen, as well as to your Heads of State, your governments and your peoples, my warmest wishes for the New Year!

As mentioned above, in the preceding weeks Hitler had been extremely depressed by the increasing friction between the Wehrmacht on the one hand and the Party and the SS on the other. The Saar plebiscite was nearing, and he planned to reintroduce general conscription immediately when this territory once more became a part of the Reich. Hundreds of thousands of young men would swell the ranks of the Reichswehr, doubtless increasing its influence, while the Party would be forced into a supporting role—a fact of which the generals and Party leadership were well aware. But what alternative did Hitler have? He had made up his mind to accomplish his foreign policy goal of conquering new Lebensraum in the East using conscription soldiers serving two-year terms. Later, when he had achieved his aims, he would naturally send the generals packing and structure the army according to pure Natural Socialist principles. In the meantime, however, it was his conviction that he needed the Reichswehr generals, and he had no qualms about German youth entering the reactionary “School of the Nation.”⁷ His exclusive objective at the time was to overcome the resistance of the Party and to impress upon the generals that he would by no means disarm the SS as they wished.

While Hitler did flatter the generals, he certainly did not intend to place himself in their power and sacrifice his SS elite guard. The question was how to lend more emphasis to his wishes; another Rohm Purge, for instance, was not a viable alternative. Faced with this difficult situation, he conceived of an inventive solution relying upon his rhetorical talent to arouse sympathy. This ploy had been very successful during the crisis surrounding Strasser in December of 1932, and what had worked with party leaders might well also prove effective with the upper echelons of government and the Wehrmacht.

Thus Hitler scheduled a “Rally of German Leadership” in Berlin on January 3.⁸ The term “German Leadership” (*Deutsche Führerschaft*) had not been used prior hereto; it was created for the purposes of this rally and never used again thereafter. The expression was, however, understood to signify that the leaders of both the Party and the armed forces were to constitute a single unit for the occasion.

Unfortunately, there is no verbatim record of Hitler’s January 3 speech addressed to the “German Leadership” in the State Opera (Unter den Linden). If one lends credence to the accounts of those in attendance, his speech did not differ substantially from the one delivered to the NSDAP Reichstag deputies in December 1932. He began with a long version of the “party narrative,” enumerated his own achievements, and then, ostensibly close to tears, confessed that he would not be able to continue the work of reconstructing Germany unless all of the leaders of the Party, the State and the Wehrmacht represented a single unit devoted to no one else but him.

It has been reported that here—as on the occasion of the Strasser crisis—Hitler publicly threatened to commit suicide. In any case, the speech accomplished its purpose, due in no small part to the fact that Hitler had placed the necessity for an en-bloc effort within the context of the approaching Saar plebiscite. His performance was greeted with thunderous applause, for no one wanted to bear the blame were the beloved Führer to suddenly suffer a nervous breakdown and decide to put an end to it all. Rudolf Hess, who chaired the rally, subsequently gave the floor to Göring, who—again, just as during the Strasser crisis—expressed the unanimity of all present in moving words. Particular emphasis was put on the fact that he was speaking as a “high-ranking National Socialist leader and at the same time as a Reichswehr General and a Member of the Reich Cabinet”—thus personifying the synthesis of all “German leaders” present—when he read his “Address of Gratitude and Devotion.”

January 3, 1935

Following Hitler's convincing play-acting, the well-behaved participants were treated to yet another performance that evening at the State Opera. A specially selected ensemble, conducted by General Music Director Erich Kleiber, presented Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, staged for the sole enjoyment of this elite "German Leadership."

On the next day, German newspaper readers were surprised to find the following official report of this somewhat extraordinary rally at the Berlin State Opera:⁹

Berlin, January 3

At the Rally of German Leadership, following the welcoming remarks of the Prussian Minister-President, the Führer took the floor to deliver a speech characterized by electrifying power and inner faith. He first presented a retrospective on what lies behind us, on the achievements and accomplishments of the past year of which we can be proud, and then cited the prospects for the work of the coming year.

In connection with the forthcoming Saar plebiscite, the Führer discussed the flood of lies which has now once again been launched against the Reich. The same elements which persecuted the National Socialist Movement and heaped upon it lies and slander for fourteen years in Germany were today, in foreign countries, returning to these same methods because they had no other means at their disposal with which to attack the new Germany. The Führer then proceeded to show, in a tone of heavy sarcasm, how they attempted over and over again to create the impression of mistrust and discord between Germany's leaders according to their old, worn-out recipes. Their slogan was, "Lies always spread faster than the truth. For that reason lie, and keep lying—perhaps some of it will catch on."

Nothing could be too stupid and too brazen but they would do it. They were, the Führer said, simply speculating on the forgetfulness and stupidity of the people. But in the end they always succumbed to the same mistakes. They had, for instance, up to now repeatedly forecast the dates for the "German collapse" too prematurely—to their own detriment—only to have their own prophecies shown up as lies. Even if now, after these experiences, they had become more cautious and were predicting the next action and catastrophe in Germany only for January 14, intending that their lie would not be revealed before the plebiscite, this maneuver would not be much help at this stage.

On January 13, the Führer stated, it is necessary that our brothers who wish to return to the homeland after fifteen years of brave resistance will be able to return to a homeland worthy of them, and the opponents must realize all the more that any thought of gambling on the age-old ill from which Germany is still suffering, on our lack of unity, would be in vain this time. "They should not think that they only have one of us before them; rather, they should all know that, as concerns the defense of German honor and the defense of peace and the vital interests of the nation, they are faced with the entire German nation, today's entire State, as a single sworn unit."

In gripping words repeatedly interrupted by showers of applause on the part of the entire German leadership corps, the Führer spoke of the indissoluble bond of fate between all those serving the nation and its future by working together in mutual trust toward the great goals of National Socialist Germany. No difficulty could ever be greater than our will, our faith, our decency, our solidarity, and our shared work.

In closing, the Führer responded to the New Year's congratulations which had been extended to him:

"I would like to reciprocate these New Year's wishes to you as representatives of the entire German Volk and to add one more: May the Almighty God not only keep you and our Volk healthy, but may He also make us truly strong of spirit for the coming year so that we may do justice to all of the tasks confronting us.

"In this year, too, we wish to extend our hands to one another in boundless trust and, as before, march into a year not only of struggle and difficulty, but also of victory, as a community which is unshakeable."

In a show of applause powered by deep emotion, the assembled leaders thanked Adolf Hitler for his remarks, giving a spontaneous demonstration of their loyalty and affection. The adage, "Where he treads, no treason lurks; there stands the guard of loyalty" is quite fitting.

Following the Führer's speech, Rudolf Hess returned the floor to Prussian Minister-President Hermann Göring¹⁰ who, in his joint functions as a high-ranking National Socialist leader, Reichswehr General and a Member of the Reich Cabinet, read an address on behalf of those attending:

"Mein Führer!

"Caught still in the grip of the powerful words which you have just imparted to us, I may assure you in this address that we are all moved to the innermost and to the utmost; that we are willing, as a united whole, to follow you as comrades unto death. In this spirit and in this sense, the German leadership assembled here may address you as follows:

"The members of the Reich Government and the Reich Leadership of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the Reichsstatthalters and the representatives of the Land Governments, the heads and officers of the Wehrmacht, the commanders and officers of the Land Police, the Gauleiters of the Party, the Leaders of the SA, the SS, the NSKK, the Labor Service, the Feldjägerkorps, and the Hitler Youth assembled here may thank you for your impressive and arresting words.

"The words of trust which you have given us fill us with deep-felt pride. An irresponsible and transparent campaign abroad is hoping in vain, with a view to the forthcoming plebiscite in the Saar which will bring our German brothers back home, to arouse unrest and mistrust in order to weaken the steady stance of the loyal Saarlanders by senseless, fabricated lies and rumors at home and abroad.

'It is with loathing and indignation that we stand up against these machinations stemming from interested parties. The holders of the highest offices in the Reich, State and Party who have been appointed by virtue of your confidence; the generals and officers of the Wehrmacht and the Land

Police; the well-trying leaders of the SA and SS troops; and all others present who occupy outstanding positions in public life pledge to do everything to put a speedy and thorough end to these malicious lies by steadfastness, enlightenment and vigorous action.

‘The attempt to wear us down with this clever and systematic press campaign should and will fail because of our nerves of steel and our mutual loyalty and dedication.

‘This year as well, we shall all follow our Führer in blind obedience, filled by the unshakeable faith that all of your feelings, thoughts and your untiring work are dedicated solely to the thriving and flourishing of the German Volk, a Volk which wants nothing but to live in peaceful equality of rights with all other peoples while upholding its honor and its freedom.’

“I appeal to all of you to reaffirm this vow by calling out: Three *Sieg Heils* to our dearly beloved Führer.”

As one body, the assembled rose and joined in the *Sieg Heil* with jubilant enthusiasm. Then the Führer’s deputy, Rudolf Hess, announced the close of the rally of German Leadership.

The day ended quite festively with a performance of *Tannhäuser* at the State Opera, attended by the Führer. The opera house was reserved exclusively for those present at the major rally in the afternoon, and the inner determination and unanimity of the audience was displayed outwardly as well by the overwhelming number of party uniforms. It may well be that every single member of the audience had the feeling of being, in his place, important to the will of the Führer and valuable to the Movement.

The Führer was seated in the front row of the large center box. Next to him sat Reichsstatthalter von Epp; General von Blomberg; the Führer’s deputy, Hess; Minister-President Göring; SA Chief of Staff, Lutze; and the Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels.

By virtue of his sentimental speech on January 3, Hitler succeeded in at least temporarily smoothing out the most pressing differences between the NSDAP and the Reichswehr. After general conscription was instituted, the conflicts between the Party and the generals resurfaced, particularly because the latter renewed their efforts to gain influence in the state and the civilian sector by means of their newly created *Soldatenbund*¹¹ (Soldiers’ League). The animosities smoldered on into 1938.¹²

The positive outcome of the “Leadership Rally” freed Hitler from the mental pressure from which he had been suffering. He was so euphoric that he spent the next day with Goebbels touring the Neubabelsberg film studio and visiting film sets.¹³

On January 11, he received the Reichskommissar for the Saar, Gauleiter Josef Bürckel, in the Reich Chancellery and gave him last-minute instructions concerning the plebiscite.¹⁴ On January 13, the vote

was taken determining the future of the Saar under the protection of the League of Nations and neutral troops dispatched by Great Britain, Holland, Sweden, and Italy. The voting procedure was supervised by three hundred commissioners appointed by the League of Nations. Three alternatives were submitted: the status quo, union with France, or reunion with Germany.

Counting the ballots took some time, so that the results were not disclosed until 5:15 a.m. on January 15. The announcement was made by the president of the voting commission, Rhode, and its Secretary-General, Vellemain. 445,000 votes (90.5 percent) had been cast for reunion with Germany; 46,000 for the status quo, and 2,000 for union with France.

Hitler was informed of the results by Gauleiter Bürckel per telephone on the Obersalzberg. He then delivered the following speech on radio from the Post Office at Berchtesgaden:¹⁵

Germans!

An injustice which has existed for fifteen years is coming to an end! The suffering to which so many hundreds of thousands of Volksgenossen in the Saar have been subjected during this time was a suffering shared by the German nation!

The joy at the return of our Volksgenossen is a joy shared by the entire German Reich. Fate willed that it not be superior reason which would end this both pointless and regrettable situation, but a section in a treaty which promised to bring peace to the world and led instead only to endless suffering and constant discord.

Our pride is therefore all the greater that, after fifteen years of violating the voice of the blood, it has now, on January 13, 1935, made its most powerful profession of faith!

There is one thing we all know, my dear Volksgenossen of the Saar: the fact that today, in a few hours, the bells will ring throughout the German Reich as an outward expression of the proud joy which fills us, is something we owe to you Germans in the Saar, to your sheerly unshakeable loyalty, to your self-sacrificing patience and persistence, and to your bravery.

Neither force nor temptation have made you waver in the faith that you are Germans, just as you have always been, and as we all are now and will remain!

Hence I may extend to you as the Führer of the German Volk and Chancellor of the Reich, in the name of all Germans whose spokesman I am at this moment, the gratitude of the nation, and may assure you how happy we are at this hour that you are once again united with us as sons of our Volk and citizens of the new German Reich.

It is a proud feeling to be chosen by Providence as the representative of a nation. In the next few days and weeks, you, my Germans of the Saar, will

January 15, 1935

be the representatives of the German Volk and the German Reich. I know that you will not forget in the coming weeks of joy over the victory—just as you did not forget in the past under the most difficult circumstances—that there are those whose most fervent desire it is to find fault in your return to the great homeland, even after the event. You must therefore continue to maintain the strictest discipline!

The German Volk will be all the more grateful to you because you have taken upon yourselves a decision that will remove tensions in Europe which have weighed most heavily: for all of us wish to perceive in this act of January 13 an initial and decisive step toward a gradual reconciliation among those who, twenty years ago, stumbled into the most horrible and least fruitful battles of all time, victims of fate and human fallibility. Your decision, my dear German Volksgenossen of the Saar, today makes it possible for me to submit a declaration, as our selfless, historic contribution to the pacification of Europe which is so vital: when your reintegration has been effected, the German Reich will place no more territorial demands upon France!

I believe that, in doing this, we are also expressing to the other powers our appreciation for faithfully scheduling this plebiscite in cooperation with France and ourselves and for making it possible that it subsequently be carried out.

It is our unanimous wish that this German end to such a tragic injustice will contribute to a greater pacification between the peoples of Europe. For just as our determination to gain and ensure equality of rights for Germany is great and absolute, our resolve not to evade those tasks which are a necessary part of bringing about genuine solidarity among the nations in the face of today's perils and crises is equally great.

You, my German Volksgenossen of the Saar, have made a significant contribution to increasing the awareness of the indissoluble community of our Volk and of the inward and outward value of the German nation and today's Reich. Germany thanks you for this from millions of overflowing hearts.

Welcome to our dear, shared homeland, to our united German Reich!

On the same day, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Reichskommissar for the Saar, Gauleiter Bürckel, from Berchtesgaden:¹⁶

On the occasion of the wonderful conclusion to fifteen years of separation of the Saar from the Reich, please accept my most sincere gratitude for the exemplary work you have done. At the same time, I may ask you to pass on my thanks to the leaders of the German Front. Let them know that we are very proud and filled with joy.

Mit herzlichem Heilgruss,

Your Adolf Hitler

On January 16, Hitler granted an interview at the Obersalzberg to the American journalist Pierre Huss, a correspondent for the Hearst Press:¹⁷

Question: Herr Reichskanzler, what is your opinion of the outcome of the Saar plebiscite?

Answer: The results of the plebiscite fill me—and every single one of my staff—with infinite pride in the German Volk. At the same time, this is a subsequent condemnation of the Peace Treaty of Versailles of truly historic dimensions. For in this Treaty, this region was torn from Germany on the grounds that 150,000 French lived there. After a fifteen-year rule of the League of Nations and thus ultimately of France, it has now been ascertained that not 150,000, but a scant 2,000 French reside in this region, i.e. not even four French per 1,000 inhabitants of the Saar. How can anyone be surprised no good can come of a treaty based upon such incorrect assumptions?

Question: Will the Social Democrats or Communists in the Saar and other non-National Socialist inhabitants of this territory who have cast their ballots for Germany have anything to fear in the future due to their former political leanings?

Answer: Sixteen years ago, I began my struggle for Germany with six men; that means my struggle for the German Volk. The number of my followers, to-wit, the followers of the National Socialist Movement of the new State, has risen to nearly thirty-nine million since then. Do you think that all these people did not belong to some other party before? No, at one time they were all part of some movement or another.

They have been won over to the National Socialist idea with labor and with time. And we will not give up this struggle for the soul of our Volk now. Therefore, we never ask what an individual was in the past, but what he wants to be today. This is how we have succeeded in dissolving the feuding German parties and formed a true Volksgemeinschaft in which former Communists and adherents of the Center coexist, joined in their mutual struggle for the National Socialist State, the new Reich. But a part of this Reich is the Saar, and its inhabitants comprise a part of our Volk.

Question: Herr Reichskanzler, you have frequently stated that the last obstacle to amicable relations with France would be removed when the Saar question was settled. In view of your untiring, further pursuit of this goal in the interest of world peace, do you have a specific plan in mind?

Answer: I have frequently stated that, after the return of the Saar to Germany, I would place no further territorial demands on France. I have repeated this statement definitively today before the whole world. In historical terms, it is a very difficult thing to renounce this as I am doing in the name of the German Volk. But I am making this most difficult sacrifice in order to contribute to the pacification of Europe. One cannot expect more from Germany. It is now up to the rest of the world to draw the consequences of such a decision. Never shall I—and never shall the new German Reich—consent to any limitations to the rights of our people. We wish to be a peaceful Volk, but under no circumstances without honor.

We are willing to make a very big sacrifice, but never to renounce our freedom. We reject any differentiation between moral equality and factual equality: there is but one equality of rights, and that is the right of a sovereign

state and a sovereign nation. If the world recognizes this, there is no need for grandiose plans to fortify peace in Europe.

Question: Herr Reichskanzler, do you now, after your great success in the Saar plebiscite, have anything to say which might be of particular interest to the American people?

Answer: I have but one request to address to the American people. For years now and in the past months, millions of American citizens will have been hearing and reading the opposite of what has now been affirmed in this free and open ballot on the Saar. I would be happy if this were to be taken cognizance of so that, in the future, no one will any longer believe a word of what the professional international well-poisoners and rabble-rousers among our emigrants say. Just as they lied about the Saar, they are lying about Germany and, in doing so, practically lying to the whole world.

The American people should hear only eyewitness reports on Germany and, if possible, personally come to Germany in order to see for themselves a State whose regime is today supported by the overwhelming majority of the nation.

An interview with Ward Price followed on January 17.¹⁸ Noteworthy is the fact that, although Ward Price emphasized the “fait accompli of the restoration of German arms,” Hitler did not deign to utter a single word on the subject.

Question I. Under which conditions could Germany return to the League of Nations?

Answer: Neither I nor anyone else in Germany would even consider placing any “conditions” on our possible return to the League of Nations. Whether or not we return to this body depends exclusively upon whether we can belong to it as a completely equal nation. This is not a “condition,” but a matter of course.

Either we are a sovereign state, or we are not! As long as we are not, we have no business in a community of sovereign states. As long as the National Socialist Movement is leading Germany—and that will be the case for the next few centuries, no matter how often our emigrants conjure up the opposite view—this opinion will not change.

Incidentally, I stated this explicitly in my May speech in 1933.¹⁹ I would like to stress that the German Volk feels that the differentiation between “moral” and “factual” equality is an insult.

Whether or not sixty-eight million people are morally equal in this world or not is ultimately something which can be decided by no one save the respective people itself.

Either one is factually equal, and consequently morally equal as well; on the other hand, if one is morally equal, there is no reason why one should contest factual equality of rights or simply refuse to grant them.

Question II Will it be necessary to separate the general provisions of the League of Nations from those of the Treaty of Versailles?

Answer: As long as the League of Nations constitutes only a treaty of guarantee for the victorious nations, it is by no means worthy of its name. The fact that, with time, this League—which was presumably designed by its founders to exist for all eternity—cannot be coupled with a Treaty the short term of which is inherent in its own weaknesses and impracticabilities, is a point which can perhaps be contested by today's interested parties, but which will one day be deemed a matter of course in history.

Question III Should the recognition of equality of rights be a precondition, or could granting equality of rights and rejoining the League take place simultaneously?

Answer: German equality of rights is the prerequisite for any participation on Germany's part in international conventions and agreements. I certainly am not alone in the world with this demand; I am in the best of company. Let it be said that no self-respecting people and no responsible government would be able to think or much less act differently in such a case. The world has already seen a great many wars lost in the past.

If in the past, after every lost war, the unlucky vanquished were divested forever of their honor and their equality of rights, the League of Nations would even now have to be satisfied with a whole series of non-equal and thus ultimately dishonorable and inferior nations. For there is hardly a state or nation in existence which has not once had the misfortune, even if it was in the right a thousand times over, to be defeated by a stronger opponent or a stronger coalition.

Until now, this abominable absurdity has not yet been able to gain a foothold in the world, and we are determined to ensure that Germany will not be the first to set an example for the introduction of such an absurdity.

Question IV Does Your Excellency not find that a reform of the League of Nations is called for? What practical steps would this entail? Which arguments could be used to obtain public support?

Answer: Since we are not in the League of Nations in any case, we do not devote our attention to reflecting on its internal reforms.

Question V. Recently I spoke with a high-ranking political personage in France. I asked him the following:

Why does France choose not to recognize the fait accompli of the restoration of German arms? We English always hold that it is more sensible not to ignore such facts.

The politician replied to me:

Yes, we believe that Germany will uphold a policy of reconciliation only until the Reichswehr judges itself capable of successfully waging a war. In France, there is fear that the overtures to the French associations of front-line soldiers are only a camouflage to conceal aggressive future intentions.

What is Your Excellency's reply to this fear?

Answer: That politician has never led a people. Otherwise how could he believe that one can talk about peace for a decade and then suddenly, with the same people, simply start a war without further ado? When I talk about

peace, I am expressing none other than the innermost desire of the German Volk. I know the horrors of war: no gains can compensate for the losses it brings. The disastrous consequences of widespread European butchery in the future would be even worse. I believe that the madness of Communism would be the sole victor. But I have not fought this for fifteen years to elevate it finally to the throne by way of a detour. What I want is the well-being of my Volk! I have seen that war is not the highest form of bliss, but the contrary: I have witnessed only the deepest suffering. Hence I can quite frankly state two of my beliefs:

1. Germany will never break the peace of its own accord, and

2. He who would lay hands upon us will encounter thorns and barbs! For we love liberty just as we love peace.

And if, without being compelled to do so, I submit to France on behalf of the entire German Volk the pledge that we will place no further territorial demands upon it and thus of our own accord eliminate any grounds for revenge, at the same time I pledge an equally sacred vow that no measure of need, pressure or violence will ever move us to relinquish our honor or our equality of rights.

I hold that this must be said, for treaties only make sense when concluded by honor-loving peoples and honor-conscious governments. Germany wishes to establish honest relations with the peoples of neighboring countries. We have done this in the East, and I believe that not only Berlin but Warsaw as well will rejoice in the decontamination of the atmosphere brought about through our joint efforts. I hold to my conviction that, once this path of mutual understanding and consideration has been taken, more will come of it in the end than through ever so extensive pacts inherently lacking in clarity.

In any case, I will reflect a thousand times over before I allow the German Volk to become entangled in agreements whose consequences are not readily evident. If, on our own account, we do not intend to wage war, we are much less willing to do so for interests which do not concern Germany and are alien to it. I may add that we have more than once stated our willingness to conclude non-aggression pacts with the states neighboring our own!

On January 22, at the eighty-fifth birthday celebration of General von Litzmann in Berlin-Nikolassee, Hitler made a short speech and presented the General with a new car for his birthday.²⁰

The evening of the same day, Hitler held a reception in the "House of the Reich President" for members of the diplomatic corps.²¹

On the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact, Hitler received a correspondent of the *Gazeta Polska*, Casimir Smogorzewski, for an interview on January 25, in which he stated in part:²²

The policy which we have adopted of respecting the peoples who live along our borders thus reflects our innermost conviction. [—]

I regard mutual protection of the nationalities as one of the most desirable goals of a superior leadership of state. It is, however, obvious that such a policy can only be successfully put into practice given mutual consensus.

On the subject of the centralized German state, he declared:

The transference of the organizational structure which the NSDAP has long since set up to form the later structure of the Reich will come about of its own, with the necessary corrections, as a natural development in the course of time.²³

Hitler's reply to the question, "Which of the great thinkers of the past had a significant influence upon Your Excellency?" was evasive. He held himself to be such a remarkable personage as to make this query nearly an affront: everything the great thinkers of the past had merely been able to envision was now personified in himself. He stated:

It is very difficult to count the number of thinkers who have made stimulating contributions to every great idea of the past. Our entire way of thinking originates to an overwhelming extent in the products of the mental labors of the past and is only in small part the product of our own thoughts. The important thing is to organize the body of thoughts passed down by the great thinkers of former times reasonably and effectively and to draw the resulting logical consequences. What good is knowledge when one does not have the courage to use it?

By drawing the practical political conclusions from a host of intellectual and scientific findings, we have overcome the lethargy which had become completely sterile, giving decisive impetus to our life as a nation.

At the end of January, Hitler received a number of British politicians for unofficial talks in the Reich Chancellery, among them Lord Allen of Hurtwood of the Labour Party²⁴ and Lord Marquess of Lothian of the Liberal Party.²⁵ The discussion revolved around the question of disarmament, Germany's return to the League of Nations, and its participation in a collective security system.

Just as the Party's commemoration of the Lippe Landtag election on January 15, 1933 had been eclipsed by the Saar plebiscite, the commemoration of the *Machtergreifung* on January 30 passed quietly. Too preoccupied with the preparations for his announcement of general conscription to deliver a lengthy address to the Reichstag, Hitler opted for a proclamation, citing as reasons Hindenburg's decease and the forthcoming return of the Saar, which was to become "the greatest celebration of the year." The wording of the proclamation was as follows:²⁶

To the German Volk!

Two years ago, on this day and at this very hour, National Socialism gained power and thus the responsibility in the German Reich, following a drive unequalled even in the history of parliamentary government.

Just as, not only in the recollections of living witnesses but for coming generations as well, the outbreak of the World War represents an historic transition, so does the accession of National Socialism represent such a transition for our German Volk.

It has put back on its feet a nation wasting away in dull despair and instilled in it a strong, believing faith in the inner worth and creative power of its own life.

And this is its greatest and most significant merit. The transition of the external symbols corresponded to the change in the people themselves! In joyful self-discipline, countless millions of our Volk have placed themselves at the service of the new idea. The soldiers of the Wehrmacht so rich in tradition took their places beside the zealous fighters of our revolutionary National Socialist Party. There came to be a mobilization of human forces of hitherto scarcely conceivable dimensions. From the throngs of millions of our youth up to the gigantic community of the mental and manual workers (*Arbeiter der Stirn und Faust*) united in a single front, we see the evidence of the National Socialist art of organization and work of organization.

The old world was not first destroyed to build the new; the new world on the rise has surpassed the old.

Not for a single second did a break interrupt our National Socialist Revolution. At no stage of our advance and our battles did chaos reign. It was the least bloody revolution in world history, but nevertheless one of its most far-reaching! Thus the attempt to try to deny or falsify the character of our National Socialist Revolution by means of an international campaign of agitation and lies was ultimately futile.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women of all nations who have been placed, in the past two years, in a position to judge Germany with their own eyes have become witnesses to the greatness and discipline of the National Socialist uprising. And they remain the best witnesses to our work of reconstruction.

On January 30, 1933, I asked the German Volk for four years' time to implement the first labor program, and now, in merely half that time, more than two thirds of what was promised has been delivered!

Hence no democratic government in the world can submit itself with greater trust and greater confidence to the will of its people than the National Socialist Government of Germany!

We did not carry out the revolution for the sake of a revolution; rather, our will to rebuild a new German Reich required the elimination of the old powers weighing it down. The overwhelming majority of all our former adversaries has long since apologized to us in their innermost heart of hearts. What we have always hoped for has come to pass. They subjected our intentions and our work to a just examination and ultimately found in us and through us the fulfillment of everything they had not otherwise yearned for

in the depths of their hearts: a Germany of honor, freedom and social good fortune. And if, this year, we are not commemorating this day with large-scale festivities, it is because of the feeling of sorrow which overcomes us in view of the death this past year of the man who, two years ago, entrusted to me and hence to the National Socialist Movement the leadership of Germany. Stirred most deeply, we are all mindful of the fate which led our Movement from the past to the future in so symbolic a fashion.

Furthermore, the greatest celebration of this year should not be a celebration commemorating the takeover of power, but a celebration of joy on the day the Germans of the Saar return. They will encounter a Volk worthy of them and a Reich in which it is once more a thing of good fortune for a German to live. They will encounter a Volksgemeinschaft in which innumerable millions of people, from the National Socialist fighter to the soldier, from the worker to the civil servant, are working together in true comradeship to honestly fulfill their duties in the reconstruction of a state and the education of a nation whose wish it is to be full of honor, peaceful and industrious in this world.

Berlin, January 30, 1935

Adolf Hitler

Notwithstanding the massacre of June 30, 1934, Hitler apparently felt no qualms about once again referring to the National Socialist Revolution as the "least bloody in world history."

January 30 marked the promulgation of several domestic laws of lesser significance, among them the new German Municipal Ordinance, a Reichsstatthalter Act and two laws concerning the reintegration of the Saar.²⁷

In Berlin as well, the activities commemorating the takeover were restricted to general tribute-paying in front of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler received Professor Dr. Friedrich Grimm, pioneer of the national cause and known to be a Francophobe.²⁸

On the same day, he also received the Reich Minister of Economics, Kurt Schmitt, who had been on leave and now requested that he be relieved of his post for reasons of health; Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, was appointed his successor. On January 31, Hitler sent the following telegrams of confirmation to Schmitt and Schacht:²⁹

Dear Reich Minister,

In view of the fact that you have not been fully restored to health, you requested being relieved of your posts as Reich Minister of Economics and Prussian Minister of Economy and Labor. To my sincere regret, I feel myself obliged to grant this request. I may extend to you my utmost gratitude for your knowledgeable, selfless and devoted efforts toward the reconstruction of the Reich. The fact that the German economy was led out of its threatening state of decay and put on the path of recovery and invigoration within a relatively short time is due in part to your resolute efforts.

January 30, 1935

You, my esteemed Reich Minister, have assured me of your willingness to place your powers and your experience at the service of the Reich when you have completely regained your health. I thoroughly appreciate this willingness and thank you for same.

Extending my best wishes for the speedy and complete restoration of your health, I remain with the German salute,

Yours very truly,

Adolf Hitler

Dear Mr. Reichsbank President,

Reich Minister Dr. Schmitt has requested, in view of the fact that his health has not yet been fully restored, that he be relieved of his posts as Reich Minister of Economics and Prussian Minister of Economy and Labor. I have granted this request. I have assigned to you, Mr. Reichsbank President, the task of assuming the responsibilities of Minister of Economics and Prussian Minister of Economy and Labor. In the interim, you have received the decrees which I have passed in this context.

For six months you have successfully devoted your efforts to heading the two Ministries parallel to holding your office as President of the Reichsbank Board of Directors. I may extend to you my particular thanks and wish you much success in your endeavors to restore the German economy to health.

With the German salute, Yours very truly,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler apparently was in the vein for giving interviews during this period; on January 31, he spoke with Armando Bonaventura, a representative of the Portuguese newspaper *Diario de Noticias*, stating:³⁰

There is all the more reason for the relations between Germany and Portugal to be close and truly sincere because the current political situation in Portugal is inspired in many ways by those same principles and precepts which guide the National Socialist regime in Germany.

An interview with a reporter from the *Diario de Lisboa*, Felix Goreira, was published on February 7 containing similar statements.³¹

In early February, Hitler presented himself to the public eye on a variety of occasions,³² attending a concert of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra on February 2, the horse show tournament "Nations' Prize" on February 3, and the inauguration of the "largest film archive in the world" at the Harnack House in Berlin on February 4.

The following announcement was issued two days later: "The Führer's receptions scheduled for the next ten days are canceled due to important political talks."³³

Hitler nonetheless met with the new Japanese Ambassador, Count Mushakoji, on February 7. After having accepted the Ambassador's credentials, he delivered a short address:³⁴

February 7, 1935

Your Excellency!

I have the honor of personally receiving from Your Excellency both the letter of dismissal of your esteemed predecessor and the letter with which His Majesty the Emperor of Japan certifies your appointment as Ambassador Plenipotentiary.

It fills me with great pleasure that Your Excellency has found such warm words of praise for the German Reich in memory of your former work in Berlin and in remembrance of your deceased father's sojourn in Germany as a student. I may also thank you for the tribute which you have paid to the accomplishments of the German Volk and ask you to rest assured that your words will meet with a grateful response in Germany. It is with great respect that I recall the commendable service of your esteemed predecessor, who demonstrated at all times an avid interest in and a great appreciation for the task of building a new Germany.

The German Volk evinces unbounded admiration for the great Japanese nation, its time-honored culture and its outstanding achievements. It is my pleasure to be able to state that, on the basis of our spiritual alliance, the political and economic relations between our two nations have evolved against the background of sincere friendship, a friendship which, as you have stressed, has already become a tradition.

I welcome the fact that Your Excellency considers it your most noble duty to do your utmost toward further expanding our respective relations by patient cooperation based upon mutual respect. You can be certain that the Reich Government and I are guided by the same motives and will do everything in our power to facilitate the tasks of your high office.

On behalf of the German Reich, I may extend to Your Excellency a warm welcome.

On February 11, Hitler delivered an address in the Deutscher Hof Hotel in Nuremberg on the occasion of Gauleiter Julius Streicher's birthday:³⁵

For Streicher, the Führer explained, it certainly must be an uplifting feeling that his 50th birthday marked not only the turning point of a century but also of a millennium of German history. In Streicher he felt confident of having a man in Nuremberg who never wavered for a second and stood behind him unerringly in every situation.

On February 14, Hitler opened the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in the Berlin Exhibition Halls on Kaiserdamm with a lengthy speech. As in preceding years, he first discussed general aspects of transportation and then focused his attention on government measures promoting motorized traffic. In respect to the Autobahn and Volkswagen projects, he stated:³⁶

When the Reich Autobahn network is completed, Germany will be able to call its own the most modern system of roads in the world by far.

Tremendous evidence of peaceful progress! These measures are to be complemented by the task of creating a car for the people at large. I am happy to say that a brilliant designer has succeeded, with the cooperation of his staff, in completing preliminary plans for the German Volkswagen and will finally be able to test the first models beginning in midyear.

Hitler closed his speech by pointing out that the possibilities of producing synthetic rubber and synthetic gasoline were now theoretically given and stated, "Not only are our automobiles and motorcycles the fastest in the world; they are also, we can proudly say, the best."

Until now, Hitler had prudently kept the fact of German rearmament concealed from the German people, fearing their reaction; he had maintained repeatedly in his speeches and proclamations that Germany was a peace-loving country, a claim obviously at odds with his clandestine steps toward rearming. As Ward Price had pointed out on January 17 in no uncertain terms,³⁷ the accomplished fact of German rearmament had remained no secret abroad.

In early February, the British and French governments presented proposals in Berlin for general arms limitation, the conclusion of an Eastern Locarno Pact and an international convention prohibiting air raids. Hitler responded with delaying tactics, for naturally he would never consent to having the chains of Versailles merely replaced by a new set of shackles restricting his freedom to take military action. He found it wise, however, to wait until the Saar had returned before presenting his *fait accompli* to the Western Powers.

Thus he stalled, having the following answer dispatched to the British and French Ambassadors on February 15 on behalf of the Reich Government:³⁸

The German Government concurs with the British Government and the French Government in the sincere desire to promote a secure peace, for maintaining peace lies equally in the interests of Germany's security and in the interest of the security of the other European nations.

The German Government hails the spirit of trust which has characterized the exchange between the respective governments and which is manifested in the communications of the Royal British Government and the French Government. It shall thoroughly investigate the entire scope of the European questions posed in the first part of the communique of London. This investigation will be marked both by the spirit of our dedication to peace and by our concern for the security of the German Reich in its particularly exposed geographical position in the heart of Europe.

In particular, the German Government will assess which means can serve to ban the risk of arms races in the future, a risk which has come about due

to the reluctance of the highly-armed nations to comply with the disarmament required by the Treaty. It is of the conviction that only the spirit of voluntary agreement between the sovereign states as expressed in the Anglo-French communiqué can lead to lasting international terms in the arms sector.

The German Government welcomes the proposal to increase protection against unexpected aerial attacks by signing a convention as soon as possible to provide for the immediate aid of the air forces of the undersigned on behalf of the victim of a non-provoked air raid. The Government is fundamentally willing to make use of its air forces as a deterrent to violations of the peace. Thus it is inclined to find ways and means of achieving, as soon as possible by voluntary agreement with the governments in question, a convention which will guarantee the greatest possible security for all signatory parties.

The German Government holds that negotiations within a larger scope for which there is insufficient preparation will, according to the dictates of experience and common sense, be accompanied by friction which should be avoided in the interest of concluding this aerial convention, the effects of which represent a completely new departure. Before, however, the German Government takes part in such negotiations, it holds that it would be advisable to clarify a number of basic preliminary questions in separate talks with the governments involved. Thus it would appreciate if—following the Anglo-French consultations to date—the British Government were willing at this point, in its capacity as the participant in the London talks and simultaneously Locarno guarantor, to also take up direct negotiations with the German Government on this subject.

The German Government is in consensus with the view of the British Government and the French Government, to-wit, that the conclusion of an aerial convention would constitute a significant step towards solidarity between the nations of Europe and can be expedient in bringing about solutions to the other European problems satisfying all of the nations.

On February 18, Hitler congratulated the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin by telegram on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.³⁹

On February 21, he spent several hours inspecting infantry and artillery barracks in Frankfurt an der Oder, subsequently joining the Officers' Corps at their quarters for the evening meal.⁴⁰

In the preceding months, the Labor Service had been neglected in favor of Hitler's protege, the Reichswehr, and a hush had fallen on the hitherto much-touted topic of compulsory labor service. The Reich leader of the Labor Service and Secretary of State former Colonel Konstantin Hierl took advantage of major land cultivation efforts in Emsland to rekindle support, sending a telegram to Hitler on February 22.⁴¹ In reply, Hitler merely expressed his appreciation for Hierl's show of loyalty and praised the cultivation work as a "model for the entire youth."

The customary festivities commemorating the birth of the NSDAP were held on February 24 in the Munich Hofbräuhaus. In a markedly aggressive mood, Hitler went through the ritual of the “party narrative” and then turned his wrath upon his domestic foes:⁴²

I have been a prophet so often in my lifetime, and you have not believed, but instead ridiculed and mocked me. Once again I will be a prophet and say to you: you will never return! [—]

All the dimwits who are counting on a return of the past would have to resolve to take the same path I took. That means that one of the nameless would have to come and take up the same struggle I took up,⁴³ but with one difference: I conquered democracy with its own madness, but no democrat can conquer us. I was able to eliminate our opponents when they had all the power and we had nothing, so let me say to you: today we have power, and you have nothing! You will surely not eliminate us.

Hitler held the erroneous opinion that foreign powers, too, would never be able to “eliminate” him. He stated:

The rest of the world will have to change its views. It will have to erase the fourteen years of German history before us from its memory and put in its place the memory of a thousand-year history prior thereto, and then it will understand that this Volk was without honor for fourteen years thanks to a leadership without honor, but was strong and brave and honest the thousand years prior thereto. And it can rest assured that the Germany which is living today is identical with the eternal Germany.

The humiliating interim is over! The nation is united in a yearning for peace and determined to defend German liberty. We want nothing but to coexist with other peoples in mutual respect. We do not wish to threaten the peace of any people. But we will tell the world that anyone who would rob the German Volk of liberty must do so by force, and each and every one of us will defend ourselves against force!

Never will I nor any government after me which is born of the spirit of our Movement affix the nation’s signature to a document signifying a voluntary waiver of Germany’s honor and equality of rights. Conversely, the world can also rest assured that, when we do sign something, we adhere to it. Whatever we believe we cannot adhere to, on principles of honor or ability, we will never sign. Whatever we have once signed we will blindly and faithfully fulfill!⁴⁴

On February 27, Hitler received Reich Bishop Müller in the Chancellery to discuss matters of church politics.⁴⁵ The next day he was visited by Gauleiter Bohle, the head of the NSDAP’s foreign organization, for an exchange concerning questions arising in connection with the return of the Saar.⁴⁶

On March 1, the official return of the Saar took place at the Parliament House in Saarbrücken at 9:30 a.m. A triumvirate appointed

by the League of Nations made the presentation to the government appointee, Reich Minister of the Interior Dr. Frick. At 11:15 a.m., Frick installed Gauleiter Bürckel as Reichskommissar for the Saar.

Coming from Mannheim, Hitler crossed the border to the Saar at Homburg at noon and arrived in Saarbrücken at approximately 1:00 p.m., where he took up lodgings at the Excelsior Hotel.

At 3:00 p.m., notwithstanding a torrential downpour, he inspected the ranks of the formations and party sections. Police troops and the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* brought up the rear, constituting the only armed divisions in the parade; the Saar—as the Rhineland—continued to be a demilitarized zone, and the Reichswehr was barred for the time being.

At 5:30 p.m., Hitler addressed the League of Nations' Commission of Three⁴⁷ consisting of its President, the Italian Baron Aloisi; the Argentinian Ambassador in Rome, Cantilo; and the Spanish Envoy, Lopez Olivan, and expressed the gratitude and appreciation of the German people to the League for having conducted the plebiscite. The League of Nations he had so abused had done an exemplary job in the Saar. Nevertheless, he found the mediating efforts of neutral powers bothersome and chose in 1938, for instance, to completely ignore the provisions of the Munich Agreement which called for the appointment of an international commission and required that plebiscites be conducted in certain districts of the Sudetenland.

At 6:00 p.m., Hitler delivered a major public speech at the City Hall Square in Saarbrücken. As he normally enjoyed good “Hitler weather,”⁴⁸ he felt obligated to explain the inclement weather manifest on this memorable occasion, doing so in less than plausible terms.

He also gave vent to his anger that “international bodies” [and not he] had initiated the return of the Saar, even scheduling the date for the rally. Hitler spoke as follows:⁴⁹

German Volksgenossen!

Two years ago, in 1933, I spoke for the first time before many tens of thousands of Saarlanders at the Niederwald Monument.⁵⁰ At that time, in the midst of one of the most difficult battles to establish our ideas and principles in the new Germany, I was filled by anxious concern for the future of the Saar. One year later I was already facing hundreds of thousands in Koblenz.⁵¹ Once more I was moved—as were you all—by a deep-felt concern for the future of this territory which had been torn from the Reich. At that time, we mutually pledged two things:

You promised me that, when the hour should come, you would stand up, man for man and woman for woman, in support of Germany.

March 1, 1935

You have kept your vow. I promised you that Germany would not desert you, never and nevermore, and Germany reciprocated and kept its promise; both times I was able to assure you with all my heart that I would be happy the day I would be able to reward you for coming to Koblenz.

At that time I promised that I would come to you in the initial hours of your freedom, and now I am happy to be here in your midst. It is my belief that we can all thank Heaven for having made possible that our third encounter does not find you as guests in the Reich, but that I am now able to come to you in your homeland, in our German Saarland, as Chancellor of the Reich and as your Führer. It is the latest possible date the international bodies could schedule for a rally in this territory. And I believe that is why the sky is overcast and is letting rain fall. We have not been deterred by this rain, for even if the sky is shedding tears, today we have had the sun in our hearts.

We are all so overjoyed to be able to take part in this happy day. This very minute countless millions of Germans are listening throughout the Reich. A happy day for the entire nation. From here to Hamburg, from Western Germany to Königsberg—everywhere the same sentiment: finally, finally you are back with us. But it is not only a happy day for Germany; I believe it is also a happy day for the whole of Europe. It was a hallowed decision to finally fix this day and to respect its outcome. To restore this territory, which so easily could have become a permanent bone of contention, to the German Reich, whence it had been torn with no right and no reason. A happy day for Europe particularly because this return of the Saar might perhaps best serve to remedy the crisis from which two great nations are suffering most. We hope that by virtue of this act of conciliatory justice reinstating common sense, we hope that by virtue of this act the relations between Germany and France will improve once and for all.

Just as we desire peace, so must we hope that our great neighboring people is also ready and willing to seek with us this peace. It must be possible for two great peoples to join hands to combat by mutual effort the crises which threaten to bury Europe beneath their weight.

And this day shall also be a lesson, a lesson to all those who, ignorant of an everlasting historic truth, delude themselves that terror or violence could strip a Volk of its innermost character; a lesson to those who imagine they could tear away a part of a nation to steal its very soul. May all statesmen draw one conclusion from this: that it is useless to attempt to tear asunder peoples and nations by such methods. In the end, blood is stronger than any documents of mere paper.

What ink has written will one day be blotted out by blood. This most profound voice, ringing loud and clear, will ultimately drown out every other sound. Woe to him who refuses to learn in the face of this certitude. He will bring distress and troubles upon mankind without achieving his goal. He will bring suffering and misery upon the peoples for a time, but in the end he will sustain a humiliating defeat.

Through this solemn plebiscite and this demonstration of belief in the Reich, you have rendered yet another great historic service. In a hard phase

of the struggle to rebuild the German Reich, you have made my own work easier with this belief.⁵² As God is my witness: this work has no other aim than to make Germany free and happy once more.

You have thus earned great credit and with it, a sacred right to celebrate this day of joy. And I am happy to be allowed to pass this day in your midst. May we today surrender to the embrace of happiness and joy, and tomorrow we shall return to work, to the great task of working for our new German Reich.

For we know that, whatever has been accomplished, and be it oh so wondrous, it is only a start, only the beginning of what we envision. You are not entering a finished building; you are entering a community of people which has just now been joined together. You shall help build and help work, and you shall be proud, you shall be happy that you were able and allowed to work together on the new German structure. It is a wonderful thing to turn the word Volksgemeinschaft into a reality. We shall now accomplish what many centuries past have vainly yearned for.

We first had to meet up with misery to make our Volk ready for this idea. Sometimes we are overcome by the feeling that everything which has happened is part of an unavoidable fate destined to lead us to where happier days unfortunately could not have brought us; the feeling that the hand of the Lord had to strike us to make us ready for this, the greatest inner good fortune there is, the good fortune of mutual understanding within one's own people.

What is external glory, what are external advantages in comparison to this greatest of possessions a Volk can acquire? We would be unable to understand the world, and the world would not comprehend us—if we did not first learn to understand each other.

That is the first step to a better future for mankind. We have earnestly pursued this route, endeavoring to rip from our inner depths vanity, class madness, and the arrogance of rank. We have endeavored to judge people on the basis of their inner worth, endeavored to depart from the mere appearance, from the superficial, endeavored to forget origin, rank, profession, wealth, education, knowledge, capital, and all those things which separate people from one another, in order to penetrate to what can join them together. To penetrate to the heart, to the character, to the conscience, to decency—and we have been rewarded. We have found rich treasures. We have been able to discover what we had not seen for centuries: the German Volksgenosse in every class of our Volk, in every rank of our Volk, in every profession. To rightfully address people of the highest value as “Genossen” of a Volk.

And it is as a witness on behalf of this community that I have come here to you, as a witness and as a fighter in this community which today joins together the millions who are Germans.

I know that Heaven does not bestow perfection upon men. Their lot is to earn all, hard and painfully. And I know that today this great goal is far from being achieved in full. But we strive for it with burning hearts, and Heaven and Providence have blessed our efforts. For there is one thing I can surely

say: may my opponents at home and the opponents of the German Volk everywhere bear one thing in mind: fifteen years ago I began my struggle for Germany with a handful of people, and it was difficult to spread beyond this handful, to spread into the environment, out into a city, out into a Land, out of a Land and into the German Reich. Fifteen years of struggle, and when I take stock of the result today, I must thank Heaven, for it blessed the struggle and blessed it again and again. The struggle has not been in vain. Fifteen years of struggling for a Volk, fifteen years of fighting for a Reich, and today I am able to welcome you in the German homeland on behalf of this Volk and on behalf of this Reich.

I have come to you today, but this shall be only the first of many visits. I shall return, and I shall speak to you again.

But now I could wait no longer. It would have been impossible for me to have spent today sitting in Berlin or somewhere else, impossible⁵³ to pass this day in inner turmoil and impatience.

I have come because my heart has led me here to you to tell you how infinitely happy the German Volk is and how happy I myself am.

I shall return and then—I hope—speak to you many times over.⁵⁴

It is a wondrous evolution this Movement has made. A truly unique rise from the smallest beginning to such a large following. This evolution gives all of us the confidence that the undertaking will be completed, that we will not only envision the great aim, but perhaps even live to see it materialize. You are now invited to take part in this work. I ask you to give to the new Reich the virtues you have retained these fifteen years. For fifteen years you kept the faith. I beseech you: keep the faith in the new Reich, too; believe in its future, believe in the task and in its accomplishment, believe in the success of this task, believe in the freedom, believe in the greatness and permanence of our Volk.

If you had not had faith as your support during these fifteen years, what would you have left? If you had not had faith during these fifteen years, who would have been your leader? Faith can move mountains; faith can also free peoples.⁵⁵ Faith can fortify nations and lead them to rise again, however humiliated they may have been.

And you have remained loyal for fifteen years. And once more I ask of you: place this loyalty in the new Reich! You were loyal, regardless of what you were offered; you were loyal, regardless of what you were promised. You did not weigh the material advantages. And so I ask of you: be just as loyal in the work you are taking on, be loyal in this new Reich, be loyal to this Movement, loyal to this German Volksgemeinschaft, never be distracted by what those outside our ranks promise us, never forget:

We were just as loyal when Germany was at its worst; it was then we hoisted the flag. When Germany was most deeply humiliated, it was then we unfurled the flag of faith, the flag of commitment to this Germany. We did not say: we are ashamed of being Germans; we said: we are prouder than ever to be Germans.

And we have never asked what else we might be offered, have never weighed what we were actually offered; we believed in Germany, and we

remained loyal to it every hour of the day, in every crisis, in every danger, through all the wretchedness and through all the misery. And I ask you to give this loyalty to the new Germany, your Germany, our Germany.

And I ask you too to give this Germany your will. What good is a man who does not establish a goal which he pursues with zealously and determination? The will is a tremendous force when used persistently by someone persistently striving towards his goal. It was your will to return to Germany, and your will has triumphed. It was our will to lead Germany once again to the top, and as you see, our will has triumphed.

When Germany sank into the depths of humiliation, our will to establish the German Volksgemeinschaft grew. When Germany split into classes and ranks, our will to overcome them and make the nation ruler over its own life grew. And the will triumphed. Germany has become one, a new banner has gone up, and there, beneath the waving banner, march the millions in step; there marches the entire German nation.⁵⁶

I ask you to transpose the will of the last fifteen years, the will that inspired you, now fresh and alive, onto the new Reich and enter into it with the one great resolution of serving it. Enter with the resolve to subordinate yourselves to this Reich and to place yourselves at its disposal.

If you thus enter our Reich, the Reich we have all built together, the Reich which is ours because no one gave it to us, for the German Volk itself created it; if you thus enter this Reich, you will all be happy! Then you will be happy in knowing that you have not accepted a gift but achieved something magnificent by your joint effort.

Happiness and good fortune are things you cannot be given. The utmost good fortune which can be bestowed is the conviction of having accomplished something through one's own effort. You will be as blessed with this good fortune as we all already are today, for we are proud of the fact that we were the ones who designed and hoisted this flag fifteen years ago, and by virtue of our work it today constitutes a symbol of mutuality everywhere Germans are.

We are happy knowing that we were given nothing by others,⁵⁷ but have achieved all in a thousand battles, in untiring work, by our diligence and our will, with our loyalty and with our faith. And you will be just as happy in fifteen or twenty years, when Germany will be completely free, when Germany, as a nation of peace but also as a nation of freedom and honor, will once more supply its sons and its children with daily bread. You will be happy and proud in knowing that you, too, have contributed to winning this wealth for our Volk. Gathered here in this evening hour, we wish to look not only at the past but also gaze into the future; we want not only to rejoice in our accomplishments, but to establish new goals for the work which shall lie before us.

We shall turn our gaze from the past and fix it on the future of our Volk. There we see the tasks to which we are assigned, and we are pleased, for we have no desire to be a generation which simply takes what is given and which expects things to fall into its lap; we would rather end our days with the feeling: we have met our obligations, we have done our duty. That is the utmost good fortune.

March 1, 1935

When today we set our sights on the future, our goal appears to be this new Reich of a more noble Volksgemeinschaft, this new Germany of a purer *Volksgenossenschaft*; our goal appears to be this Germany which is as peace-loving as it should be strong and must be honorable and true!

And to this Germany, which we all see before us at this moment, we shall now swear our oath. It is to this Germany we wish to devote ourselves in this solemn hour, it is under its spell we wish to fall as long as we breathe, and we wish to confirm this oath together now, man for man and woman for woman:

To our Germany, our Volk and our Reich: *Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!*



XVI January 15, 1935
Hitler at Haus Wachenfeld (Obersalzberg, Berchtesgaden), listening to the results of the Saar plebiscite.

Photo: Domarus archives



XVII Hitler and the generals

March 17, 1935, after the reintroduction of general subscription. Göring is moved to tears. From left to right: General der Flieger Göring (hitherto Infantry General), Artillery General von Fritsch, Reichswehr Minister Colonel General von Blomberg, Admiral Raeder, Hitler.

Photo: Domarus archives

2

Back in Berlin on March 2, Hitler appointed seven new Reichstag deputies from the Saar.⁵⁸ On March 4, he dispatched a telegram to Kemal Atatürk, congratulating him on his re-election as President of Turkey.⁵⁹

In the meantime, unwelcome tidings had reached Berlin: British Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon and Lord Privy Seal Anthony Eden had announced their visit to Berlin for March 7 to personally discuss Hitler's note of February 15.

Hitler was hardly satisfied with the date, for he was on the verge of announcing general conscription and planned to land this coup prior to the arrival of the British statesmen. Hence Hitler conveniently developed a cold—not surprising, considering the downpour in Saarbrücken (!)—and had the following official statement published on March 5:⁶⁰

As a consequence of his visit to Saarbrücken, the Führer has caught a slight cold accompanied by extreme hoarseness. At the recommendation of his physician, talks scheduled for the near future have been canceled to spare his voice. Under these circumstances, the Reich Government has relayed, via the Reich Foreign Minister, to the English Ambassador the request that the scheduled visit by the English Ministers be postponed.

On March 5, Hitler received bad news in a personal vein. His old comrade in arms, Gauleiter and Bavarian Minister of Culture Hans Schemm⁶¹ had crashed in his plane near Bayreuth and was seriously injured. Hitler immediately dispatched a telegram with wishes for his recovery, but Schemm did not survive the accident more than a few hours.

Upon receiving word of his death, Hitler exclaimed, "If I lose Germany, I can win it back again. But one of my best men is irretrievably lost."⁶² The remark, made spontaneously, reveals the pessimism under-

lying Hitler's views on his rule in Germany. Despite his vociferous claims that he would never surrender power, he did not rule out one day perhaps "losing Germany."

He sent the following telegram to Schemm's widow on March 6:⁶³

Most severely shaken by the misfortune of my old, loyal party comrade and fellow fighter, may I offer you my deep-felt condolences.

Adolf Hitler

At the funeral in Bayreuth on March 9, Hitler was in attendance but did not speak "due to his health."⁶⁴ The eulogy was delivered by Rudolf Hess.

The same day, Hitler had the foreign governments informed that Germany once again had an Air Force (Luftwaffe), a fact which amounted to a unilateral abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles.⁶⁵

This announcement—made, as was Hitler's wont, on a Saturday⁶⁶—has been interpreted as a trial balloon sent up to allow the German dictator to gauge reaction abroad one week prior to his introduction of general conscription.⁶⁷ While this may be true in part, the main reason lay certainly in his wish to unveil the Luftwaffe in time for the Heroes' Memorial Day festivities on March 17.⁶⁸

In the interim, the English journalist Ward Price had visited Joachim von Ribbentrop,⁶⁹ at that time Reich Commissioner for Disarmament, and inquired as to Hitler's illness.⁷⁰ He received the reply that the Führer's illness was by no means serious—but neither was it a diplomatic maneuver, as Ward Price had suspected. Ribbentrop clearly indicated, however, that the British White Paper of March 4⁷¹ had elicited bitter disappointment in Germany.

On March 9, Hitler had Foreign Minister von Neurath inform the British Ambassador that he would be taking a two-week rest in Bavaria and hoped to be able to meet with the English statesmen for talks at the end of March.

Hitler had gained fourteen days' time, exactly the right period, in order to make general conscription an accomplished fact in the interim. The alleged two weeks of convalescence in Bavaria dwindled to a scant week and on March 14, as a prelude to the announcement, Hitler outlined the future military sports function (!) of the SA in the following decree:⁷²

The new State requires a robust, hardy race. The *weltanschaulich* training of the spirit must be accompanied and reinforced by an aggressive training of the body by means of simple, useful and natural physical exercises.

In order to give added impetus and direction to the efforts of our youth, I am renewing the award of the SA Sports Badge⁷³ for the entire SA and all of its former sections; it is to be awarded upon completion of a conscientiously absolved period of training when an achievement test has been passed.

In order to lend a more conscious expression to the cultivation of military spirit (*wehrhafter Geist*) in every area of the German Volk, I further direct that this SA Sports Badge may also be acquired and worn by non-members of the Movement insofar as they fulfill, within a racial and *weltanschaulich* sense, the National Socialist requirements.

The implementation provisions will be issued by the Chief of Staff.

The Supreme Commander of the SA: Adolf Hitler

On Friday, March 15, Hitler returned to Berlin to confer that evening with several ministers and to convene a ministerial council for 1:00 p.m. the following day.

The goal was now in sight: the reintroduction of general conscription was scheduled to be announced the day before Heroes' Memorial Day. Hitler had once again deliberately chosen a Saturday, believing that the Anglo-Saxon world was incapable of making a decision over the weekend.

His alleged bout of bad health again proved quite opportune, for he was thus naturally relieved of having to speak personally. For good reason he was apprehensive of a possible unfavorable reaction in the German populace and shunned, as was his custom in such situations, direct contact with the people.

It is absolutely false to claim that the announcement was "received with enthusiasm;"⁷⁴ the opposite was in fact the case. The German people, having a vague premonition of the consequences which would ensue from this step, responded with a baleful silence. Conscious of this widespread feeling, Hitler did not risk holding a plebiscite at any point in 1935.

In the cabinet, however, the news might well have elicited a different reaction, to judge from official bulletins. The Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, let out a chorus of three "Heils" for Hitler and renewed his pledge of unshakeable loyalty and solidarity. That Saturday afternoon, Hitler received the ambassadors of France, Great Britain, Italy, and Poland and informed them of the Government's decision to reintroduce general conscription.⁷⁵

At 4:00 p.m., Goebbels met with representatives of the Berlin and foreign press and read them the "Statement of the Reich Government." In this proclamation, Hitler justified his step with the all-purpose reputed Bolshevik threat inherent, he argued, in the existence of a

Soviet Army comprising 101 divisions. As grounds for the move he also cited the two-year military service recently introduced in France, which had been well-timed for his purposes,⁷⁶ and indulged in enumerating dozens of figures allegedly documenting Germany's reduction in arms after the World War. The German people and the entire world were to hear these numbers—59,000 pieces of heavy artillery, 130,000 machine guns, etc.—time and time again in the years to come. For all his juggling of figures, Hitler overlooked the fact that the world judged him by his actions and not by the dialectic reasoning with which he attempted to rationalize them.

Hitler's statement of March 16 read as follows:⁷⁷

To the German Volk!

When in November 1918 the German Volk—trusting in the guarantees of Wilson's Fourteen Points—laid down their arms after four and a half years of valiant resistance in a war they had never wanted, they believed they were doing a service not only to tormented mankind, but to a great idea in and of itself. Having suffered the most from the consequences of this insane fight, the millions comprising our Volk faithfully reached out for the concept of restructuring the relations between peoples, which was to be consummated by abolishing, on the one hand, the secrets of diplomatic cabinet politics and, on the other, the instruments of horror themselves. Many Germans thus viewed the harshest consequences of defeat in history as an avoidable sacrifice in the interest of ridding the world once and for all of similar horrors.

The concept of the League of Nations awakened perhaps in no other nation more fervent support than in the German nation, so forsaken of all earthly possessions. This alone explains the fact that the—to some extent patently absurd—conditions which destroyed all prerequisites for and any possibility of defense were not only accepted by the German Volk but also fulfilled by it.

The German Volk and especially its respective governments at the time were convinced that compliance with the disarmament provisions stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles in accordance with the auspices of this Treaty would lead to and guarantee the start of a general international reduction in arms.

Only such bilateral accomplishment of the purpose of the Treaty could morally and rationally justify a demand which, unilaterally imposed and carried through, would necessarily have resulted in the perpetual discrimination and thus a certification of the inferiority of a great nation.

Hence such a peace treaty could never have constituted the basis for any genuine inner reconciliation between peoples and a pacification of the world thus brought about, but a basis only for the growth of an ever-gnawing hate.

Germany has fulfilled the obligations imposed upon it to disarm, as verified by the Allied Control Commission.

The work of destroying the German armies and their resources as verified by this Commission was as follows:

a) The Army: 59,897 guns and barrels; 130,558 machine guns; 31,470 trench mortars and barrels; 6,007,000 rifles and carbines; 243,937 MG barrels; 28,001 gun carriages; 4,390 trench mortar carriages; 38,750,000 shells; 16,550,000 hand grenades and rifle grenades; 60,400,000 live fuzes; 491,000,000 pieces of handgun ammunition; 335,000 tons of shell cases; 23,515 tons of cartridge cases; 37,600 tons of gunpowder; 79,500 ammunition gauges; 212,000 telephone sets; 1,072 flamethrowers; 31 armored trains; 59 tanks; 1,762 observation vehicles; 8,982 wireless stations; 1,240 field bakeries; 2,199 pontoons; 981.7 tons of equipment for soldiers; 8,230,350 pieces of reserve equipment for soldiers; 7,300 pistols and revolvers; 180 MG sledges; 21 mobile workshops; 12 anti-aircraft guns; 11 limbers; 64,000 steel helmets; 174,000 gas masks; 2,500 machines of the former war industry; 8,000 rifle barrels.

b) The Air Force: 15,714 fighter planes and bombers; 27,757 aircraft engines.

c) The Navy: destroyed, scrapped, scuttled or surrendered Navy warship material: 26 capital ships; 4 armored ships; 4 battle cruisers; 19 light cruisers; 21 training ships and special ships; 83 torpedo boats; 315 submarines.

The destruction of the following was also required: vehicles of all types, gas and in part anti-gas defense equipment, propellants, explosives, searchlights, sighting devices, range finders and sound rangers, optical devices of all types, tackle, narrow-gauge devices, field printing presses, field messes, workshops, cut-and-thrust weapons, steel helmets, ammunition transport wagons, normal and special machines of the war industry, clamping devices with drawings, aircraft and airship hangars, etc.

After compliance with this Treaty, a feat unparalleled in history, the German Volk had the right to expect that the other side also perform the obligations it had undertaken.

Bear in mind: 1. Germany had disarmed. 2. The Peace Treaty had explicitly required that Germany be disarmed as a precondition for universal disarmament, i.e. this fact alleged that the existence of Germany's arms alone constituted the reason for the armament of the other countries. 3. Both the governments and the parties of the German Volk were caught up at that time in a conviction which concurred in every way with the pacifist and democratic ideals of the League of Nations and its founders.

However, while Germany fulfilled its obligations as one party to the Treaty, the other party to the Treaty failed to perform its obligation. And that means: the esteemed parties thereto from the former victorious nations have unilaterally breached the Treaty of Versailles.

It was not enough that not a single reduction in arms was made which was in any way comparable to the German destruction of weaponry; nay; there was not even a moratorium on arms production, but the opposite: the arms of a whole series of nations finally came to light. The new machines of destruction which had been invented during the War were now perfected in peacetime, in methodical and scientific work. In the field of developing powerful land tanks as well as new fighting and bombing machines, constant and terrible improvements were made. Huge new guns were built and new high-explosive bombs, incendiary bombs and gas bombs were developed.

Since then the world has once again been reverberating to the sound of battle cries, as though there had never been a World War and a Treaty of Versailles had never been concluded. In the midst of these highly-armed nations of war, ever better-equipped with the most modern motorized forces, Germany was a vacuum where power was concerned, completely at the mercy of any threat and any danger which any of them might pose.

The German Volk recalls the misfortune and suffering of fifteen years of economical impoverishment, and political and moral humiliation. Hence it was understandable when Germany began to raise its voice to urge that the promise of the other states to disarm be kept. For one thing is clear: not only could the world endure one hundred years of peace; it would view it as an immense blessing. One hundred years of being torn apart as victor and vanquished is something it cannot, however, endure.

This feeling on the moral justification and necessity of international disarmament prevailed not only in Germany but also in many other nations. At the urging of these powers, attempts were initiated to bring about a reduction in arms by means of conferences and with it a general international alignment at a low level. This resulted in the first proposals for international disarmament agreements, and of these, we recall most vividly that made by MacDonald.⁷⁸

Germany was willing to accept this plan and to have it form a basis for agreements to come. It failed for lack of the other nations' support and was finally abandoned. Due to the fact that, under such circumstances, the equality of rights solemnly guaranteed to the German Volk and Reich in the statement of December 1932 did not become a reality, the new German Reich Government saw itself, as protector of the honor and the vital rights of the German Volk, in no position to continue participating in such conferences or to remain part of the League of Nations.

However, even after withdrawing from Geneva, the German Government was nonetheless willing not only to examine proposals made by other states, but also to submit its own practical proposals. In doing so, it adopted the self-styled attitude of the other nations that the creation of short-term armies is unsuitable for the purposes of an offensive attack and thus was to be recommended for peaceful defense.

It was thus willing to transform the long-service Reichswehr into a short-service army in compliance with the wishes of the other nations. Its winter 1933/34 proposals were practical and feasible. The fact of their rejection along with the definitive rejection of the similarly construed Italian and English proposals was an indication, however, that the other parties to the Treaty were no longer inclined to subsequently fulfill their respective obligations to disarm in accordance with the Treaty.

Under these circumstances, the German Government felt compelled to take of its own accord those steps necessary to ensure that an end be put to a situation which was both unworthy and ultimately threatening and in which a great Volk and Reich were powerless and defenseless. In doing so, it was following the same reasoning which Minister Baldwin⁷⁹ expressed so accurately in his last speech:

'A country which shows itself unwilling to make what necessary preparations are requisite for its own defense will never have force, moral or material, in this world.'

The government of today's German Reich desires but a single moral and material force—that is the force to preserve peace for the Reich and thereby for the whole of Europe as well.

It has therefore continued to do what was in its power to promote the cause of peace.

1. Quite some time ago, it proposed the conclusion of non-aggression pacts to all of its neighboring states.

2. It sought and reached a treaty arrangement with its eastern neighbor which, thanks to the high degree of accommodating understanding, has, it hopes, once and for all mitigated the threatening atmosphere which existed when it took power and will lead to a permanent understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

3. It has finally given France its solemn pledge that Germany will not make or place any further territorial demands upon France now that the Saar question has been settled. It believes that it has thus created, in a form rarely matched in history and by making a difficult political and material sacrifice, the basis for the termination of a dispute between two great nations which has lasted centuries.

The German Government must, however, observe to its regret that a continuous increase in arms has been taking place in the rest of the world for months. It sees in the creation of a Soviet-Russian army consisting of 101 divisions, i.e. an allowed force of 960,000 in peacetime, a factor which could not have been foreseen when the Treaty of Versailles was concluded.

It views the acceleration of similar measures in other states as further evidence of the rejection of the concept of disarmament formerly proclaimed. The German Government by no means intends to make accusations against any particular nation. However, it is compelled to note that, with the introduction of a two-year term of service in France which has now become law, the ideas underlying the creation of short-service defensive armies have been abandoned in favor of a long-term organization.

This constituted, however, one of the arguments for insisting that Germany abandon its Reichswehr at the time.

The German Government feels that under these circumstances it is impossible to delay any longer the measures required for the security of the Reich or indeed to refuse to inform its environment of these measures.

In now complying with the wish the British Minister, Baldwin, made on November 28, 1934, that light be shed upon Germany's intentions, it is doing so:

1. in order to give the German Volk the conviction and the other states notice that the preservation and security of the German Reich is once again entrusted from now on to the German nation's own strength;

2. that, by establishing the limits of the German measures, it will invalidate allegations charging that the German Volk is striving for military hegemony in Europe.

What the German Government desires, as protector of the honor and the interests of the German nation, is to secure the measure of power essential not only for upholding the integrity of the German Reich but also for Germany's international respect and esteem as a co-guarantor of general peace.

For in this very hour, the German Government renews its resolve before the German Volk and before the entire world that it will never step beyond the bounds of preserving German honor and the freedom of the Reich and in particular shall never make of the German national arms an instrument of warlike aggression, but an instrument confined exclusively to defense and thereby to the preservation of peace.

The German Reich Government is confident in its hope that the German Volk, once more restored to its honor and enjoying independent equality of rights, may be granted the opportunity to make its contribution to the pacification of the world in unrestrained and straightforward cooperation with the other nations and their governments.

Bearing this in mind, the German Reich Government has passed the following law as per today's date, which is hereby promulgated:

Law on the Establishment of the Wehrmacht of March 16, 1935

§ 1. Service in the Wehrmacht shall be effected on the basis of general conscription.

§ 2. The German peacetime army, inclusive of the transferred troop-police,⁸⁰ is comprised of twelve corps and thirty-six divisions.

§ 3. The supplementary laws on the details of general compulsory military service shall be submitted by the Reich Minister of Defense to the Reich Ministry of Defense.

Berlin, March 16, 1935

The *Heldengedenktag* on March 17, 1935, was exceptionally suited to mark Hitler's reintroduction of general compulsory military service. The flags were flying full, raised from half mast; mourning for the victims of war was passé: it was time to celebrate the past and future heroes.

The troops of the Army, the Navy and the new Luftwaffe had assembled in Linter den Linden in Berlin attired in dress uniforms. Hitler held a review of the companies, accompanied by the generals and imperial Field Marshal von Mackensen, and subsequently pinned Crosses of Honor to the Army standards posted in front of the palace terrace. The troops then filed past Hitler and Mackensen. In the afternoon Hitler flew to Munich, where he was received at the airport by the local Reichsstatthalter, General von Epp, and made a short speech.⁸¹

On the same day, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price in Munich, in which he took pains to paint the reaction of the German

public to the announcement of general conscription in positive colors.⁸²

1. In response to the question whether Germany was still as willing to negotiate with England and France as had been stated in his note of February 15, the Chancellor replied:

Establishing German military sovereignty is an act which restores the sovereignty of a great state which had been violated. It would be absurd to assume that a state which has become sovereign would be less inclined to negotiate than one which is not sovereign. It is for the very reason that we are a sovereign state that we are also willing to negotiate with other sovereign states.

2. Ward Price then asked the Chancellor whether Germany continued to feel bound by the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, to which the Chancellor responded:

The act of restoring German military sovereignty touches only upon those points in the Treaty of Versailles which have in any case long since lost their legal validity by virtue of the refusal of the other states to perform their respective obligations to reduce arms. The German Government is conscious of the fact that unilateral measures can never prompt a revision of the territorial provisions of international treaties.

3. In conclusion, Ward Price asked the Führer which impression the proclamation of March 16 had made on the German Volk. The Führer's reply was:

You yourself, Mr. Ward Price, saw the mood of the German Volk in Berlin, and you have now seen it in the South of the Reich, in Munich. It is no different in any other place in Germany. And this may make something clear to you: the German Volk perceives of the German Government's action taken yesterday not so much as a military, but as a moral step.

It has suffered for fifteen years from provisions by which it felt that a self-evident, intrinsic right of each and every people was violated. Had the world disarmed on an international scale, the German Volk would have been more than satisfied. But the fact that the rest of the world was arming itself while denying Germany any right to self-defense was perceived as a monstrous and degrading desecration. And that this defenseless position provoked an incessant stream of humiliations over and above that, begins to explain the proud satisfaction which the nation feels now that its honor has been restored.

If you were to now ask one of these millions whether he is thinking of peace or war, he would gaze at you in total incomprehension. For all these rejoicing people are moved not by some kind of animosity towards any one other nation, but solely by the satisfaction of knowing that their own Volk has regained its freedom.

They are moved by only a single idea: that they may once again, without having to be ashamed, count themselves as part of a great people. You do not understand this and are not able to understand it. Yet had you gone through anything similar to what the German Volk has gone through, you would

perhaps comprehend the emotions which overcome a person who has been kept for years in a dishonorable position and who has now, of his own accord, regained his honor.

And thus I am able, in the same proclamation with which I have re-established the military sovereignty of the German Reich, to plead loud and clear for peace and to offer our cooperation in securing that peace. The German Volk does not want war; it wants only the same rights as all others. That is all.

Abroad, criticism of Hitler's announcement was relatively low-key. On March 18, Great Britain delivered a solemn protest in Berlin but proceeded to ask whether Germany was still willing to enter into talks with Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden in the German capital.

The British put up no real resistance in the matter of general conscription, a fact Hitler attributed to their having become soft and senile.⁸³ In truth, Great Britain's basic policy was to concede to Hitler whatever was justifiable in terms of international law and to immediately draw the line should he take military action against another country. General conscription was perceived to be within the framework of German equality of rights and did not, in England's view, constitute a *casus belli*—notwithstanding the fact that solving this problem by international consensus and integrating Germany in a European system of defense would have been preferable.

Hitler, however, was determined to personally take what he judged his due, irked by the feeling of being passed over whenever his demands were met by international agreement as had been the case at the return of the Saar in 1935 (Treaty of Versailles) and at the surrender of the Sudeten territories to Germany in 1938 (Munich Agreement).

France and Italy required more time to put their resolutions against Hitler's action of March 16 on paper, not handing over their protest notes until March 21 in Berlin. Mussolini still dared to defy his fellow dictator while the Polish, having learned the role assigned to them, refrained from comment.

Hitler acted the part of the convalescent for several more days. On March 19, he drove by car to Stuttgart, where he stayed at the Viktoria Hotel, having stopped along the way in Augsburg to visit the Golden Hall in the City Hall. The next day he proceeded via Heidelberg and Darmstadt on to Wiesbaden, where he spent three days recuperating at the Rose Hotel health resort, attending a concert at the spa center and a performance of *Aida* at the State Theater.⁸⁴

“Potsdam Day,” which had been celebrated on March 21 of the preceding year with a commemorative publication, went by the board in 1935, overshadowed by the decisive stride taken in military policy. Hitler, however, did think to pen the notation, “Potsdam Day, March 21, 1935”⁸⁵ on an insignificant decree concerning the integration of trade and industry in the German Labor Front, which closed with the following words:

The foundations for the new social administration of all working Germans have now, following the establishment of the German Labor Front, the issuing of the Law Regulating National Labor, and the organization of trade and industry, been laid by means of the new agreement. The agreement gives nothing away, but instead requires the highest achievement. It places the will to form a community foremost. This will⁸⁶ must pervade into the bottommost organs of our entire body of labor and economy. I know that every German Volksgenosse will earn the faith which I place in him with this new work.

On March 23, Hitler dispatched a telegram wishing Georg Hirst, Senior Musical Director in Munich and the composer of his particular favorite, the Badenweiler March, a happy birthday.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden had been able to move the German Chancellor to reflect on an armament agreement, and three months later an Anglo-German naval treaty was signed.⁸⁸

On March 24, Simon and Eden arrived in Berlin and met with Hitler in the Chancellery for three extensive talks over the next two days.⁸⁹ The Führer even dined once at the British Embassy.

Hitler dealt with the British statesmen much as he had earlier with the German Nationalists, making no distinction between domestic and foreign policy. Claiming he was saving Europe from Communism, he presented his military steps as a contribution to European security for which Great Britain should be grateful, comparing himself to Blücher, who had come to Wellington’s assistance during the Battle of Waterloo and had not first asked whether or not his actions were in line with the treaties in force. How little the Englishmen were impressed by Hitler’s rhetoric is illustrated by the fact that Eden proceeded immediately on to Moscow at the conclusion of the talks with “Europe’s Deliverer from Bolshevism.”

For the first time on March 28, Hitler paid his respects to the new German *Reichsluftwaffe* in his function as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, viewing the Richthofen fighter group in Döberitz.⁹⁰ In a short speech he expressed his appreciation of the accomplishments he had seen.

On the same day he received the new Spanish Ambassador, y Cortijo, in the Chancellery to accept the latter's credentials, making a few welcoming remarks on the occasion.⁹¹

March 29 marked the premiere of a film by Leni Riefenstahl shown at the Ufa cinema near the Zoo in Berlin centering around the Reich Party Congress of 1934. The documentary showed a scenario that seemed to be arranged for a science fiction opus, but it was reality: column upon column of countless parade formations stand at attention in strict, clear lines, motionless, expecting their Lord and Master. From the wide celestial skies descends the Führer's plane as if bringing down to earth the Redeemer the world so eagerly awaits.⁹² Hitler himself had contributed the film's title *Triumph des Willens* which reflected his belief that, given sufficient will power, one could accomplish anything. He doubtless would have chosen the motto "Triumph of the Will" for the Congress itself, had the Röhm affair preceding it not called for a certain degree of reticence on his part.⁹³

On April 1, Hitler toured the Deutsches Museum in Munich.⁹⁴ The following day, he attended a state ceremony at the Berlin State Opera marking the incorporation of the judicial administration of the Länder into the Reich.⁹⁵

One day later, a reception for the Gauamtsleiters of the Winterhilfswerk took place in the Chancellery, at which Hitler repeated his pledge,⁹⁶ "We will never for all time give up the Winterhilfswerk!"

On April 4, Hitler held an evening reception for NSDAP Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the "House of the Reich President" in Berlin.⁹⁷

Erich Ludendorff, retired General of the Infantry, celebrated his seventieth birthday in his house on the banks of the Starnberg Lake in Tutzing on April 9. The old fellows of the 1923 Putsch, Hitler and Ludendorff, had not been on friendly terms since 1925. Although their ideas did coincide, each felt superior to the other.

General Ludendorff had been one of the parties essentially responsible for spreading the legend of the "stab in the back." This propagandist allegation had it that the munitions workers' strike in October 1918, just as the German Army was purportedly at the threshold of victory, had been the cause of the dishonorable defeat of the invincible German forces. Although it might be understandable that Hitler and others who had fought in the war held this view, there is no excuse for Ludendorff's support of such an obvious fallacy. He had not experienced the war from a corporal's perspective, as the later dictator

had, but been instrumental in waging it as Quartermaster General from 1916 to 1918. In September of 1918, together with Hindenburg, he had petitioned the German Government to conclude an armistice within twenty-four hours in order to circumvent the otherwise inevitable military collapse. However, this did not prevent him from subsequently claiming, against his own better knowledge, that Marxists, Jews, Freemasons, and the Catholic Church had connived to bring about Germany's collapse.

In 1923, Ludendorff and Hitler had been on the same side; from 1925 Ludendorff rejected his former companion as being not sufficiently radical; strange as this may sound today, he viewed him as an "ultramontane"⁹⁸ and a *Judenknecht* (slave to the Jews).

Ludendorff's attitude naturally rankled Hitler, and his vanity would not allow that anyone in Germany of standing or reputation was not wholly—and publicly—supportive. Moreover, he intended to have Ludendorff enter into Valhalla when he died, just as he had sent Hindenburg⁹⁹ to the great hall dedicated to the war heroes in Norse mythology. Thus he enlisted all of his powers of persuasion to move Ludendorff to desist and adopt a *modus vivendi* of mutual respect. A reconciliation of sorts had come about between the two former comrades in arms by the time of Ludendorff's death in 1937;¹⁰⁰ however, in 1935, Hitler's essays in this direction were fruitless, despite his belief that his foe would finally come to view him as Germany's savior for having reinstated military service.

Consequently he issued an "order" on April 8 in which he lauded Ludendorff as the "greatest German commander in the World War." This "Order of the Führer and Reich Chancellor"—no one was quite sure to whom it was addressed—read as follows:¹⁰¹

Tomorrow, on April 9, General Ludendorff is celebrating his seventieth birthday. With sentiments of deepest gratitude, the German Volk recalls on this occasion the immortal accomplishments of its greatest commander in the World War. In the grasp of this sentiment of a national debt of gratitude, I order that all state buildings exhibit flags on April 9.

Adolf Hitler

On April 9, Hitler had an honor guard appointed to the celebrant and dispatched the Reich Minister of Defense, von Blomberg, and the Chief of Army Command, von Fritsch, to relay his congratulations in Tutzing. Blomberg was also instructed to present the marshal's baton to Ludendorff, but the latter, the victorious commander *per se*, rejected the appointment.

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Naturally the German public heard nothing of this affront, although it was rather obvious that the reports on the birthday festivities in Tutzing made not a single mention of the Chancellor. Following the "order" of April 8 and the military favors Hitler had bestowed upon Ludendorff, the absence of any word of thanks from the latter did appear curious.

On April 10, Göring was wedded to the actress Emmy Sonnemann in Berlin. Hitler acted as a witness at both the civil ceremony in the Berlin City Hall and the religious one in the cathedral.¹⁰²

The following day marked the beginning of a conference of the British, French and Italian Heads of State in Stresa at the Lago Maggiore which closed on April 14 with a unanimous condemnation of Germany's reintroduction of military service. This opinion was also confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations on April 17, which found, "By its independent action, Germany has violated the Treaty of Versailles and threatened the safety of Europe."

In spite of the consideration the British had shown Hitler, they were anxious to have the fact of Germany's abrogation of Versailles determined by an international body. This sequence of events was repeated even more starkly in 1936, when Hitler occupied the demilitarized Rhineland, thereby violating not only the Treaty of Versailles, but the Locarno Pact as well.¹⁰³

On April 20, Hitler first accepted the congratulations proffered by Generals Blomberg, Göring and Fritsch and Admiral Raeder. Chief of Staff Lutze, on behalf of the SA, presented Hitler with the *Horst Wessel* fighter group, "for restoring military sovereignty."¹⁰⁴ The new "standard of the Führer and Reich Chancellor" was raised at the Chancellery in honor of the day.¹⁰⁵ On April 28, Hitler toured the construction work in progress on the Congress grounds in Nuremberg.¹⁰⁶

May Day festivities commenced in Berlin with a youth rally in the Berlin Lustgarten, and Hitler's now-traditional speech climaxed in the statement, "German Youth! It is a great time you are experiencing. What is often not granted for generations is yours!"¹⁰⁷

Such references to the "great time" which German youth owed to Hitler became, from this point onwards, integral parts of his speeches at May Day festivities and Reich Party Congresses. The rally on the Tempelhofer Feld—this time the crowd numbered "only" one and a half million as opposed to the alleged two million the previous year—was not blessed by *Hitlerwetter* from the start, but obscured by thick

snowfall. However, “the moment the Führer set foot on the steps to the speaker’s platform, the sun broke through.”¹⁰⁸

Hitler made use of his speech before the assembled masses to vent his anger at Oswald Spengler and his book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*),¹⁰⁹ alleging that these critics had now been proven wrong, for his—Hitler’s—success was obvious to all; moreover, his “forging anew” of the German Volk constituted “the greatest feat of this century.”

The speech began as follows:

German Volksgenossen!

The first of May—in days of yore the German Spring holiday. And another first of May—a day of strife and discontent, a day of our Volk being torn asunder in classes. And yet another first of May—the day marking the springtime of the nation! The day of the solidarity of a Volk in its work!

A great age has thus dawned once again for Germany. We say this knowing that the greatness of an age lies in the greatness of the tasks assigned to it and thereby to us. Great tasks, such as those vested in only few generations in history.

Yesterday we were still a powerless Volk, for we were strife-torn, falling out and apart in internal discord, fragmented into hundreds of parties and groups, leagues and associations, Weltanschauungen and confessions—a Reich built upon this fragmented Volk, equally weak and powerless, a mere plaything at the mercy of alien despotism! Small states deride it, small states deprive it of its rights and gag the people of this Volk. The economy was in the throes of death. Disintegration and ruin at every turn. Every principle had been abandoned. What had once seemed good became bad; what had been detestable was suddenly venerable. What was once meant to and able to give life more meaning was now passed off and perceived to be merely a burden to mankind. One author summed up the impressions of this age in a book which he entitled, *The Decline of the West*.

Is this then really the end of our history and hence of our peoples? No! We cannot believe or accept it! It must be called not the ‘Decline of the West,’ but the ‘Resurrection of the Peoples of the Western World!’

Only what has become old, rotten and bad dies. And it should die! But new life will generate. The will shall find the faith. This will lies in leadership, and faith lies in the people!

But all must believe in one thing. He who would tackle this great work of reorganization must begin with the Volk itself. First a new Volk, and with it the new age! Great tasks have always been accomplished only by strong leaders; but even the strongest leadership must fail if it does not have a faithful, inwardly steadfast and truly strong Volk standing behind it.

It is mankind’s misfortune that its leaders forget all too often that ultimate strength does not lie anchored in divisions and regiments or in cannons and tanks; rather, the greatest strength of any leadership lies in the people

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themselves, in their unanimity, in their inner unity and in their idealistic faith. That is the power which, in the end, can move the mountains of resistance! But this requires a philosophy which the Volk understands, a philosophy which it comprehends and which it loves.

When we first set forth in 1919 as preachers of the National Socialist philosophy, we were a tiny little group of idealists or, as they said, dreamers, the object of ridicule. The critics have been proven wrong today. Some of them might also have striven for what has happened since, but they were incapable of bringing it about; in a historical sense, visible success is ultimately decisive for the correctness of a principle. And this here is documentary proof of this success which no one can forge: *one Volk in one Reich!*

Everything we have achieved would have been impossible; nothing we did could have been accomplished; there never would have been a January 30th; never a 21st nor a 16th of March; the external success would never have come about if the German Volk had not gone through an inner transition. The fact that we were able to give the German Volk a new philosophy and to lead it to a new type of life by means of this philosophy is the greatest feat of this century for our Volk. The greatest achievement which will outlive by far everything which can be accomplished in day-to-day work, thanks to this unique achievement.

Hitler then gave himself up to sentimental reflections on the poverty of the Germans compared to the wealth of other peoples, building up to the assurance that no one in the world need fear him. Even if he were given the gift of continents, he would still prefer to be the poorest citizen of the German Volk. The flowing rhetoric in which this noble message was clothed is as follows:

And this united nation—we need it, for when was a leadership confronted with a more difficult task than our German leadership? Bear in mind, my Volksgenossen, what our Germany is, and compare it to other countries. How little we have! 137 people per square kilometer, no colonies, no natural resources, no foreign currency, no capital, no foreign assets left, only heavy burdens, sacrifices, taxes, and low wages. What do we have compared to the wealth of other states, the wealth of other countries, the wealth of other peoples, the wealth of possibilities they have? What do we have? Only one thing: we have our Volk! It is either all, or it is nothing. Our Volk is the only thing on which we can depend. The only thing upon which we can build. Everything we have accomplished to date we owe only to its quality, its capabilities, its loyalty, its decency, its diligence, its sense of order. And when I weigh all of that, then it appears to me to be more than everything the rest of the world has to offer us. And that, I believe, is something we can well impart to other peoples on this first of May: you need not fear that we will place demands on you. We are proud enough to confess that the utmost—something you cannot give us—is something we have ourselves: our Volk.

As Führer, I cannot conceive of any task on this earth more marvelous and glorious than to serve this Volk. Were I given the gift of continents, I would

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still prefer being even the poorest citizen of this Volk. And with this Volk it must and will be possible to accomplish the tasks of the future as well.

At the close of his speech, Hitler proclaimed that the demonstration was the greatest and most glorious in the world and that his will must be the faith of all.

And thus I ask of you: renew on this day of the greatest and most glorious demonstration in the world your vow to your Volk, to our community and to our National Socialist State. My will—and this must be the vow of each and every one of us—is your faith! To me—as to you—my faith is everything I have in this world!

But the greatest thing God has given me in this world is my Volk!

In it rests my faith. It I serve with my will, and to it I give my life!

May this be our mutual sacred vow on the day of German labor, which so rightfully is the day of the German nation!

To our working German Volk: *Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!*

As in preceding years, Hitler also attended the ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of Culture at the State Opera, at which Goebbels presented the national film award to Leni Riefenstahl for *Triumph des Willens*.

In the afternoon, Hitler received workers' delegations from the various Gaus and delivered a brief address.¹¹⁰

On May 2, the participants and heads of the delegations to the International Film Congress met in the Chancellery to hear Hitler expound at length on the significance of film in international cultural exchange.¹¹¹

On May 3, Hitler received the newly-appointed Bulgarian Envoy, Dr. Christov, and stressed in his welcoming remarks “the traditional amicable relations between Germany and Bulgaria.”¹¹²

The next day he toured the new East Asia steamer *Scharnhorst* in Bremerhaven and commented in a short speech on the inauguration of “this most modern and fastest ship in the East Asia line” of the Norddeutsche Lloyd.¹¹³

On May 5, Hitler dispatched the following telegram to King George V of Great Britain from Berchtesgaden:¹¹⁴

I may request that Your Majesty accept my sincerest congratulations and those of the Reich Government on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Your Majesty's accession to the throne, coupled with best wishes for Your and Her Majesty's personal well-being.

The German Volk is following with warm-hearted understanding all of the endeavors of Your Majesty and the Royal British Government to safeguard the peace.

It hopes that these endeavors may be successful for the welfare of the British Empire and to the benefit of the entire world.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

On May 6, Hitler surveyed the new German Alpine route between Inzell and Berchtesgaden.¹¹⁵ May 11 saw him meeting with delegates of the World Association of Automobile Clubs at the Chancellery, where he talked of the “construction of the Reichsautobahn unique in all the world.”¹¹⁶

In response to the news of Marshal Pilsudski’s death, Hitler sent the following telegram to his widow, Alexandra Pilsudski, on May 13:¹¹⁷

The sad news of the decease of your dearly beloved spouse, His Excellency Marshal Pilsudski, has pained me to the quick. I may bid you, my dear madam, and your family accept my offering of deeply felt sympathy. My thoughts of the departed will always be those of gratitude.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

Göring was sent to attend the funeral services in Warsaw and Krakau as Hitler’s proxy, while the dictator himself went to a requiem mass held for Pilsudski in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Hedwig’s in Berlin.¹¹⁸

On May 19, Hitler delivered a short speech in Frankfurt at the opening of the Reichsautobahn segment between Frankfurt and Darmstadt.¹¹⁹

In a cabinet meeting on May 21, the time had finally come for Hitler to announce the new “German Military Service Act” (*Wehrgesetz*), which provided as follows:¹²⁰

§1

1. Military service is an honorable service to the German Volk.
2. Every German man is obligated to perform military service.
3. In the event of war, every German man and every German woman beyond the scope of military service is under obligation to serve the Vaterland.

§2

The Wehrmacht is the bearer of arms and the military training school of the German Volk. It comprises the Army, the Navy and the Luftwaffe.

§3

1. The Supreme Commander (Oberster Befehlshaber) of the Wehrmacht is the Führer and Reich Chancellor.
2. Subordinate to him, the Reich Minister of War has command over the Armed Forces as Commander in Chief (Oberbefehlshaber) of the Wehrmacht.

The most striking facet of the law's phrasing lay in the use of the word "war," which the National Socialists usually shunned due to its negative impact on the population at large.¹²¹ Particularly noteworthy in this context is also the fact that the Reich Minister of Defense was now renamed Minister of War. Although historic parallels¹²² were found for this step, the German public rightly viewed it as a portent of what was to come.

To be on the safe side, Hitler had reserved for himself the decision as to the length of military service, and even now he was disinclined to openly announce the two-year term he envisioned, preferring to dole out these bitter pills one at a time. On May 21, he issued a decree providing that the period of active military service for all members of the Wehrmacht was one year. There is no doubt that he planned to double this term before the first year of service had ended, but by that time the Germans would have become more accustomed and more amenable to the fact as such; moreover, he certainly would have no difficulty in manufacturing some plausible reason for the extension when time came.¹²³

However, at present he judged it expedient to deliver another "Peace Speech" before the Reichstag to reassure the world and the German people of his purported desire for peace and to assuage the consternation his new law had created with typically honeyed phrasing.¹²⁴ In essence, the speech of May 21, 1935 was a reiteration of Hitler's "Peace Speech" of May 17, 1933,¹²⁵ with the notable difference that his own position had become much stronger.

The 1933 speech had constituted something of an alibi for Germany's planned withdrawal from the League of Nations, and the 1935 speech was also an advance justification of Hitler's next coup: the occupation of the Rhineland. On May 2, France and the Soviet Union had signed a pact of mutual assistance; although this in no way violated the Pact of Locarno, Hitler stated on May 21:

The German Reich Government will particularly abide by all of the obligations arising from the Locarno Pact as long as the other parties are willing for their part to adhere to this Pact. The German Reich Government holds that respecting the demilitarized zone constitutes an enormously important contribution to the appeasement of Europe. It feels bound, however, to point out that the continued increase in troops on the other side can by no means be viewed as a complement to these endeavors.

These words served to outline in no uncertain terms the German objectives in respect to the Rhineland.

Hitler commenced his speech of May 21 with the claim that he spoke always “with complete openness and total frankness.” Moreover, he was a democrat extraordinary, having been lawfully elected as sole deputy by thirty-eight million Germans, Here he also inadvertently revealed how much importance he attached to the remaining 668 duly-elected deputies of the Reichstag.

It is my belief that making this type of statement is particularly useful, for it not only gives me the right but actually places me under obligation to be completely open and to speak about the various problems with total frankness.

The German nation has the right to demand this of me, and I am determined to obey. I frequently hear Anglo-Saxon countries express regret that Germany should have departed from the very principles of a democratic concept of state which are particularly sacred to these countries. This opinion is based upon a grave error. Germany also had a “democratic constitution.” The present German Government of the National Socialist State has also been appointed by the people and feels itself responsible to the people in the same way. It does not matter how high the number of votes in the individual Länder were. There are Länder which require 20,000 votes for one deputy. In others, 10,000 or even 5,000 suffice; in still others, the figure is 60,000 or more.

The German Volk elected a single deputy as its representative with thirty-eight million votes! That is perhaps one of the most significant differences in comparison to the conditions in the other countries. It means, however, that I feel just as responsible to the German Volk as any parliament would.

Hitler then launched into what was almost a word-for-word repetition of the views and ideas upon which he had expounded to the British statesmen in exhaustive monologues at the end of March,¹²⁶ from the “dictated peace” (*Friedensdiktat*) of Versailles to the peaceful mission of National Socialism, which he described with the following words:

The blood which has been shed on the European continent for the past three hundred years bears no proportion whatsoever to the outcome of events in terms of nationalities. In the end, France has remained France, Germany Germany, Poland Poland, Italy Italy, etc. What dynastic egoism, political passion and patriotic blindness have attained by rivers of blood in the way of seemingly far-reaching national and political changes served, in terms of the nations, only to scratch the surface of peoples, doing very little to really alter their basic parameters. Had these states devoted merely a fraction of their sacrifices to wiser aims, the resultant success would certainly have been greater and more permanent.

When I, as a National Socialist, uphold this opinion in total frankness, I am moved by yet another realization: every war initially devours the cream of the crop. But because there is no more unoccupied space left in Europe,

every victory—without effecting any change in the fundamental European misfortune—can at best bring about a numerical increase in the inhabitants of a given state. If, however, this means so much to the nations, they can accomplish it in a much simpler and above all more natural way than by shedding tears. A sound social policy can increase the willingness of a Volk to have offspring and thus, within only a few years, give to a nation more children of its own Volk than the number of foreign people who could be conquered and made subjects by war.

No! National Socialist Germany wants peace out of its innermost *weltanschaulich* convictions. It wants peace owing, too, to the simple and so basic realization that no war would be capable of essentially alleviating our widespread European distress, but would more likely increase it. Modern Germany is presently undertaking the enormous effort of repairing its inner damages.

None of our projects of material nature will be completed before ten to twenty years have passed. None of the tasks of an ideal nature which we have taken on can come to fruition in less than fifty or perhaps even a hundred years. Back then I started the National Socialist Revolution by creating the Movement and I have actively carried on this revolution. I know that all of us will witness only the very beginning of this great and sweeping development. What more could I want than peace?

But if they claim that this is the desire only of the leadership, I must respond with the following: even if only the leaders and those in government wanted peace—the peoples themselves have never wanted war! Germany needs peace, and it desires peace.

I have now heard from the lips of an English statesman that such assurances mean nothing and that the only guarantee of sincerity is a signature on collective treaties, and I may ask Minister Eden to take into consideration that it is, in any case, an 'assurance.' On occasion it is much easier to sign one's name to a treaty, inwardly reserving the right to review one's attitude in the decisive hour, than to declare—before an entire nation and completely out in the open—one's support of a policy which serves the cause of peace because it rejects the prerequisites of war.

I could have put my signature on ten treaties, and the weightiness of such an action would not have had the same significance as the statement I made to France on the occasion of the Saar plebiscite. When I, as Führer and appointed representative of the German nation, gave my assurance in front of the world and my Volk that Germany would make no further territorial demands upon France after the question of the Saar had been settled, this constituted a contribution to peace which is greater than many a signature on many a pact.

Hitler then aired at length his dislike of international conventions and collective treaties, above all building his case against the prior handling of disarmament, and reciting once more his tedious catalog of quantitative proof that Germany had kept its part of the bargain.

Yet even in the *Friedensdiktat* of Versailles it was expressly provided that Germany's reduction in arms was to be effected first only in order to enable the others to reduce their arms as well. And now this example may serve to illustrate the extent to which the concept of collective cooperation was violated by those very parties who are today its most vociferous advocates.

Germany performed the obligations imposed in the Treaty of Versailles with nothing short of zealousness. Financially, up to the complete collapse of its finances; economically, up to the total destruction of its economy; militarily, up to a complete lack of defenses. I may repeat here in general terms the facts of Germany's performance of the treaties which are contested by no one.

The following were destroyed in the Army: 1) 59,000 guns and barrels; 2) 130,000 machine guns; 3) 31,000 trench mortars and barrels; 4) 6,007,000 rifles and carbines; 5) 243,000 MG barrels; 6) 28,000 gun carriages; 7) 4,390 trench mortar carriages; 8) 38,750,000 shells; 9) 16,550,000 hand grenades and rifle grenades; 10) 60,400,000 live fuzes; 11) 491,000,000 small arms ammunition; 12) 335,000 tons of shell cases; 13) 43,515 tons of cartridge cases; 14) 37,600 tons of gunpowder; 15) 79,000 ammunition gauges; 16) 212,000 telephone sets; 17) 1,072 flamethrowers, etc. Further destroyed were: sledges, mobile workshops, anti-aircraft vehicles, limbers, steel helmets, gas masks, machines of the former war industry, and rifle barrels.

Further destroyed in the air were: 1) 15,714 fighter planes and bombers; 2) 27,757 aircraft engines.

At sea, the following were destroyed: 26 capital ships, four coastal tanks, four battle cruisers, 19 light cruisers, 21 training ships and special ships, 83 torpedo boats, and 315 submarines.

Also destroyed were motor vehicles of all types, chemical warfare and, in part, anti-gas defense equipment, propellants, explosives, searchlights, sighting devices, range finders and sound rangers, optical instruments of all kinds, harnesses, etc.; all airplane and airship hangars, etc.

Hence in a genuine act of self-sacrifice, Germany fulfilled all of the conditions for cooperation in a collective sense in keeping with the American President's thinking.

At the latest upon the consummation of Germany's disarmament, the world should, for its part, have taken the same step toward establishing equality. It is merely one proof of the accuracy of this view that there was no dearth of admonishing and warning voices in the other peoples and in the other states who endorsed the performance of this duty. I wish to cite only a few of these men—who certainly cannot be referred to as friends of today's Germany—in order to refute, by their own statements, those who seem to be suffering from amnesia and cannot recall that the Treaty of Versailles contained the contractual obligation not only for Germany to disarm, but for the other states as well.

Hitler then proceeded to read statements British and French politicians had made on the question of disarmament:

Lord Robert Cecil, Member of the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference and Head of the British Delegation to the Disarmament Conference (*Revue de Paris*, No. 5, 1924):

“The disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and the other peace treaties commence with a preamble which reads as follows: In order to make possible the introduction of general arms limitation for all nations, Germany undertakes to closely observe the following provisions on armed forces on land, at sea and in the air. This preamble amounts to an agreement. It constitutes the solemn promise of the governments to the democracies of all those states which signed the peace treaties. If it is not kept, the system set up by the peace treaties cannot be permanently upheld, and even partial disarmament will shortly cease to exist.”

Paul-Boncour on April 8, 1927 at the British Meeting of the League of Nations' Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference:

“It is true that the preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles concerns the restrictions on arms which were imposed upon Germany as precondition and as precedent for a general arms limitation. This very clearly distinguishes Germany's limitations on arms from other comparable limitations on arms which have been imposed in the course of history at the close of wars and which have incidentally in general proven rather ineffective. This time such a condition—and only then does it take on its full value—has been imposed not only on the party signing the treaty, but is moreover a duty, a moral and legal obligation of the co-signatories to take steps towards the general limitation of arms.”

Henderson's statement of January 20, 1931:

“We must persuade our parliaments and our peoples that all of the members of the League of Nations are compelled to adopt this policy of general disarmament by solemn obligations imposed upon us both by international law and by a sense of national honor. I shall remind the Council that Article 8 of the Covenant, the preamble of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, the final act of the Pact of Locarno, and the resolutions passed every year since 1920 by the assembly demonstrate that all members of the League are subject to the same responsibility in this sector. We have all assumed obligations, and if we do not perform them, doubt can be shed upon our peaceful intentions. The influence and the reputation of the League of Nations would suffer as a consequence.”

Briand's statement of January 20, 1931:

“On behalf of my country, I may endorse the eloquent words with which our President has opened the session. . . I believe as you do. I have had the opportunity to say this on several occasions—that the obligations which the nations have contractually undertaken by signing Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations may not be allowed to remain but lifeless words. They constitute a sacred commitment, and a country which would shirk this would dishonor itself.”

Remarks of the Belgian Foreign Minister Vandervelde, Member of the Belgian Peace Delegation, on February 27, 1927:

“From now on we are faced with the following dilemma: either the other powers must reduce their armies in proportion to the German Reichswehr or the Treaty of Versailles will be rendered invalid and Germany will claim for itself the right to possess armed forces in order to be in a position to defend the sovereignty of its territory. Two conclusions are to be drawn from these facts: first, that all measures of control have little effect; secondly, disarmament will either be general or not happen at all.”

The same Foreign Minister on December 29, 1930 in the *Populaire*:

“The Treaty of Versailles would be reduced to so many scraps of paper if the moral and legal obligations of the Treaty which forced disarmament upon defeated Germany with the aim of preparing for a reduction in arms by the others were not fulfilled.”

Lord Robert Cecil in his radio speech of December 31, 1930:

“International arms reduction numbers among our more important national interests. We have not only once, but many times over undertaken the obligation to reduce and limit the arms of the nations which were victorious in the World War to supplement the reduction in arms we imposed as a duty upon our former adversaries. We will destroy all faith in international obligations if we do not carry out what we have promised. In my view it is of secondary importance that we would know no answer were our former adversaries to approach us with the demand to be allowed to rearm.”

And once again Paul-Boncour on April 26, 1930 in the *Journal*: “Finally, one does not have to be a prophet; it suffices to keep one’s eyes open to observe that, in the event of a definitive failure of the disarmament negotiations or even only in the event of their continuing postponement, Germany—freed of other constraints—will prepare to shake off this arms reduction and to no longer tolerate alone a limitation of arms which the Treaty of Versailles itself describes as the precondition, but also as the promise, of a general reduction in arms. We no longer have a choice.”

This by no means marked the end of Hitler’s introductory remarks; he continued along this vein for another hour and more. His detailed sketch of German disarmament was followed by an interminable series of figures outlining the armaments of the other nations, the development of new weaponry from machine guns to the direction finders and aiming mechanisms of the Air Force and the torpedo tubes on warships, etc. Then began a long dissertation on the reasons why the reintroduction of conscription had been necessary and on the perils of military pacts.

This discourse climaxed in a comprehensive comparison between National Socialism and Bolshevism in which the former was presented as personifying social justice and cultural and religious forbearance, while the latter was portrayed as no less than the epitome of brutality: hostile to civilization and devoid of any religious feeling. Hitler assured his public:

One could pursue this topic indefinitely. Both we National Socialists and the Bolshevists are of the conviction that worlds separate us, a gap never to be bridged. But beyond that we are separated by more than 400¹²⁷ murdered National Socialist Party comrades; thousands of other National Socialists in other associations who were killed repelling Bolshevik revolts; thousands of soldiers and police squads who were shot and massacred fighting to protect the Reich and the Länder against the never-ending Communist uprisings; and more than 43,000 injured in our Party alone. Thousands of them are partially blinded, partially crippled for the rest of their days.

Hitler then enumerated all of the actual or alleged Communist uprisings and disturbances around the globe which had taken place since 1918 and lectured Lord Privy Seal Anthony Eden yet again on the perils of Bolshevism:

If I am not mistaken, I gather the impression from the last speech of the English Lord Privy Seal that the Soviet Union has no interest at all in such tendencies—in particular aggressive military tendencies. No one would be happier than we should this opinion prove true in the future. The past, in any case, indicates the opposite. If I presume to contrast my own impression with this finding, I am at least in a position to point out that the success of my own life-struggle is not due exclusively to a particularly large measure of incompetence on my part. I believe I do in fact understand some things here. I began my activities in Germany at approximately the same time Bolshevism was celebrating its initial achievements, i.e. the first civil war in Germany. When, after fifteen years, Bolshevism in our country had six million followers, I had risen to thirteen million. Then, in the decisive battle, it lost. National Socialism has ripped Germany and with it perhaps the whole of Europe back from the brink of the most horrible catastrophe of all time.

When he had completed this part of the speech, Hitler launched the same attack against Lithuania with which he had confronted Simon and Eden in March in the most dramatic tones and gestures.¹²⁸

He was willing, he stated, to conclude pacts of non-aggression with any country—any country, that was, except Lithuania which “failed to respect the most primitive laws of human coexistence.”

Perhaps it may appear surprising that Hitler pounced upon Lithuania of all countries as the target of his vituperative utterances at the time. He believed, however, that it would best distract international attention from his own breaches of treaties to point an accusing finger at another culprit flaunting non-compliance with international conventions. It was an incontrovertible fact that Lithuania had disregarded existing agreements and the authority of the League of Nations in occupying the Memel territory in 1923, in spite of protests by the French High Commissioner Petisné.

While it was true that the inhabitants of the Memel territory had been guaranteed autonomy by means of what was known as the Memel Statute, the parties to the agreement—Great Britain, France and Italy—were at pains to enforce this guarantee upon the Lithuanian Government.¹²⁹

In March, 128 Memel National Socialists had been put on trial in Kaunas; four were sentenced to death. Hitler's diatribe on this red-herring theme was barely surpassed by his later harangues against the Czechs and the Polish.¹³⁰

They [the inhabitants of the Memel territory] are Germans; in an attack which was subsequently sanctioned and took place in the midst of peace they were torn away from the Reich, and as a penalty for continuing to be attached to German *Volkstum*, they are persecuted, tortured and maltreated in the most barbaric way.

What would be said in England or in France if members of these nations were to meet with such a sorry fate? When the feeling of belonging to a Volk which is harbored by people torn away from such a Volk contrary to all law or natural sentiment is deemed a punishable crime, then this means that people are being denied a right which is even granted to each and every animal: the right to be attached to its old master and the old inborn community. But 140,000 Germans in Lithuania were actually confined to a position below these rights. Thus we see no possibility—as long as the responsible guarantors of the Memel Statute for their part are not in a position to lead Lithuania back to respecting the most primitive human rights—of concluding for our part any treaties whatsoever with this State.

In the further course of his speech, Hitler described the new Franco-Soviet pact as a “military alliance” incompatible with the Covenant of the League of Nations and in all probability with the Pact of Locarno as well.

The German Reich Government will be particularly grateful to receive an authentic interpretation of the repercussions and effects of the Franco-Russian military alliance on the contractual obligations of the individual parties to the Pact of Locarno. It would like to rule out any doubt on its own opinion, i.e. that it holds these military alliances to be incompatible with the spirit and the letter of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

In the next part of his speech, Hitler dismissed as inconceivable the notion that Germany could contemplate an annexation of Austria.

Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in inner-Austrian affairs or to effect an Austrian annexation or *Anschluss*. Born of a simple feeling of solidarity due to a common national origin, the German Volk and the German Government have, however, the understandable desire that not only alien peoples, but also the German Volk be guaranteed the right of self-determi-

nation everywhere. I personally believe that any regime which is not anchored in the people, supported by the people and wanted by the people cannot endure for any length of time. If such difficulties do not exist between Germany and Switzerland—itself to a large percentage German as well—this is for the simple reason that Switzerland's independence is a fact, and because no one doubts that its government represents the true and legal manifestation of the will of the people. We Germans have, however, every reason to be pleased that there is a state on our border with a large proportion of German inhabitants which has a great degree of inner stability and is in possession of real and factual independence. The German Government regrets the tension caused by the conflict with Austria all the more because it has caused a disruption in our relations with Italy which were previously so good, to a state with which we otherwise have no conflicts of interests whatsoever.

This sobering statement on Germany's Italian "friend" marked the end of Hitler's introductory remarks, and he proceeded to expound his thirteen points [!] containing answers to all of the pressing problems of the day.

Of these thirteen points, only the passage citing a limitation of navy tonnage to thirty-five percent of the British figure has achieved any real significance. Hitler stated:

When I now proceed from these general remarks to fix my aim more closely on the current problems at hand, I arrive at the following position of the German Reich Government:

1. The German Reich Government rejects the resolution passed in Geneva on April 17. It was not Germany which unilaterally breached the Treaty of Versailles; the Diktat of Versailles was unilaterally breached in regard to the points in question and thus rendered invalid by those very powers which could not bring themselves to follow up the reduction in arms required of Germany by one of their own as had been contractually stipulated. The new discrimination of Germany added by virtue of the resolution in Geneva makes it impossible for the German Reich Government to rejoin this institution unless the necessary foundation is laid for a truly equal legal status.

For this purpose the German Reich Government considers it necessary to make a sharp distinction between the Treaty of Versailles, which is based upon a division of the nations into victors and vanquished, and the League of Nations, which must be based upon the equal worth and equal rights of all its members. This equality of rights must be a practicable equality and extend to include all of the functions and property rights comprising international life.

2. As a consequence of the non-performance of the disarmament obligations on the part of the other States, the German Reich Government has, for its part, renounced those articles which, as a consequence of the one-sided burden now placed upon Germany in violation of the Treaty, constitute an indefinite discrimination of the German nation. It hereby most solemnly declares, however, that its respective action is confined to those points giving

rise to the moral and material discrimination of the German Volk as have been disclosed. The German Reich Government shall thus unconditionally abide by the other articles governing the coexistence of the nations, including territorial provisions, and put into effect solely by means of peaceful understanding those amendments which become inevitable by virtue of the changing times.

3. The German Reich Government does not intend to sign any treaty which it does not feel able to fulfill. It will, however, scrupulously comply with every treaty signed voluntarily, even if same was drawn up prior to its having taken office and coming to power. It will particularly abide by and perform all of the obligations arising from the Locarno Pact as long as the other parties are willing for their part to adhere to this Treaty. The German Reich Government holds that respecting the demilitarized zone constitutes for a sovereign state an enormously important contribution to the appeasement of Europe. It feels bound, however, to point out that the continued increase in troops on the other side can by no means be viewed as a complement to these endeavors.

4. The German Reich Government is willing at all times to participate in a system of collective cooperation with the goal of safeguarding peace in Europe, but feels it would then be necessary to do justice to the law of perpetual evolution by keeping amendments to the treaty in reserve. It feels that a stipulation allowing such an evolution of the treaty would be instrumental in safeguarding peace, while choking off any necessary change would amount to bottling up the ingredients for ensuing explosions.

5. The German Reich Government is of the opinion that the goal of rebuilding European cooperation cannot be achieved by means of foisting conditions upon one side. It believes that it is only right to be content with a minimum, in view of the diversity of interests involved, instead of allowing this cooperation to fail as a consequence of an unattainable maximum of demands. It further holds the conviction that this understanding—with one great aim in view—can only be achieved step by step.

6. The German Reich Government is basically willing to conclude pacts of non-aggression with its respective neighboring states and to supplement these pacts by all such provisions designed to isolate those who would wage war and to limit the center of war. It is specifically willing to undertake any and all obligations which may thus arise to supply materials and weapons in peace or in war which are undertaken and respected by all the partners to the pact.

7. The German Reich Government is willing to consent to an air pact to supplement the Pact of Locarno and to enter into talks with this aim.

8. The German Reich Government has disclosed the extent to which the new German Wehrmacht will be built up. It will under no circumstances retreat from these parameters. It does not regard the fulfillment of its program on land, in the air or at sea as constituting any threat whatsoever to another nation. It is nonetheless willing at all times to perform those limitations on its armament which are undertaken by the other states as well. The German Reich Government has already announced certain limitations of its own regarding

its intentions. It has thus best illustrated its good will to avoid an unlimited arms race. Its limitation on German air armaments at a level of parity with the other respective major western nations makes it possible at any time to fix a maximum figure with which Germany would then also be obliged to comply.

The limitation on the German Navy, amounting to thirty-five percent of the English Navy, is still fifteen percent below the total tonnage of the French fleet. Due to the fact that the opinion has been expressed in various commentaries in the press that this demand is only the beginning and would be increased to include the possession of colonies, the German Reich Government hereby makes the following binding declaration: for Germany, this demand is final and lasting.

Germany has neither the intention, the need nor the means to enter into any kind of new naval rivalry. The German Reich Government acknowledges of its own accord the paramount importance of and thus the justification for a dominating protection of the British World Empire at sea, just as we are conversely resolved to do all that is necessary to protect our own continental existence and liberty. It is the sincere intention of the German Government to do everything to find and maintain a relationship with the British people and the British State which will rule out forever a repetition of the only battle thus far between the two nations.

9. The German Reich Government is willing to take an active part in all endeavors which can lead to a practical limitation of boundless armaments. It views a return to the lines of thinking at the former Geneva Red Cross Convention as the only possible way to achieve this at present. It believes that, initially, it will be possible only to gradually abolish and outlaw those weapons and methods of warfare which are at odds, by their most inherent nature, with the Geneva Red Cross Convention already in force. It believes in this context that, just as the use of dum-dum bullets was once prohibited and thus, in broad terms, practically put to a stop, the use of certain other weapons can also be prohibited and thus practically put to a stop as well. It conceives of these as all such combat weapons which cause death and destruction not primarily to soldiers in combat but rather to women and children not directly involved in the fighting. The German Reich Government holds that the idea of doing away with aircraft but allowing bombardment is wrong and ineffective. However, it does see the possibility of instituting a global ban on the use of certain weapons as contravening international law and ostracizing those nations which persist in making use of such weapons from the realm of humanity and its rights and laws.

In this context as well it believes that a gradual process can most readily lead to success. To sum it up: bans on dropping gas, incendiary and demolition bombs outside the real battle zone.

This limitation could actually be extended until bombing were completely outlawed worldwide. So long as bombing as such is permitted, any limitation on the number of bombers is of questionable value in view of the possibility of quick replacements.

Should bombing as such be branded as a barbarity contravening international law, the construction of bombers would soon become superfluous

and pointless of its own accord. If it was once possible by means of the Geneva Red Cross Convention to prevent, in a step-by-step process, the killing of defenseless wounded soldiers and prisoners, then it must also be possible, by an analogous convention, to prevent the bombing of equally defenseless civilian population and ultimately to bring this to a complete halt. Germany believes that such a comprehensive approach to this problem would mean a greater sense of ease and security for the peoples than any number of mutual assistance pacts and military conventions.

10. The German Reich Government is willing to consent to any limitation which leads to the abolishment of those heaviest weapons which are particularly suitable as weapons of attack. These weapons include: first, the heaviest artillery and secondly, the heaviest tanks. In view of the enormous fortifications along the French border, such an international abolishment of the heaviest weapons of attack would automatically put France at least in possession of a one-hundred-percent security.

11. Germany declares itself willing to consent to any limitation on the caliber of artillery, battleships, cruisers, and torpedo boats. Similarly, the German Reich Government is willing to accept any international limitation on the size of ships. And finally, the German Reich Government is willing to consent to a limitation of submarine tonnage or to its complete abolishment, should this be stipulated by international agreement.

Furthermore, it repeats its assurance that it will join any international limitation or ban on arms going into effect concurrently.

12. The German Reich Government is of the opinion that all attempts to effectively ease certain tensions between individual states in the form of international or multilateral agreements must be to no avail until appropriate measures have been taken to prevent irresponsible elements from poisoning the public opinion of the peoples by the written and spoken word and in movies and the theater.

13. The German Reich Government is willing at all times to consent to an international agreement which, by effective means, serves to prohibit and render impossible all attempts by third parties to interfere in other states. It must, however, demand that such a settlement go into force on an international scale and equally benefit all states. Due to the risk that domestic uprisings within countries whose governments do not enjoy the general confidence of their people may all too easily be ascribed by parties with respective interests to interference from without, it would seem necessary to arrive at a precise international definition of the term "interference."

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

I have endeavored to give you an idea of the thoughts which move us today. However great the specific concerns might be, I believe that it is incompatible with my feeling of responsibility as Führer of the nation and Chancellor of the Reich to voice even a single doubt as to the possibility of preserving peace. The peoples want peace. The governments must be able to maintain it! I believe that the restoration of German military power will become a factor in this peace—not because we plan to increase this power to some pointless magnitude, but because the simple fact of its existence does

away with a dangerous vacuum in Europe. Germany does not intend to increase its armaments to an infinite degree.¹³¹ We do not have 10,000 bombers and we will not build 10,000 bombers; on the contrary: we have imposed upon ourselves the limitation which guarantees, in our opinion, the protection of the nation without violating the concept of the possibility of a collective security and a respective agreement. We would be most pleased were such an agreement to afford us the opportunity to make use of the diligence of our Volk for production processes more beneficial than those of manufacturing instruments for the destruction of human life and values.

Hitler closed with the words:

May other peoples also succeed in putting into bold words the true yearning of their innermost depths. He who would brandish the torch of war in Europe can desire nothing but chaos.¹³² We, however, live in the firm conviction that our age will witness not the decline of the West, but its resurrection. That Germany may furnish an immortal contribution to this great work is our proud hope and our unshakeable belief.

After the Führer had delivered his “Peace Speech” following the promulgation of the new Military Service Act, the members of the Reichstag stood up as one body, rose their right arm to the “German salute,” and sang the national anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* and the “Horst Wessel Lied” *Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen dicht geschlossen!* (“Up with the flag! Form in closed ranks!”). The latter included the line *Zum Kampfe sind wir alle schon bereit* (“We’re all ready for battle”). Though these two songs already belonged to the usual ceremony held in the Reichstag after each session, they seemed to be of greater significance that day.

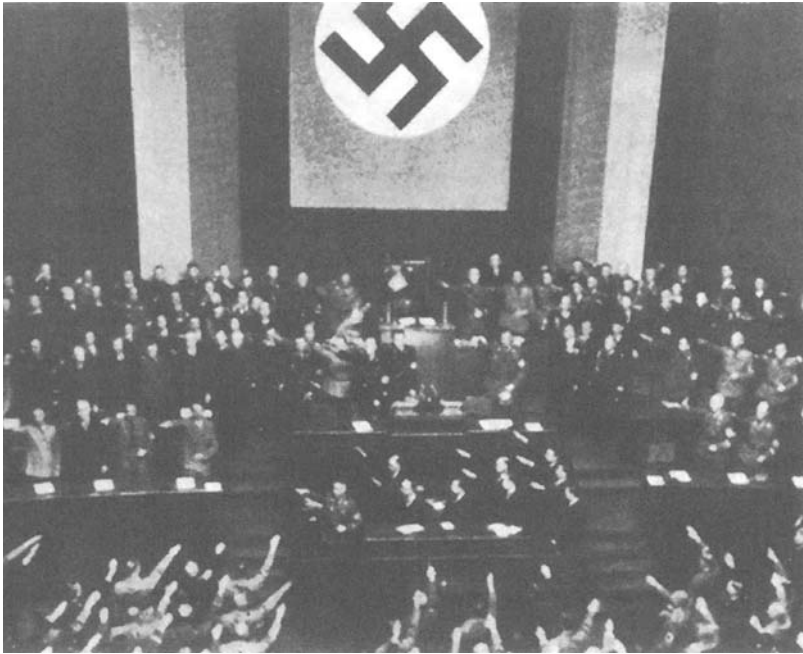
Hitler’s speech of May 21 was clearly focused abroad—keyed foremost of course to Great Britain—and his forum of the German Reichstag provided the acclaim he needed at home for his arguments. At bottom, however, this favored method of gaining attention abroad was nothing but another of Hitler’s acts of self-delusion; doubtless foreign statesmen listened to the radio broadcasts of these speeches in the same silent, yet disapproving attitude they assumed when being personally subjected to his monologues. Moreover, the deputies of the Reichstag did not represent the German people but—in Hitler’s own view—were but mere replicas of their illustrious Führer.

The more Hitler addressed foreign countries in his speeches and devoted his rhetorical powers to outlining his future foreign policy, the less he cared about the real opinion of the German population. Believing he had progressed beyond the point where he need court

the people's favor, Hitler was content with the plaudits of the Reichstag and NSDAP leadership and basked in the hysterical cheering which accompanied the Party congresses. Withdrawing ever more from direct contact with the people, he increasingly confined his appearances to mass rallies, well knowing that he would find little public support for his military plans and his aggressive foreign policy.

While the Germans listened patiently to the Führer's empty talk of peace on May 21, their faith in the truth of his words began, albeit at first only gradually, to wane. They had just overcome unemployment only to be confronted with the new problems Hitler's armament policy would cause. While much attention was devoted to—and much money invested in—air-raid protection and arms production, civilian life was plagued by a shortage of essential raw materials; construction work and other civil projects were curtailed, and the nation's food consumption gradually underwent a transition to wartime conditions,

One noteworthy aside on Hitler's "Peace Speech" of May 21 was the start of a new program in agrarian policy on May 24: an advertising campaign for "meat in its own juices" was designed to motivate the public to stock up on canned beef and pork.¹³³—People began to wonder why.



XVIII May 21, 1935

After the promulgation of the Military Service Act and Hitler's "Peace Speech," the members of the Reichstag sing the "Horst Wessel Lied."

Photo: Domarus archives



XIX Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg

September 16, 1935. Hitler has the leaders of the general staff parade by in front of him. From left to right: Generals von Blomberg, von Fritsch, Göring; Admiral Raeder.

Photo: Domarus archives

3

On May 28, Hitler paid his second visit of the year to the Deutsches Museum in Munich, where he expressed his satisfaction with the “most beautiful hall in Germany.”¹³⁴

On June 1, Hitler appointed Joachim von Ribbentrop Ambassador Extraordinary for special missions.¹³⁵ From this point onwards the German dictator made almost exclusive use of Ribbentrop for foreign errands—not because he valued his opinion, but because Ribbentrop unquestionably carried out his taskmaster’s instructions, even if his own views were diametrically opposed.

After the fall of the Third Reich, the allegation was made both within Germany and abroad that Ribbentrop’s reports to Hitler on Great Britain and the Soviet Union had been incorrect and that this had been the cause of Germany’s failed foreign policy. The facts do not support this interpretation. In contrast to Hitler, Ribbentrop had spent considerable time abroad, and his views were not clouded by fantastic preconceptions of English senility; moreover, there was no doubt in his mind that, in all human probability, Hitler’s foreign policy must lead to war with Great Britain. Ribbentrop’s ideas in respect to the Soviet Union also differed substantially from those of his chief when the latter returned ecstatic from his trip to Moscow in 1939. Ribbentrop’s reports had as little effect upon Hitler as Caulaincourt’s had had upon Napoleon.¹³⁶ This is one of the astounding characteristics shared by nearly the entire upper echelon of the Third Reich: by no means unintelligent men were willing to repudiate their own opinions—and even to act in total conflict with them—the moment Hitler instructed them to do so. The main key to this enigmatic behavior lies in Hitler’s domestic success in the years 1932–33. He did not tire of repeating to all those who initially entertained doubts as to his foreign policy goals that he alone, despite all predictions to the contrary, had always been right in the end

and had triumphed at home after all; consequently, he would also be right in terms of foreign policy, no matter what people said. Nearly all of Hitler's partners in such discussions were bound to succumb to this argumentation, and only major failures and setbacks in his foreign policy allowed reason to win out against Hitler's flood of rhetoric on this point. Although Ribbentrop was personally ambitious, his overriding *raison d'être* was to satisfy Hitler, and he had never harbored any aspirations beyond being his Führer's secretary for foreign affairs—a fact he stressed with pride before the judges in Nuremberg.¹³⁷ The chief interpreter of the Foreign Office, Paul Schmidt, who had known Ribbentrop closely for years, confirmed his absolute devotion to Hitler, stating that the former had parroted Hitler's views and directives almost word for word.¹³⁸

Behind Ribbentrop's appointment as ambassador extraordinary were the upcoming naval talks in London. The British had responded immediately to Hitler's proposals for naval strength in his May 21 speech and were anxious to reach a consensus with him. Until now, he had carefully avoided entering into any international or bilateral armament agreements, attempting to maintain a certain leeway by categorically rejecting existing treaties as non-binding upon Germany on the grounds that they did not bear his—Germany's sole representative's—signature.

June 4 marked the beginning of talks at the Foreign Office.¹³⁹ Ribbentrop did not mince words but informed the British pointblank of Hitler's ultimatum: the offer was final and not open to discussion. As a prerequisite for any further negotiations, Britain was to accept a German Navy thirty-five percent the size of its own.

Taken somewhat by surprise by the artlessness of this piece of German diplomacy, the British temporarily suspended negotiations only to declare their willingness two days later to accept Hitler's conditions *a priori*. The announcement met with widespread consternation. On June 18, the Anglo-German naval agreement was concluded providing for naval strength on the basis of one to three.¹⁴⁰

There was much criticism, particularly in France, of Britain's entering into this agreement with Hitler so shortly after the reintroduction of general conscription. However, further developments finally proved the English right, for their willingness to submit to any German demands which were in some way compatible with international law doubtless accelerated Hitler's ultimate downfall. It was only a matter of time and logic that he would sooner or later outreach his own limits.

Hitler's public speeches were few in the months from June to August, due partly to an operation on his vocal chords performed on May 23 which was not disclosed until August 25, when the following communiqué was published:¹⁴¹

The Führer and Reich Chancellor suffered increasingly from hoarseness in spring, which put a particular strain on him in his last major speech before the Reichstag. Professor Dr. von Eicken located the cause as a polyp on the Führer's right vocal chord which was surgically removed on May 23. The Führer's voice was soon back to its usual clarity. Subsequent examinations have shown that the vocal chords are now once again completely normal.

Hitler compensated for his imposed silence by dispatching numerous telegrams, paying various visits, attending theater performances, etc. Of the multitude of messages he dictated to all types of societies and associations during these months, only the most significant have been mentioned here.

On June 2, Hitler sent a telegram to the German Society of World Economics.¹⁴² On June 3, he attended the funeral service of SS Standartenführer Karl Ostberg in Munich.¹⁴³ He dispatched his condolences to the widow of Colonel General von Linsingen on June 7 by telegram.¹⁴⁴

On June 9, Hitler attended a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in the State Opera House directed by Furtwängler.¹⁴⁵ One week later, he dispatched a telegram to Reich Master Craftsman Schmidt on the occasion of the German Crafts Day of 1935 and Frankfurt's nomination as "City of German Crafts."¹⁴⁶

June 18 marked Hindenburg's seventieth birthday. Hitler's congratulatory telegram read as follows:¹⁴⁷

Highly esteemed Mr. Privy Councillor!

I may extend to you my most sincere congratulations on the occasion of your seventieth birthday today. I always recall your unchangingly loyal national-mindedness and think with appreciation and gratitude of your efforts in the service of rebuilding Germany.

With kind regards,

Your Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler traveled to Reinsdorf near Wittenberg to be present at a funeral service for sixty workers who were killed in an explosion.¹⁴⁸ On June 21, he attended a Bach Festival concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus.¹⁴⁹ The next three days Hitler spent in Hamburg, where he attended a *Meistersinger* performance at the Reich Theater Festival, also finding time to grace the Navy with a visit and greet veterans from the War of 1864.¹⁵⁰

June 24, 1935

On June 24, he proceeded to Hohenlychen near Dresden to visit Rudolf Hess in a sports spa there.¹⁵¹ The next day he sent a telegram to the Franco-German and Anglo-German reunions of front-line soldiers in Stuttgart and Brighton respectively.¹⁵²

June 26 finally saw the promulgation of the long-awaited “Reich Labor Service Law” (*Reichsarbeitsdienstgesetz*),¹⁵³ which proved a watered-down and disappointing version of what its advocates had initially envisioned. The term for compulsory labor was set at six months.

The following day, Hitler received Ambassador Mushakoji and accepted the latter’s gift of an antique Japanese painting.¹⁵⁴

The annual convention of the Academy for German Law took place in Munich on June 29. In response to a telegram sent by its head, Reich Minister Dr. Hans Frank, Hitler dispatched the following lines:¹⁵⁵

I may thank the members and guests of the Academy for German Law for the friendly greetings telegraphed to me, which I may most warmly reciprocate with the hope that your work may meet with continuing success in the service of German law.

Adolf Hitler

The Chancellor personally attended the ceremonial session of the Academy at the University of Munich. At the Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin before departing for Munich, he had met with a group of Polish naval officers headed by a Captain Frankovsky.¹⁵⁶ Hitler’s friendly exchange with the officers—who were from two Polish cruisers from Gdingen currently docked in Kiel—received much attention, for popular opinion in Germany had it that the Polish Navy had little or no *raison d’être*, since the coast of the Gulf of Danzig and the “Corridor” constituted its sole base. It was a known fact that Germany lay claim to this territory.

On June 30, Hitler was present at the roof-raising ceremony of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich and also attended the opening of the first twenty-five-kilometer-long segment of the Reich Autobahn from Munich to Salzburg.¹⁵⁷

On July 3 and 4, events in Berlin were dominated by the visit of Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck and his wife.¹⁵⁸ Hitler played the charming host, treating his guests to an evening reception with gala concert. A communiqué on Hitler’s two days of talks with Beck was issued on July 4; it placed particular emphasis on the fact that the German-Polish Pact of 1934 had proven satisfactory and emphasized the resounding echo which Hitler’s May 21 speech had elicited in Poland.

On July 11, Hitler visited Carola Hoffmann, his old Party comrade in Munich-Solln, on the occasion of her seventy-eighth birthday.¹⁵⁹ The following day, he toured the BMW works in Munich, accompanied by Blomberg and Göring.¹⁶⁰

On July 15, Hitler received a delegation of the British Legion and met for two hours with Major Fetherstone-Godley and his five escorts.¹⁶¹ At the close of the encounter, he stressed in a short speech how much value he placed upon the cooperation between the front-line soldiers of the last World War in the interest of preserving peace.

On July 16, Hitler appointed the former Prussian Minister of Justice and Vice President of the Reichstag, Hanns Kerrl, to the post of Reich Minister for Church Affairs.

July 19 marked another appointment: SA Oberguppenführer and former Chief of Police in Potsdam, Graf Helldorff,¹⁶² replaced the Chief of Police in Berlin until that time, former Rear Admiral von Levetzow. Necessitated, it was reported, by the need for a “political purge” (i.e. the elimination of politically “tainted” elements), the move was symptomatic of a new course of action being launched against “unreliable” persons, above all against Stahlhelm followers and politically active Roman Catholics.

The Stahlhelm organization still in existence at the time (now called the NS Deutscher Frontkämpferbund) was dissolved in Silesia, while Stahlhelm leaders in Thuringia were arrested. The activities of Catholic youth groups in Pomerania were discontinued, and similar measures were taken throughout the country.

On July 20, Hitler once again checked the work-in-progress on the congress grounds in Nuremberg and there held an impromptu speech to the construction workers, outlining his “secret” foreign policy goals—or at least some of them. One of the workers responded to this proof of Hitler’s confidence by crying out, “*Nur nichts verraten!*” (Mum’s the word!).¹⁶³ Such ‘secret speeches’¹⁶⁴ to construction workers in Nuremberg, Berchtesgaden, Berlin, and elsewhere were to follow.

On August 2, Hitler stamped Munich for all time with the epithet “Capital of the Movement,” and an official communiqué was issued to this effect:¹⁶⁵

In a meeting today with Mayor Fiehler, the Führer has officially conferred upon the City of Munich the epithet, “Capital of the Movement.”

On August 7, Hitler received the committee of the American Steuben Society at the Obersalzberg.¹⁶⁶ The same day he dispatched

a telegram congratulating the industrial magnate Gustav von Bohlen und Halbach on his sixty-fifth birthday.¹⁶⁷

For the first time since his operation, Hitler made a speech before a public rally at the Max Joseph Square in Rosenheim on August 11. The NSDAP chapter in Rosenheim was celebrating its fifteenth anniversary; it was the first major NS Ortsgruppe to have formed outside Munich.

Hitler made use of the opportunity to rail against his domestic opponents and to support current action being taken against Stahlhelm members and former Centrists, declaring:¹⁶⁸

At that time [1920] we stood one man pitted against ten, and we did not let up from this struggle until success was won.

Today nine members of the Volk as a whole stand pitted against one of the little doubters. If we did not capitulate then, we will certainly not capitulate now.

Fighting we once conquered the German Reich, and fighting we will maintain and preserve it. Let those who are against us not be deceived! We have never shunned the fight—not then, and not now. If they want the fight, they can have it! We will give them such a battering (*niederschmettern*) that they will abandon every thought of continuing this fight for the next fifteen years!¹⁶⁹

Today the Movement is the Movement of Germany; today this Movement has conquered the German nation and is shaping the Reich. Would that have been possible without the blessing of the Almighty? Or would those who ruined Germany back then pretend they had God's blessing? What we are is what we have become not against, but by virtue of the will of Providence, and as long as we are loyal, honest and courageous in battle, as long as we believe in our great cause and do not capitulate, we will continue to enjoy the blessing of Providence.¹⁷⁰

If those who ruined Germany in fifteen years fancy today, in light of the National Socialist achievements in reconstruction, that they see a ray of hope, I can only answer: That would please you fine, now that there is once again something to be squandered away! [—]

And if Fate should choose to test us in the future, we hope that such hammer blows of Providence will make us truly hard and strong.

In closing, Hitler once again took on the role of prophet, predicting that the swastika flag would become, in five hundred years' time, the lifeblood of the German Volk. He stated:

If we have the sacred will to educate our Volk in this unity, then after decades of unceasing work, National Socialism as a Weltanschauung will have become the great mutual experience consolidating our Volk, and then a Volk will exist which is filled to its innermost depths with the sense of its common task and mission.

My belief in respect to the future is just as unshakeable as it was fifteen years ago in respect to today! At that time I created this flag and said that it would one day fly over the whole of Germany. Fifteen years have passed, and waving over Germany are our flags!

And today I further predict: in five hundred years this flag will have become the lifeblood of the German nation!

Hitler had obviously just decided to make the swastika the sole German national flag and to pass a law to this effect at the upcoming Reich Party Congress.

On August 12, Hitler spoke in Berlin with the Bundesführer of the Stahlhelm organization, Reich Minister of Labor Franz Seldte, on “the future of the Stahlhelm.”¹⁷¹ The new course of action taken by the National Socialists spoke a message louder than these words: even in its current restricted role of an NS Front-Line Soldiers’ Association, its days were clearly numbered. Hitler was waiting only for an excuse to completely do away with this organization—and an opportunity presented itself in November 1935.¹⁷²

Beginning on August 26, Hitler observed naval artillery maneuvers in Kiel lasting for several days. Aboard the cruiser Köln, he once again penned an entry in the cruiser’s guest book, in which he had already immortalized himself in 1932.¹⁷³ This time he wrote,¹⁷⁴ “Following the realization of my hopes. Kiel, August 26, 1935—Adolf Hitler.”

On August 29, Hitler sent his condolences to the Kings of Belgium and Sweden subsequent to the fatal car accident of the Belgian Queen Astrid.¹⁷⁵ The same day he undertook a lengthy tour through Schleswig-Holstein, stopping at 3:00 p.m. to inaugurate an “Adolf-Hitler polder” in the Dieksand Bay and the laying of the cornerstone for the *Neulandhalle*, where he gave the following speech:¹⁷⁶

German Volksgenossen!

When we stand here today on this new land, we should not forget two lessons: labor alone has created this work. May the German Volk never forget that at no time has life ever been given as a gift; it must continually be fought for and achieved by labor.

And the second lesson: just as here every square meter must be won from the sea and shielded with untiring, brave devotion, so must everything which the entire nation creates and builds be shielded by all German Volksgenossen.

This is a symbol of labor and of constant struggle, of diligence and bravery! Let no one forget that our Reich, too, is but a polder in the waters of the world and that it can only be maintained if its dikes are strong and are kept strong.

With this thought in mind, I hereby lay this cornerstone.

That evening, Hitler visited one of the workers' barracks and made another 'secret speech' on the political and economical state of the nation and the goals of the future.¹⁷⁷

On September 5, Hitler met with party leaders at the Braunes Haus in Munich to discuss last-minute details of the forthcoming Reich Party Congress.¹⁷⁸ The following two days, he observed autumn maneuvers performed by the Sixth Army Corps in the Lüneburger Heide, which closed with a parade in Munsterlager.¹⁷⁹

On September 8, Hitler received the newly-appointed Italian Ambassador Bernardo Attolico at the House of the Reich President in Berlin and accepted his credentials. Relations between Germany and Italy, which had still been problematic during the conference in Stresa in April of the year, had undergone a steady improvement in the preceding weeks. As early as June 5, the bans on the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the *Illustrierter Beobachter* and the *Brennessel*¹⁸⁰ had been lifted in Italy. The fact that a new Ambassador had been appointed was also designed to promote better understanding between the two countries. Mussolini's change of heart stemmed from the unexpected difficulties he was encountering from the West in reaction to his planned foray into Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

Encouraged by the lenient treatment Hitler had received when reintroducing German conscription, the Italian dictator apparently thought it was a good time to incorporate Abyssinia and found an Italian empire. While Great Britain did allow Italian troops to pass through the Suez Canal, it notified the League of Nations—just as France did—of its opposition to any plans for invasion Italy might have. Mussolini, not disposed or able to abandon his project at that point, had no choice but to rekindle amicable relations with Germany.

Hitler was gratified to accept Attolico and note Italy's friendly overture. To the new Ambassador he declared:¹⁸¹

It is with a lively sense of satisfaction that I conclude from your remarks that you see your task as lying in endeavoring to the best of your ability to strengthen and enhance the relations between Germany and Italy on an ongoing basis, for I share your conviction that these relations will play a significant role in future political developments with the goal of a fruitful and peaceful cooperation between the nations. It is also my belief that such a cooperation can be based only upon the concept of justice and a mutual understanding of the vital necessities of the peoples involved.

At the same time I trust that the mutuality of many of the ideas which form a bond between Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany will more and more come to serve the best interests of our countries, and that the rest of the

world will also benefit from the advantages resulting thereof. In your endeavors to promote the relations between our countries along these lines, Your Excellency can count on my full support and that of the Reich Government.

Reciprocating most sincerely the friendly greetings which you bring from His Majesty the King and His Excellency, the Head of the Royal Italian Government, I may extend to Your Excellency, in the name of the German Reich, a most warm welcome here.

By indirectly expressing in these words his tacit approval of Italy's plan of action in Ethiopia, Hitler was essentially expecting in return the same hands-off consideration with respect to Germany's position vis-à-vis Austria—and it would not be long before he presented this note for payment.

On September 10, the "Reich Party Congress of Freedom" commenced. Hitler had coined this epithet as well, which was to emphasize Germany's having regained the freedom to rearm and defend itself. The 1935 Party Congress in Nuremberg achieved a certain sorry significance by the passage of a number of so-called "Nuremberg Laws," namely the "Reich Flag Act," the "Reich Law of Citizenship," and the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor," all of which were passed by the Reichstag on September 15, 1935.¹⁸² To Hitler, the most important of these was doubtless the "Reich Flag Act," which provided as follows:

Article 1: The Reich colors are black-white-red.

Article 2: The swastika flag is the Reich flag and the national flag. It is, at the same time, the merchant flag.

By virtue of this law, the swastika was finally granted the status of sole official flag of the Reich. The black-white-red banner of imperial Germany, which the National Socialists had disdained as reactionary, now disappeared altogether. Thus the step the dictator had wanted to take in 1933 but had postponed out of consideration for Hindenburg and the German Nationalists now became reality. The black-white-red imperial flag had been a constant thorn in his side during the preceding two and a half years, particularly on the vessels of the merchant marine, where large imperial banners prominently decorated each ship's stern, dwarfing the small swastika flag flying at the bow. Now one Volk had one flag. Hitler did, however, hesitate until November to declare the swastika as the new Reich naval ensign (*Reichskriegsflagge*).¹⁸³

Although they marked another climax in German racial policy, the two other Nuremberg Laws had merely stepping-stone character in

Hitler's scheme of things: laws and treaties signified for him not the establishment of a lasting legal status but mere means to an end, born of the instant, which could be overturned the moment they grew to constitute a hindrance and lost their calculated effect. Though Hitler did make frequent use of legislative measures in both his foreign and domestic policies, he never regarded them as binding upon himself or "his" state. As a consequence, he flew into constant fits over his own party comrades who, schooled in the principles of law, would or could not accept the complete arbitrariness with which their despotic leader treated these time-honored precepts. The German people had been accustomed for centuries to an authoritarian state and wanted only clear-cut legal guidelines by which to abide, regardless of whether these complied with prior legislation or past concepts of what was right.

The National Socialist Unterführers went along with Hitler's view that the system of Roman law, civil or public, was to be discarded; but in lieu of this they desired new, binding norms, and they pressed for compliance with the legal regulations passed by their own National Socialist State.

Some National Socialist judges at the time still claimed that they were able to remain independent of the will of the state. Of course Hitler had a natural apathy against this type of view, and there were times when he favored the even more pliant bourgeois members of the judiciary as, for instance, Reich Minister of Justice Dr. Gürtner and State Secretary Dr. Franz Schlegelberger,¹⁸⁴ over the National Socialist Legal Protectors (*Rechtswahrer*) with Dr. Frank at their fore. Hitler's quarrel with the party jurists was pending until April 26, 1942, when he had his appointment to Supreme judge explicitly approved by means of a "Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag."¹⁸⁵ From that point on, he was empowered to dismiss any civil servant or judge without regard to that person's duly-acquired rights, as they were called, by virtue of office, rank or position.

The so-called "Reich Law of Citizenship" (*Reichsbürgergesetz*) deprived Jews of German citizenship, designating them as "subjects of the state."¹⁸⁶ The third law made public in Nuremberg, the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" (*Gesetz zum Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*), put militant National Socialist anti-Semitism into practice: it forbade marriage (*Rassenverrat*) and sexual relations (*Rassenschande*) between Jews and citizens of "German or cognate blood." Furthermore, Jews were prohibited from

raising the Reich flag but “allowed to show the Jewish colors,” which was meant as a derision.

The Nuremberg Laws clearly constituted a further escalation of the boycott in force since March 1933, leading to even more open demonstrations of violence. On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that Hitler viewed the 1935 laws as any more than a momentary measure prompted by the flag act which was his main concern. It was by no means his goal to “solve” the ‘Jewish Question’ by legislation or emigration. He intended to exploit German Jews as a bird in the hand in his foreign policy dealings; later he brutally sent them to the slaughter in the hopes that his inhuman actions would persuade the Western Powers to comply with his demands.

In 1935, there were still Unterführers who believed the answer to the ‘Jewish Question’ lay in legislative measures. Even many German Jews held the opinion that a clarification of their legal status, even if it constituted a temporary change for the worse, was better than no clear status at all. Throughout the centuries in which anti-Semitism had existed in Germany, Jews had not seldom been given a different and lesser status. The times had doubtless been difficult, but they had survived, and they hoped to survive the Third Reich—or at least Hitler—and to afterward regain their former equal status.

On September 10, Hitler was presented with a gift in the Nuremberg City Hall: a replica of the old German imperial sword.¹⁸⁷ He naturally expressed his gratitude in a speech, stating:¹⁸⁸

The extension of the Luitpoldhain which has, in essence, been completed this year, marks the first of these unique arenas for the National Socialist Reich Party Congress.

It has grown particularly dear to all of us because it was here that, even during the time of struggle, one of the first standards was consecrated at Nuremberg. The temporary completion of the renovation of the Zeppelinfeld provides the opportunity for the Movement’s political organization and in particular the Wehrmacht to make their debut there until the large new Märzfeld¹⁸⁹ will have been finished. It is a great pleasure for all of us to be able to inaugurate this new facility in such an uplifting manne—with the *Volksarmee* of the German nation.

Now, following the resurrection of the power and the strength of the Reich, we are particularly happy to be able to celebrate the Reich Party Congress in a city which is not only beautiful but was once so strongly fortified against attack. May the symbolic sign of German national power which you are giving me here as a gift serve me as a constant reminder of this memorable Party Congress in the third year of the National Socialist Revolution and the first year of the new German freedom. I thank you, Mr. Mayor, once again

for this reception and the wonderful gift, and ask you all to join in calling out our German greeting to the old city of the Reich Party Congresses:

Nürnberg Heil!

On September 11, Hitler's annual Party Congress proclamation was read aloud as usual by Munich Gauleiter Adolf Wagner.¹⁹⁰

Several of the passages in the lengthy document treating the enemies at home are of particular interest. Hitler characterized these antagonists as follows:

1. Jewish Marxism and parliamentary democracy related to it;
2. the politically and morally corrupting Center;
3. certain elements in a stubborn, dumb-reactionary bourgeoisie.

The last item amounted to Hitler's description of the intellectuals. He threatened to pass sanctions against all of his enemies—not by way of legislation, but illegally, via the Party. That this was no mere saber-rattling became obvious to the Jewish population in November 1938.

I would like to point out in this context that the battle against the inner enemies of the nation will never be frustrated by formal bureaucracy or its incompetence; where the formal bureaucracy of the State should prove ill-suited to solve a certain problem, the German nation will activate its more dynamic organization as an aid to asserting its vital necessities. For it is a grave error to suppose that the nation would exist only because of some formal phenomenon and that, moreover, when such a phenomenon is not capable of accomplishing the tasks assigned to it, the nation would capitulate in the face of these tasks.

On the contrary: what can be accomplished through the State will be accomplished through the State. But whatever the State is incapable of accomplishing, due to its very essence, will be accomplished by the Movement. For the State as well is only one of the forms of organization in *völkisch* life, driven and controlled by the direct expression of the Volk's will to live, by the Party, by the National Socialist Movement.

This blunt threat of illegal violence sheds a revealing light on the practical value of the racial laws announced at the same Party Congress. Hitler then focused his diatribe on Church circles, which still refused to bend to his yoke:

Under no circumstances will the National Socialist State tolerate that the politicization of the confessions be prolonged or even begun anew by any type of detour. And let no one delude himself as to the determination of the Movement and the State! We have already fought a battle against the political clergy and ousted it from the parliaments, and that after a long struggle in which we had no state authority and the other side had it all. Today we have this authority and will more easily be able to win the struggle for these

principles. But we will never wage this battle as a battle against Christianity or even against one of the two confessions. But we will wage it in order to keep our public life pure and free of those priests who have mistaken their calling, those who should have become politicians and not clergymen.

Still irked that a “mere” ninety percent of the voting public had elected him in 1934, he consoled himself with the following argument:

After an incredible struggle for enlightenment, after endless sacrifices, we have succeeded in converting nine tenths of our Volk to subordinate themselves to *one* opinion and to *one* will. The last tenth comprises the remainder of thirty-seven parties, the confessions, the former associations—in short, that very chaos which thrust Germany into one disaster after another for centuries. And thus, when we calmly take in the perspective of what success recent years have given to our German Reich, in the end we must always recognize the most uplifting fact of all, namely:

The most valuable thing is and remains the Movement, which has joined the nation to form a whole and which allows its desires to manifest themselves in one single will. What security, and what tranquillity reign in our Germany today! Wherever we look, we see everywhere around us the ferments of decomposition, the elements of dissolution.

Endless strikes, lockouts, street-fighting, destruction, hatred and civil war; rootless Jewish-international wandering scholars are infiltrating the nations, agitating against all healthy common sense and whipping up hostility among the people. Under the guise of representing the interests of the classes, they are putting a civil war in motion which will lead only to the utmost satisfaction of their own interests. And we are witnessing the consequences. In a world which should actually live in affluence, need reigns. Countries with a population of scarcely fifteen persons per square kilometer suffer from hunger, states which are blessed with every conceivable natural resource are simply incapable of reducing their armies of unemployed.

It is a triumph of the effectiveness of the National Socialist regime that it has succeeded—in a country in which 137 persons live in one square kilometer, in a country which has no colonies, which lacks most natural resources, which was drained to its very blood for fifteen years, which lost its entire foreign capital, paid more than fifty billion in reparation dues, which was confronted with the total ruin of its economy—that even given the worst problems, it succeeded in preserving a means of existence, in reducing the number of unemployed, so that today we are better off than many of the world’s richer countries.

Turning to economic problems, Hitler once again took up his crusade against any type of currency manipulation. He would by no means tolerate salary and price increases, and this would rule out the possibility of an inflation such as that of the twenties. Although the dictator admittedly entertained quite sound economic views, he failed—as did many others—to realize that the inflation of 1920-23 was not due

to unwise economic policy but was the inevitable consequence of the destruction which the economic structure had undergone during World War I—a phenomenon not limited to this war and not only to the defeated. However, in 1935 he could still boast:

Today we can admit it openly: the year 1934 was unfortunately a bad harvest year. We are still suffering from the aftereffects. But it was nevertheless possible to secure the German Volk's supply of vitally important foodstuffs. The fact that this was possible, in spite of the many restrictions, is an achievement of which the broad masses of our Volk have perhaps not been sufficiently aware. The difficulties connected with this harvest led many a time to a temporary shortage of this or that foodstuff. We were nonetheless determined that under no circumstances would we capitulate as a certain international press was ardently hoping. And we overcame the crisis. We were forced, in this context, to repeatedly halt with every means available attempts to compensate for the bad harvest by partly understandable but also partly unjustified price increases.

In this year we were—and will likewise be in future—motivated by the unshakeable desire to prevent the German Volk from stumbling unawares into a new inflation. But this would still be the unavoidable result of any increase in salaries or any increase in prices at present. So if today, too, irresponsible egoists or unthinking fools fancy that any kind of shortage—which can always arise—gives them the right to increase prices, this behavior would, if the Government were to let it, set the well-known vicious circle of 1921 to 1923 in motion, leaving the German Volk with an inflation on its hands for the second time around. For this reason we will attack such elements from now on with brutal ruthlessness and—if good intentions fail—will not shrink from using concentration camps to make them conform with and adapt to the national interest as a whole.

On that same September 11, Hitler laid the cornerstone for a new gigantic Congress Hall¹⁹¹ which was to bespeak the glory of the Third Reich for millenniums to come. He stated:

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

Sixteen years ago the spiritual cornerstone was laid for one of the greatest and most significant manifestations of German life. The resolution of but a few men at that time to extricate Germany from the fetters of its internal corrupters and to liberate it from the yoke of external bondage constituted one of the boldest decisions in world history. Now, after sixteen years of hard struggle, this scheme has evolved to become a decisive historic achievement. A world of internal adversaries and obstacles was overcome, and a new world is at the verge of being born. On this day, we hereby lay for this new world of the German Volk the cornerstone of its first great monument. A hall shall rise which is to serve the purpose of annually housing within its walls a gathering of the elite of the National Socialist Reich for centuries to come. Should the Movement ever be silent, even after millenniums, this witness shall speak.

In the midst of a hallowed grove of ancient oak trees will the people then marvel in reverent awe at this first colossus among the buildings of the German Reich. With this premonition I hereby lay the cornerstone of the Congress Hall of the Reich Party Congresses in Nuremberg in the year 1935, the year of the freedom of the German nation hard won by the National Socialist Movement.

The same day, Hitler also delivered his obligatory speech on the arts,¹⁹² in which he expounded upon the cultural past of the human species and declared *ex cathedra*, “No Volk lives longer than the evidence of its culture!” Referring to modern art, he pointed out:

But if such a so-called “artist” feels himself called upon to portray human life under all circumstances from the viewpoint and perspective of what is inferior and diseased, then he should do so in an age in which there is a widespread appreciation for just this type of viewpoint. Today this age is over, and hence it is also over for this type of “would-be creative artists.” And though we are becoming ever firmer and more strict in our rejection of this, we hold that we are not making a mistake. For he who is chosen by Providence to lend external, graphically visible expression to the innermost and thus eternally healthy substance of a Volk will never find himself on the path to such aberrations.

Thus we are not talking about a “threat to the freedom of art.” Just as a murderer is not granted the right to kill his fellow men in body simply because this would mean interfering with his own freedom, a person similarly cannot be granted the right to kill the soul of the Volk merely so as to avoid placing any restrictions on his dirty fantasy and his total lack of restraint.

Hitler finally came to the more pertinent point of his treatise, namely the construction of edifices which should be as great and overwhelming as the ‘Age of Hitler’ itself:

In the case of really great tasks, as a general rule, both those men who have commissioned the task and those who accomplish it should bear in mind that, although the assignment was given within a certain age, its accomplishment shall, by being performed to the utmost, become ageless.

To this end it is necessary that the really great tasks of an age must be assigned respectively, i.e. public commissions must, if their accomplishment is to generate eternal value, be placed in a certain proportion in respect to the scale of the rest of life.

It is impossible to place the monumental architecture of the State or the Movement on a scale corresponding to that of one or two centuries ago, while the products of bourgeois creation in the sphere of private or even purely capitalistic architecture have expanded conversely and increased many times over. What lent the cities of antiquity and the Middle Ages their characteristic and hence admirable and endearing features was not the size of the private bourgeois structures but the manifestations of community life towering above them.

In the bourgeois epoch, the architectural expression of public life was unfortunately repressed in favor of buildings documenting private-capitalistic business life. But the great historico-cultural task of National Socialist lies above all in departing from this trend.

We must, however, be guided not only by artistic but also by political considerations in endowing upon the new Reich, with a view to the great precedents of the past, a worthy cultural personification. Nothing is better suited to silence the little carpers than the eternal language of great art. Millenniums bow to its utterances in reverent silence. May God grant us the stature to formulate these tasks in a manner equal to the stature of the nation. This is doubtless a difficult undertaking.

The heroic feats of greatness which our Volk accomplished in history over 2,000 years number among the most tremendous experiences of mankind. There were centuries in which works of art corresponded to a spiritual human greatness in Germany—and in the rest of Europe. The unique eminence of our cathedrals represents an incomparable standard for the truly—in a cultural sense—monumental attitude of these ages. They demand from us more than admiration for the work itself; they demand reverence for the races which were capable of planning and carrying out such great ideas.

Since then, our Volk has risen and fallen with the changing tides of Fate. We ourselves were witnesses of a world-defying heroism, of the deepest despair and shocked bewilderment. Through us and in us, the nation has risen once again. When today we call upon German art to take on new and great tasks, we are assigning these not only in order to fulfill the wishes and hopes of the present, but in the sense of a thousand-year legacy. By paying homage to this eternal national genius, we summon the great spirit of the creative power of the past to come dwell in the present.

But such elevated tasks will make people grow, and we do not have a right to doubt that, if the Almighty gives us the courage to demand what is immortal, He will give our Volk the power to accomplish what is immortal. Our cathedrals are witnesses to the glory of the past! The glory of the present will one day be gauged by the eternal values it leaves behind. Only then will Germany undergo a revival of its art and our Volk become conscious of a higher destiny.

On September 12, Hitler gave a speech at the Nuremberg Zeppelin Field before a roll call of the assembled Reich Labor Service, in which he dispensed a few honeyed phrases to console his audience for the anemic version of compulsory labor which had now become law:¹⁹³

Life necessarily divides us into many different groups and professions. It is the job of the political and spiritual education of the nation to overcome this division. This is primarily a job reserved for the Labor Service. It is to unite all Germans in labor and make of them a community.

For this purpose, it shall place in the hand of each the same instrument of labor, the instrument which does a Volk the most credit, the spade! There you march beneath the guardian of peace, the weapon of our inner self-

assertion! You march thus today in the entire German Reich. The eye of the nation rests upon you, its hope!

It sees in you something better than it has been in the past. If the entire German Volk were to see you today, I believe that even the last doubter would have been persuaded that the raising of a new nation, of a new community of our Volk is not a rumor, but reality.

On September 13, Hitler addressed 100,000 Political Leaders at the same site, christening them the political “officers of the nation” in spite of the pronounced non-military appearance of most of their kind.¹⁹⁴

It is good that we are able to see each other like this once a year, you the Führer, and the Führer yourselves. This can also serve as a lesson to all those who would so gladly make a distinction between the Führer and his following, those who are so incapable of understanding that there can be no distinction between us, who would so gladly say: the Führer, yes! But the Party—is that really necessary?¹⁹⁵ I do not ask if it is necessary, but if it was necessary! A commander without officers and soldiers—there are those who would gladly welcome that! I will not be the commander without soldiers; I will remain your Führer.

For me, you are the political officers of the German nation, bound to me for better or worse, just as I am bound to you for better or worse. Not one man alone conquered Germany; all united conquered Germany. One man won you over, and you have won over the German Volk!

Hitler closed his speech to the Political Leaders with a reference to where his real interest lay: the military. This group would not wage offensive wars, but rescue Germany from a “sorry fate.”

We who were able to witness the reinstatement of our peerless Army this year to our most proud good fortune, all of us know that its ultimate and greatest strength lies in the Volk which supports it. For no one is in need of idealism more than the soldier. If ever the hour, that difficult, decisive hour of renunciation, should come upon him, what can but help him then? Only the word faith, idealism. Do not be deluded! All other half-measures are insignificant compared to the power of this destiny, this inner voice.

Hence we are particularly pleased today to have in our midst for the first time the representatives and the representation of our new German *Volksheer*, the Army from which nearly all of us without exception once came forth and to which the German Volk will once again give its sons in the future, handing them over in trust in the hope that they may once again become brave, disciplined, reliable, and self-assured men. We know that our Army is not educating them in warlike militarism any more than we have ever done. It is only educating them to be reliable, decent Volksgenossen who feel faithfully bound to the nation in the hour of need and danger, and if ever Fate were to subject them to the most difficult test of all, they would defend the freedom of their people bravely and decently. That is the reason behind recreating our Army.

It was not created to wage offensive wars, but to protect and to defend our Volk so that Germany may not be made to suffer yet again the sorry fate we were made to bear in the fifteen years behind us. Not in order to deprive other peoples of their freedom, but to protect our German freedom—that is the Army's purpose. But it will come all the more naturally for this Army to accomplish its difficult offices the healthier the young German man is whom it receives from us.

And that is our task, too, to educate the German man to be politically clean and pure so that he may truly become a powerful member of our Volksgemeinschaft and assimilate for himself as well a taste of this pure, great idealism which reigned during the age of the struggle for German freedom. For as long as this idealism is alive in Germany, Germany shall never die!

On September 13, Hitler also stopped to see the visiting diplomats in Nuremberg aboard their special train.¹⁹⁶ The envoys represented only minor states, for the Great Powers still stubbornly refused to take up his invitations to attend the annual party pomp. The Polish Ambassador Lipski thanked Hitler for the invitation on behalf of the entire delegation, also extending “sincere wishes for the prosperity of the German Reich under Your Excellency's leadership.”

In his reply to these remarks, Hitler expressed his pleasure at the representatives' visit to the Reich Party Congress and his desire that they would “leave Nuremberg with the feeling that the German Volk was truly united at home and had an opportunity to witness in Nuremberg of what constituted the most inward expression of the substance and sentiments of the German Volk.”

The same day, Hitler also spoke before the Foreign Organization of the NSDAP in the Nuremberg Apollo Theater,¹⁹⁷ and gave yet another speech before the NS Frauenschaft.¹⁹⁸ In the latter, he had glowing words of praise for the female party members who had actually demonstrated an unparalleled devotion to their Führer in the early years following the collapse of 1923. Hitler also assured his audience that he would never send “but a single woman to the front” in the event of war and that he would be ashamed to be German, were such a thing ever to come to pass. His statements, published partly in indirect speech, read as follows:¹⁹⁹

Today women's battalions were being formed in Marxist countries, and to that one could only reply, “That will never happen here! There are things a man does, and he alone is responsible for them. I would be ashamed to be a German man if ever, in the event of war, but a single woman were made to go to the front.” The woman had her own battlefield. With every child to which she gave birth for the nation, she was waging her battle for the nation. The man stands up for the Volk just as woman stands up for the family. A

woman's equal rights lie in the fact that she is treated with the high regard she deserves in those areas of life assigned to her by nature.

Women still respected brave, daring and determined men, and men had always admired and been attracted to feminine women. These were the two opposites which attracted each other in life.

And if good fortune would have it that these two people find each other, then the question of equal rights became superfluous, for it had already been answered by nature: it was no longer equal rights, but a single unity!

Man and woman represented two intrinsically separate natures. In men, reason was dominant. But more stable than this was the emotion evidenced in women.

When I returned from prison after thirteen months of imprisonment, when the Party had been shattered, it was above all female party comrades who had held the Movement together. They did not succumb to clever or reason-oriented deliberation, but acted according to their hearts, and they have stood by me emotionally until today.

If our opponents were to allege, "You want to degrade women by assigning to them no other task beyond providing children," he would reply that it is not a degradation to a woman to become a mother, but the contrary—it is her utmost elevation.

There was, the Führer continued, no greater nobility for a woman than to be the mother of sons and daughters of a Volk. All the members of our youth lining the streets, so strong and beautiful, these beaming faces, these shining eyes—where would they be had not woman after woman been willing to give them the gift of life? The last immortality here on earth lay in preserving the Volk and the *Volkstum*.

People should not be able to accuse us that we have no understanding of the dignity of women. Quite the opposite! We have been in power now for three years, but I believe that when we have had a National Socialist government for thirty, forty, or fifty years, women's position will have become quite different from what it was in the past—a position which cannot be gauged politically but only appreciated in human terms. We are happy knowing that the German woman, with her instinctive insight, will understand this.

There was a time when liberalism was fighting for 'equal rights' for women, but the faces of German women and German girls were devoid of hope, bleak and sad. And today? Today we see countless beaming, laughing faces. And here again it is woman's instinct which tells her for good reason: we can laugh once again, for the future of the Volk is guaranteed.

The compensation which National Socialism gives woman in exchange for her work lies in that it is once again training men, real men, men who are decent, who stand erect, who are brave, who love honor. I believe that when, in the past few days, our healthy, unspoilt women have watched the marching columns, these sturdy and faultless young men of the spade, they must have been saying to themselves: what a healthy, marvelous race is growing up here! That is also an achievement which National Socialism has wrought for the German woman in the scope of its attitude toward women in general.

We have now reintroduced general conscription, because it is a wonderful education we wish to confer upon the upcoming young German generation, a wonderful breed which we are rearing in the Hitler Youth, the SA, and the Labor Service. I believe that the German Volk will not grow older during the next few years, but will create the impression that it remains forever young. "This all applies to our girls, too. They too are growing up in a different world, with different ideas, and they, too, will become healthier than before. Thus the two columns march along their respective paths and will sooner or later encounter one another."

Hitler then stressed how marvelous it was to live in such a great age and voiced some thoughts on his own inevitable demise:

Thus I believe that it is a marvelous thing after all to live in such an age and to lend a helping hand at one point or another. When I am one day forced to finish this life, my final conviction will be: it was not in vain. It was good, because it was a life of fighting, a life of struggle; because it was a life of work towards an ideal which often seemed so distant and which many a man believed would never be attained. We have reached our goal! That applies to all of you who are fighting with us here. No German generation will be happier in the end than ours. We have experienced infinite hardships. And the fact that we have succeeded in overcoming them and that we will succeed ever better in overcoming them—that is such a wonderful thing that all of us, men and women alike, can be proud and happy and will also be proud and happy one day. The time will come when you will all think back with proud joy on these years of struggling and fighting for this new Germany. Then it will be your most treasured memory that, as German women, you helped wage the battle for our German Volk in this great age of the German renaissance and uprising.

On the morning of September 14, Hitler spoke before 54,000 members of the Hitler Youth in the Nuremberg stadium,²⁰⁰ where he used the later much-quoted phrase describing the ideal German man of the future which he had coined in *Mein Kampf*²⁰¹ "Swift as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel."²⁰²

German Youth!

You are now lining up for this roll call for the third time; more than 54,000 representatives of a community which grows from year to year. The weight of those you personify here each year has become consistently greater. Not only in terms of quantity, oh no; we can see it: in terms of quality. If I think back on the first roll call and on the second and compare them to this one today, I can see the same development we see evidenced throughout the rest of German *Volksleben*: our Volk is becoming increasingly disciplined, sturdier, more taut—and youth is beginning to as well. The ideal of the man has been subjected to different views in our Volk as well. There were times—they seem to be long ago and are almost incomprehensible to us—when the ideal of the

young German man was, to use the jargon, a beer-drinking, hard-living fellow. Today we are happy to note that the ideal is no longer the beer-drinking and hardliving young man, but the tough young man, impervious to wind and weather. For the main thing is not how many glasses of beer he can drink, but how many blows he can withstand; not how long he can make the rounds night after night, but how many kilometers he can march.

Today the beer-happy bourgeois (*Bierspiesser*) of those times is no longer regarded as the ideal of the German Volk, but men and girls who are fit as a fiddle, who are string taut. What we want from our German youth is different from what the past wanted of it. In our eyes, the German youth of the future must be slender and supple, swift as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel. We must cultivate a new man in order to prevent the ruin of our Volk by the degeneration manifested in our age.

Following the youth rally in the stadium, Hitler addressed a convention of the German Labor Front in the Congress Hall,²⁰³ in which he praised the institution of a Reich Council for Labor and Economy²⁰⁴ and emphasized that the enormous convention marked the first gathering of representatives from all areas and levels of labor from workers to management.

On the evening of the same day, Robert Ley presented the working masses to Hitler in their new blue uniforms in front of the Deutscher Hof Hotel. As did the other organization leaders, Ley wanted his own private guard and had not rested until the German Labor Front could don its uniforms and march in formation—much to the irritation of the militant party units.

September 15 marked the roll call of the fighting formations, the SA, the SS, and the NSKK, in the newly renovated and greatly expanded Luitpold arena. The armed SS troops in their black helmets formed a huge block within this army unit. Numerous new SS regiments had joined the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, which were now called *SS Verfügungstruppe* and had swelled to gigantic proportions. This demonstrated to the Wehrmacht in no uncertain terms that it was definitely not “the nation’s sole bearer of arms.” While drawing attention in his speech²⁰⁵ to the change in external appearances, Hitler stressed that the spirit had remained the same since the “times in which the SA man and SS man never asked where the march was headed but stood ever by the flag.”

This was the attitude Hitler wanted to instill in his military: theirs was not to reason why, theirs was but to do—and if need be, die. In his speech, he promised the SA that the soldiers who had been discharged from the Wehrmacht would join the ranks of the SA: a clear

negative to the generals, who had entertained hopes of organizing the Soldatenbund from former conscripts.²⁰⁶ Hitler stated:

Today you present a different picture. I see how much has been learned within a year's time and what has changed in favor of the Movement. However, even though this external picture has altered, it nonetheless constitutes proof that the spirit of the old—and by that I mean our best—times has remained, times in which the SA man and SS man never asked where the march was headed but stood ever by the flag.

And it is good that your exterior also makes manifest the changing times we are so lucky to witness. For Germany has once again undergone a great historic transition in these past years, and you yourselves, my men of the SA, will notice it visibly and clearly in but a few months. For the first time, many thousands shall report to you for duty: the discharged soldiers of the first round of conscripts in the new German Army.

And just as we once came here, now year after year the German Volk, drilled in protecting the nation, will flock to us and the men will be given the best German home in your ranks.

What was once a two-year temporary schooling of the nation which was afterward lost in the course of life and in the political doings of the parties—that is now being given in trust and held in custody for the German Volk. Only then will the cycle of our Volk's education be complete. The boys—they will become members of the *Jungvolk*, and the *Pimpfs* will join the Hitler Youth, and the young men of the Hitler Youth will then report for duty in the SA, the SS, and the other associations; and the SA men and the SS men will one day report for duty at the Labor Service and from there proceed to the Army; and the soldier of the Volk will return once more to the organization of the Movement, of the Party, to the SA and the SS, and never again shall our Volk degenerate as it once regrettably did!

The ensuing ceremonies, including the consecration of the standards and banners with the *Blutgähne* (Blood Flag) and several hours of parades across the Nuremberg Market Place, ran according to schedule. At 8:00 p.m. the Reichstag convened in the hall of the Nuremberg Cultural Association building in order to pass the three bills introduced by the Government.

It was to be the first and last time during Hitler's rule that a Reichstag session was held outside Berlin. Nuremberg had last been the site of a German Reichstag (at the time an assembly of the German Empire's estates) in 1543, and the location more than the content of the session made this Nuremberg gathering remarkable.

From a constitutional standpoint, Hitler could have passed the laws himself, but he judged it more fitting to have the tradition-laden black-white-red flag of imperial Germany discarded by a jointly responsible Reichstag, the legislative body authorized to amend the constitution

under Weimar law. The reasons for this were obvious, for had he himself declared the swastika the sole national flag, this may well have prompted resistance at home from followers of the Stahlhelm and the more reactionary generals, with whom relations were already strained.

But in terms of foreign policy as well, he considered a resolution of the legislative body to be more effective. The swastika had already become a target of anti-German sentiments abroad, having, for instance, been ripped from the bow of the Lloyd steamer *Bremen* in the New York Harbor, an incident to which Hitler referred in this speech.²⁰⁷ By virtue of both the flag act and his anti-Semitic *Blutschutz* legislation, Hitler wished to convey to foreign countries that any speculations on a change in course within Germany were completely unsubstantiated. His September 15 speech to the Reichstag demonstrated anew that he was primarily pursuing foreign policy goals in his treatment of German Jews. Already extremely irritated by criticism in the foreign press, Hitler was also irked by the fact that his relations with the British statesmen were not evolving as he had envisioned in his plans for an Anglo-German alliance.

Naturally choosing not to seek the reasons in his own erroneous conceptions, he held "Jewish press agitation" abroad accountable and resolved to exert yet more pressure. In his opinion, this would be conducive toward swaying "World Jewry" to intervene and end the boycott campaign against Germany in the foreign press while at the same time prevailing upon the Anglo-Saxon powers to be more amenable to Germany's wishes. As further developments showed, this was a complete miscalculation, and while the British and the Americans sympathized with German Jews, they were not willing to change their attitude toward Hitler for this reason alone.

In the Nuremberg Laws, Hitler employed the same tactics underlying his boycott of April 1, 1933:²⁰⁸ he persecuted the German Jews but stopped short for the time being of making their lives totally unbearable. At the same time, he threatened to issue further sanctions if the foreign powers continued to refuse to comply with the wishes of National Socialist Germany. This complicated blackmail strategy was based, however, upon false premises; and thus even his drastic measures after 1941 were doomed to fail.

Hitler's September 15 speech to the Reichstag was as follows:²⁰⁹

On behalf of the German Reich Government, I have requested Reichstag President Pg. Göring to convene for today a session of the German Reichstag in Nuremberg. The place was chosen because, by virtue of the National

Socialist Movement, it is closely connected with the laws which will be presented to you today for passage; the time was chosen because the great majority of the deputies are still in Nuremberg in the capacity of Party comrades. I would like to make a few general remarks on these bills which are being introduced on a notice of motion.

The first part of the Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg has come to an end. The Wehrmacht Day will mark its final conclusion tomorrow. The picture presented by this celebration of the Movement echoes even more strongly last year's impression. The German Volk has found the way to a unity and discipline such as has never before existed in history. This expression of the stability of the Movement is simultaneously the expression of the strength of the current regime. What the German nation longed for in vain for centuries has now been given unto it: a united Volk of brothers, free of respective biases and the scruples of past epochs. This inner strength will be reflected by the picture the Wehrmacht will present to us tomorrow. It shall not be a mass demonstration, but an exposition of the inner value of our new Army.

The German Volk can consider itself lucky at the knowledge of having regained this strength after having suffered so terribly and been impotent for so long. And that particularly at a time which seems to be afflicted by formidable crises. Germany has regained its health. Its facilities are back in working order, both inside and out.

All the more greater is the responsibility of the leadership of the Reich in such grave times. There can be but one guiding principle for the whole of our actions: our great and unshakeable love of peace. It appears to me that such a statement is necessary at this time, for a certain international press will unfortunately persist in its attempts to draw Germany into the circle of its calculating designs.

Before we know it, there will be reports that Germany plans to take action against France; there will be speculation that it is turning against Austria; or the suspicion that it will attack Russia—don't ask me where. These threats are then usually presented as an argument for the necessity of forming various coalitions, depending on the needs of the moment.

In no less generous terms does this press give German friendship away and treat it as something given free for the having to any statesman inclined to reach out his hand to take it.

I hardly need assure you, my deputies and men of the Reichstag, that the German Government does not base its decisions upon any kind of negative attitude towards anyone, but solely on the consciousness of its own responsibility to Germany. The purpose of our work is not, however, to squander what it has achieved in some thoughtless and hence lunatic gamble.

The purpose of building up the German Army was not to threaten the freedom of any European people, much less deprive them of it, but solely to preserve the freedom of the German Volk. This viewpoint is the fundamental principle upon which the foreign policy of the German Reich Government rests. Therefore we refuse to comment on incidents which do not affect Germany, and do not wish to be dragged into such incidents. It is with all the more concern, however, that the German Volk is following the incidents in

Lithuania.²¹⁰ In the midst of peacetime, the Memel territory was stolen from Germany years after the peace treaty. This theft was legalized by the League of Nations and coupled only with the condition that the contractually-stipulated autonomy awarded to the Memel Germans be preserved. For years now, the German element in this area has been abused and tortured in violation of law and the treaty. A great nation is forced to look on while, contrary to law and the stipulations of the treaty, its blood relations who were attacked in the midst of peacetime and torn away from the Reich are being subjected to a treatment worse than that to which criminals are subjected in normal states.

Yet their only crime is that they are Germans and wish to remain Germans. Proposals of those responsible in Kaunas have, to date, not progressed beyond mere worthless formalities with no consequences within the country.

The German Reich Government views this development with interest and with bitterness. It would be a laudable undertaking were the League of Nations to turn its attention to the respect due to the autonomy of the Memel territory and see to it that it is put into practice, before here, too, the events begin to take on forms which could one day but be regretted by all those involved. The preparations for the election which are now taking place there constitute a mockery of both law and obligation!

Germany is by no means lodging unreasonable claims in demanding that suitable measures be taken to coerce Lithuania to comply with the existing treaties. A nation of sixty-five million ought surely to have the right to demand that it at least receive no less consideration than the whims of a country of two million.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing how, although the understanding between peoples is more needed than ever, the Bolshevist International of Moscow has resumed its open and methodical revolutionizing, which means whipping up animosity among the peoples. The farce of the Comintern Congress in Moscow is a telling illustration of the sincerity of the "non-intervention" policy this same power demands.

Since we expect nothing to come of protests and remonstrances in Moscow and have learned through our own experience and, as far as we can ascertain, from the experiences of other states as well, we are resolved to combat the Bolshevist revolutionary agitation in Germany with the effective weapons of National Socialist enlightenment.

The Party Congress has certainly left no room for doubt that National Socialism—if an attempt is made by Moscow-Bolshevism to establish a foothold in Germany or to drive Germany into a revolution—will most definitely put a stop to this plan and such attempts.

We are further compelled to note that here, as everywhere, it is almost exclusively Jewish elements which are at work as instigators of this campaign to spread animosity and confusion among the peoples. The insult to the German flag—which was settled most loyally by a statement of the American Government—is both an illustration of the attitude of Jews, even in civil service status, towards Germany and revealing proof of the pertinence of our National Socialist legislation which is designed as a precautionary measure to

prevent from the very onset that similar incidents take place in our German administration and in our courts, and to prohibit them at any cost. However, should the pertinence of our view require yet further underscoring, this is provided in abundance in the renewed boycott campaign which the Jewish element has just launched against Germany.

This international unrest in the world unfortunately appears to have given rise to the opinion among Jews in Germany that now perhaps the time has come to set Jewish interests up in clear opposition to the German national interests in the Reich. Loud complaints of provocative actions of individual members of this race are coming in from all sides, and the striking frequency of these reports and the similarity of their content appear to indicate a certain method behind the deeds themselves. These actions have escalated to demonstrations in a Berlin cinema directed against a basically harmless foreign film which Jewish circles fancied was offensive to them.

To prevent this behavior from leading to quite determined defensive action on the part of the outraged population, the extent of which cannot be foreseen, the only alternative would be a legislative solution to the problem. The German Reich Government is guided by the hope of possibly being able to bring about, by means of a single secular measure, a framework within which the German Volk would be in a position to establish tolerable relations with the Jewish people. However, should this hope prove false and intra-German and international Jewish agitation proceed on its course, a new evaluation of the situation would have to take place.

I now propose that the Reichstag adopt the bills which the Reichstag President, Party comrade Göring, will read aloud to you. The first and second laws repay a debt of gratitude to the Movement, under whose symbol Germany regained its freedom,²¹¹ in that they fulfill a significant item on the program of the National Socialist Party.

The third is an attempt at a legislative solution to a problem which, should it yet again prove insoluble, would have to be assigned to the National Socialist Party for a final solution by law. Behind all three laws stands the National Socialist Party, and with it and behind it stands the nation.

I may request that you adopt the laws for passage.

Before Reichstag President Göring disclosed the wording of the three laws, he took the podium to speak for thirty minutes in support of Hitler's views. True to his adage of July 13, 1934 ("We will all always approve of everything our Führer does"),²¹² he merely parroted what his Führer had told him to say. Although he spoke with the "voice of his master," Göring was consistently capable of expressing his own views in a tone of utter conviction; the fact that he spoke almost exclusively of the flag act on this occasion indicated how very important this matter was to Hitler.

In his remarks, Göring stressed that the old black-white-red banner had now been lowered in honor and belonged to a Germany of the

past. One had been forced, he explained, to take steps to ensure that this flag was not demoted to a mere "Party pennant disguising *Reaktion's* sign of victory."

We wish to prevent that the black-white-red banner is further degraded as not worth a fig, and held up as a fig leaf disguising the naked truth about democratic-pacifistic ignorance. For us, the swastika has become a sacred symbol, and thus it is quite self-evident that, if this flag is to fly over Germany in the future, no Jew may be allowed to hoist this sacred insignia. The new flag shall clearly demonstrate to the world that Germany will stand under the swastika for ever and for all eternity.

Göring also made reference to the New York incident involving the swastika flag, stating:

He who offends this flag insults the nation. We have noted to our regret what happened recently in America, and we feel sorry for the American people for having been forced to witness such an indignity. We frankly declare, however, that we regard this act merely as an excess and hold that a brazen Jew will never be able to insult us in his profound hatred.

The victory of the swastika gave us back our pride and gave us back our might. The Wehrmacht yearns for the insignia under which it was resurrected. Had the victory not been won through the fighting and the sacrifices of the brown battalions, had we not had this victory, we know that not a single battalion, not a single boat, not a single new airplane would have been possible. Thus for us the swastika has become for all time the symbol of freedom, and therefore it is only natural that today, at the Party Congress of Freedom, this symbol of freedom be anchored.

At the close of his speech, Göring announced the wording of the three laws. The "Reich Flag Act" and the "Reich Law of Citizenship" were received with the standard applause. The reading of the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" elicited hoots of laughter when Göring read the "comical" text of § 4: "Jews are prohibited from hoisting the flag of the Reich and the Nation and from exhibiting the Reich colors. However, exhibiting the Jewish colors is permitted. The exercise of this right is subject to State protection."

As a matter of course, the three laws were unanimously accepted for passage, whereupon Hitler felt called upon to make yet a further statement in which he stressed how many centuries would be thankful for the Reichstag's work. He declared in his "final appeal."²¹³

My Deputies!

You have now approved of a law, the impact of which will only become evident in its full scope after many centuries have passed. See to it that the nation itself does not stray from the straight and narrow path of the law! See

to it that our Volk adheres to the path of the law! See to it that this law is ennobled by the most tremendous discipline of the entire German Volk, to whom and for whom you are responsible.

As if this were not enough, Hitler once more strode to the podium at the following meeting of leading party members. It was his fourth speech of the day. The *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following report:²¹⁴

At this gathering, the Führer expressed his gratitude to the responsible leaders of the Reich Party Organization for their accomplishments, and took advantage of the opportunity to underscore the significance of the new laws and to point out that the National Socialist legislation presented the sole means for coming to passable terms with the Jews living in Germany. The Führer particularly stressed that, by virtue of these laws, the Jews in Germany were granted opportunities in all areas of their own völkisch life such as were not in existence to date in any other country. In this connection, the Führer renewed the order to the Party that it continue to refrain from taking any independent action against Jews.

September 16 marked the “Wehrmacht Day,” which opened with large-scale presentations at the refurbished Zeppelin Field. It was Hitler’s first public address to the soldiers of the army :²¹⁵

Soldiers of the new German Wehrmacht!

For the second time, units of the Army and the Navy have assembled at this spot; for the first time in the position of a free armed force (*Wehrfreiheit*). Now you have been joined by the new units of our German Wehrmacht which can now be shown to the German Volk in this, their new context.

The German was always a good soldier. For our Volk the service of arms was never an enforced service, but a service of the highest honor in every period of our history. It was thus all the more painful and dispiriting for the honoring, decent German man not to be allowed to be a soldier—or if so, under dishonorable and humiliating circumstances. How successfully this situation has now been mastered is something evidenced to you, my soldiers, and today to the entire German Volk, in this display of the union between the German man as soldier and the weapons of modern technology. Now every young German man, should he be found worthy by the nation, will join your ranks. And you will now once again perform your service with arms which are in use today throughout the world.

This service requires of each and every one of you certain sacrifices. Each of you must make a sacrifice in terms of personal freedom; he must exhibit obedience and subordination, but also toughness, endurance and, above all, an utmost sense of duty.

Those who believe this sacrifice must be wrung out of the German man are mistaken! Throughout the centuries, German men have done this voluntarily, and they were proud of their accomplishments. And not only in peacetime

did the German man joyfully make this sacrifice to the nation as soldier; he did so no less when the crisis of the Reich called upon him to protect *Volk und Vaterland*. The German was not only a good soldier in peacetime, but a brave fighter at all times.

But what are all the sacrifices required of you and of us today compared to the sacrifices required of millions of us and our comrades twenty years ago? May each of you, should he ever perceive the duty of the soldier a burden, recall that eight days of drumfire required more in terms of sacrifice from the battalions and regiments of our Old Army than the service of peace during an entire year. The German Volk in arms was not brought to its knees by this. It was brought to its knees only because it lost its inner freedom, its inner belief in its rights. This faith has returned today, and this faith, my soldiers, belongs not only to hundreds of thousands, but to millions of you; and millions of our Volksgenossen embrace you with this burning faith, with this burning confidence and with this warm love.

And if you are personally required to make the sacrifices of obedience, of performing your duty, of subordination, of being tough, enduring, and efficient, do not forget, my soldiers, that the entire German Volk makes great sacrifices for you, too. It is a difficult task for the German Volk to build what is standing here and in countless other places in Germany. Our Volk must make difficult sacrifices, and it does so gladly. For first of all, it does not want to see its sons badly equipped and secondly, it no longer wants to see Germany defenseless.

So we continue to make these sacrifices mutually—the Volk for you, and you for the Volk! Both for Germany, our Volk, and our precious German Reich! And we are also making these sacrifices with the conviction that it does not require a war to reward us for doing so.

Once Germany had a proud and brave army; it had heroic fighters. That is natural for the German soldier.

But the army was not only the nation's great defense in wartime; in peacetime it was also the splendid school of our Volk. It made men of us all, and the sight of it has always bolstered in us the faith in the future of our Volk. And this splendid Old Army is not dead; it was only sleeping and has now been resurrected in you!

You, my comrades, bear at the points of your weapons and on your helmets a tremendous legacy. You are not something artificially created, something void of tradition and a past; rather, whatever else Germany may have to offer pales compared to what you must and can personify in terms of tradition. There is indeed no need for you to win for the German army any title to fame; it already has that, you need only preserve it!

And as we stand here armed in steel and bronze, it is not because we feel it is necessary to repair the honor of the German Volk. As long as this honor was borne by the soldier, no one in the world has ever been able to rob us of it! Germany has never lost its military honor, least of all in the last war. Thus we need not recover this honor. But we will see to it in the future that not as much honor, not as much heroic courage, and not as many sacrifices are in vain as has been the case in the past.

This army of old—of which you are a continuation and whose representative and bearer of tradition you must be—offered the greatest sacrifices on the altar of the Vaterland ever required of an army from its Volk.

Demonstrate that you are worthy and deserving of these sacrifices! See to it that the nation can depend on you just as it could once depend on our splendid old military, on our Old Army and Wehrmacht. See to it that the trust of the nation can be placed in you just as it was once placed in the army, for you wear helmets from its most glorious age. Then the German Volk will love you; it will see in you the best part of the German Volk, just as it sends its best sons into this unique organization year after year. This Volk will then believe in its army and gladly and joyfully make any sacrifice out of the conviction that, in doing so, it is preserving the peace of the nation and securing the education of the German Volk.

For you have become men, and we want the whole of German youth to attend this splendid, final school and likewise become the men you are. We want to raise a tough breed which is strong, reliable, loyal, obedient, and decent, so that we need not be ashamed of our Volk before history.

That is what the nation requests, what the nation hopes for and demands of you! And I know you will fulfill this demand and this hope and this request, for you are the new soldiers of the new German Reich!

Hitler had clearly closed the book on the past. Apparently the times were over when the Reichswehr played a special role in public life and represented a separate class in the hierarchy of the State: even the designation “Reichswehr” was now avoided.

In order to bring home to the generals their new status under his sole subordination, Hitler had their representatives march by him after the speech just as young recruits pass inspection by their non-commissioned officers. The Reich Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht,²¹⁶ General von Blomberg; the Commander in Chief of the Army, General Freiherr von Fritsch; the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral Raeder; and the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, General der Flieger Göring, led the parade, marching by Hitler’s rostrum with a salute.

Following this triumph, Hitler delivered his lengthy closing speech to the assembled Party Congress participants.²¹⁷ So engrossed was he in his subject that he even made a few remarks on a future constitution for the Reich and a time when he would no longer dwell among his comrades, announcing that his successor should also personify the combined offices of “*Herr* (leader) of the Party, Head of the Reich, and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.”

When I will breathe my last breath is something I do not know. But that the Party will live on is something I do know, and that it will successfully shape

the future of the German nation beyond any individuals, whether they be weak or strong, is something I believe and something I know! For it guarantees the stability of the leadership of the Volk and the Reich, and by its own stability it guarantees the authority this leadership requires. The constitution of the new German Reich will grow out of this solid base. It is the duty of the Party as *weltanschaulich* shaper and political navigator of German fate to provide the nation and thus the Reich with its Führer. The more naturally and uncontestedly this principle is established and maintained, the stronger Germany will be.

The army as the representative of and organization for the defensive strength of our Volk must always preserve and maintain the organized military strength of the Reich entrusted to it and place same in loyalty and obedience at the disposal of the Führer given to the nation by the Movement. For when the respective new Führer is appointed, he shall be *Herr* of the Party, Head of the Reich, and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. If these principles form the unshakeable foundation of the German structures of Volk and State, Germany will be able to withstand any storms which may come its way.

But let the two fundamental manifestations of the new Reich both bear in mind that they can only satisfy the demands placed upon them jointly. The Party gives to the Volk the Army, and the Volk gives to the Army its soldiers; both together thus provide to the German Reich the security of internal peace and order and the power to stand up for itself. Today, as Führer of the Reich and the nation, I can still personally offer help and advice. But these principles must lead from the personal to the eternal.

Führers will come and Führers will die, but Germany must live on. And alone this Movement will lead Germany to this life. All of us, though, will one day be judged by the quality and historic permanency of what we are building today!

We, my Party comrades, co-leaders of the Volk and the Army, have been chosen by Fate to make history in the loftiest sense of the word. What millions of people are deprived of has been given to us by Providence. Even most distant posterity will be reminded of us by our work. And it should one day find most noteworthy and distinguished of all the fact that, in an age marked by lack of loyalty and rampant betrayal, it was possible in the Germany of our age to form as never before a mutual league of the most loyal followers. And we know one thing:

One day, a page in world history will be devoted to us, the men from the National Socialist Party and the German Army who joined efforts to build and safeguard the new German Reich. One day we will stand then side by side, immortalized in the pantheon of history, immortalized in indivisible loyalty as in the time of the great struggle and the great fulfillment.

On September 17, following the official close of the Party Congress, Hitler delivered another speech in Nuremberg to the winning troops at the Reich Sports Competition of the SA²¹⁸ in which he declared that, although the SA had decreased in quantity, it had increased in quality.

In the course of this “Party Congress of Freedom” in Nuremberg, Hitler had written and—for the most part—delivered a total of seventeen speeches.²¹⁹ He spoke, however, only at organized events to captive and obedient audiences and had little direct exposure to the public at large.

Hitler began to shrink from immediate contact with the population, a more objective audience than his Party followers. A pattern began to emerge which was later to characterize Hitler’s speeches up to 1945: he addressed only those who wanted to hear him, or—more aptly expressed—who were forced for reasons of their status and function to listen to his outpourings.

Hitler’s ‘secret speeches’ before small groups of workers etc. were no substitute for the earlier mass rallies before and after the take-over, in which he courted public support for patriotic ideals, promised economic aid and met with genuine applause. With his new “comrades from the Volk,” before meager gatherings of uncritical workers, he was certain of approval from the very onset. These “poorest and most loyal” sons of the Volk, to quote Bröger, were still easily impressed by vain words and fantastic schemes for the future. In contrast, the German people as a whole became increasingly skeptical the longer Hitler’s reign persisted. And the dictator knew it.

4

On September 24, Hitler delivered a speech at the leaders' convention of the NSDAP in Munich, in which he discussed planned implementation provisions for the Reich Law of Citizenship.²²⁰ A somewhat lengthy consultation between Hitler and Hungarian Minister-President Gömbös took place in the Berlin Chancellery on September 29.²²¹

On October 1, Hitler paid a visit to East Prussian troop units. The next day he attended Hindenburg's "final interment"²²² in a newly erected vault in the Tannenberg monument near Hohenstein.²²³ On the evening of October 2, he declared the Tannenberg monument a "Reich Memorial" and dispatched the following official announcement:²²⁴

Berlin, October 2, 1935

The mortal remains of our dearly beloved Field Marshal von Hindenburg have today, on the day he was born eightyeight years ago, been transferred to the vault erected for him in the Tannenberg monument. Here, at the site of the victory of Tannenberg, surrounded by his soldiers who lost their lives in battle, the Commander has now found his final resting place. Laying this great German to rest within the walls of this tremendous monument to battle constitutes a special consecration of this monument and elevates it to one of the nation's shrines.

In order to render visible the significance of the Tannenberg monument, I hereby declare it a "Reich Memorial" and bestow upon it the name "Tannenberg Reich Memorial." As the burial place of the Field Marshal and the twenty unknown soldiers resting at his side, it shall be consecrated for all eternity to the grateful memory of the glorious achievements and heroic sacrifices of the German Volk during the World War. The German Reich takes the "Tannenberg Reich Memorial" under its wing from today onwards and shall be mindful to preserve and protect it as a symbol of German loyalty, comradeship and self-sacrifice for all time to come.

German men created this monument in times of hardship, and many were those throughout the German populace who contributed to its expansion

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with voluntary gifts. To sincerely thank all of them in this hour is both my duty and a matter dear to my heart.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler

The same day, Mussolini gave the order, "Italy, forward march!" and launched his invasion of Ethiopia.

On October 3, Hitler addressed workers at the Schichau shipyard in Elbing and subsequently toured the Marienburg. In the evening, he spoke to the Führerkorps of the NSDAP in the Königsberg Municipal Hall.²²⁵

The *Erntedankfest* was celebrated on October 6 on the Bückeberg near Hamelin. A reported mass of one million peasants had heard the appeal and gathered there to listen to the great Pied Piper. Prior to addressing them, Hitler had exhibition maneuvers by the Wehrmacht displayed to the audience. This time, the entire rally had a militaristic character: there were artillery salutes; guards of honor marched up; the generals were in attendance, etc. The sheer magnitude of the 1,000,000 people sent Hitler into ecstasies, and he rhapsodized in his speech:²²⁶

Just as you are standing here before me, my German Volksgenossen, there stand multitudes more, sixty-eight times as many. Our Volk numbers sixty-eight million. These sixty-eight million are our principals; we are under obligation to all of them, responsible to all of them. They all want to live; they all need to eat; they need freedom, and thus they all have command over our actions. The Volk alone is our master (*Herr*), and it is this Volk we serve according to our best knowledge and belief.

However, in order to fulfill this task, it is necessary for each person to understand that the discipline and order demanded of him are to his own advantage and that the authority which requires this order is acting in his own interest. Everyone must understand this, for everyone profits from it.

Despite all his efforts, Hitler had been unable to convince the entire German population to unreservedly acknowledge the supremacy of his will. Thus here he once more expressed his annoyance at intellectual critics, calling upon his peasant audience to confirm that criticism was an unendurable phenomenon.

And I thus turn once again to you, my peasants. When you till your soil, when you walk behind the plough, when you plant and when you finally arm [!] yourselves for the harvest, you would not enjoy it if someone were constantly standing beside you who knew nothing about farming but who felt called upon to constantly criticize you. My dear peasants, what would you do with a man like that? And if we try to defend ourselves against these people, they say, "There is a need for criticism." No, my venerable Sirs, the critics: there

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is a need for work! There is a need for someone to have the courage to assume the responsibility and to stand by it to the death. Where would humanity be if in place of work and responsibility only criticism had been the governing, controlling and guiding factor in the lives of men?

What all of us have witnessed today with our own eyes, this wonderful, condensed display of military action [!], would not be possible in terms of its prerequisites, its preparation and its performance were this institution governed by the rule, "Critics welcome here," instead of, "Here orders are given, and orders are obeyed!"

It is not difficult, in view of the vast amount of work being accomplished everywhere in Germany, to ascertain with notebook in hand that somewhere, sometime, perhaps a mistake has been made. I have yet to see the peasant who can state that he has never had a bad harvest, never perhaps could have done something more sensibly. That is not the point. The point is rather that one tries to do the right thing and never capitulates in the face of whatever difficulties may arise!

Anyone forced to eliminate such distress as we were must seek new paths. Unfortunately, our predecessors in office failed here and did not bequeath to us any recipes as to how such distress could be alleviated. We have sought our own paths, and we have found them. I believe the proof is in rallies such as these, too.

Where else could it be possible that nearly a sixtieth of a great Volk's total millions flock together on one day in order not only to solemnly bear witness to their unity, but also to their solidarity with this regime and this system? Where is the statesman, where the head of state who can go forth into his Volk as I go forth among you?²²⁷

That is the marvelous thing, that our Volk has understood this regime, its necessity and its actions, and carried on as usual, in contrast to the weaklings who cannot comprehend that our Volk has understood that the actions we are taking lie in the interest of all.

The persistence with which Hitler attempted to defend himself against the criticism of the intellectuals reveals how annoying he found it—and how justified it was. Hitler closed his speech with a word of thanks to Providence for the harvest, meaning not only the agricultural harvest but above all the yield from the military and "demographic"²²⁸ harvest.

Providence has enabled us this year to reap a harvest not only plentiful in financial terms; it has blessed us even more: from the beginning of this year onward, Germany was able to score numerous and decisive victories. Our German Wehrmacht was brought back to life. The German fleet²²⁹ will come to life once more. The German cities and the beautiful villages—they are protected, watched over by the strength of the nation, watched over by the weapon in the air.

Far beyond that, we want to say thanks for a special harvest: in this hour, we wish to thank the hundreds of thousands and hundreds of thousands of

German women who once more gave us the most beautiful gift they have to give us: many hundreds of thousands of small children! [—]

We want to do our duty, to take the straight path without looking back, as we have done hitherto. We want to stride through the difficulties of this age, strong and prepared, and never weaken. We want to do the right thing and have fear of no man, and want then to submit a request to the Almighty that He bless our work in the year to come as well, that He once more bestow upon our fields a plentiful bounty and upon us all great success.

May He especially keep alive in our Volk the right insight, may He secure for it inner [!] peace and instill in us all the wisdom and the prudence to do the right thing, that our Volk may live and Germany never die.

After this flourishing finish in the style of the Catholic liturgy, Hitler left for Goslar, where a ceremonial army tattoo and a fireworks spectacle awaited him.

On October 8, Hitler opened the third Winterhilfswerk with a speech in the Kroll Opera in Berlin.²³⁰ He gave a detailed account of past socio-economic polarities, but naturally did not waste the opportunity to stress his present position of power:

First of all: in terms of power, class struggle in Germany today has been abolished; in other words, no one is left who would be in a position to engage in it. There may be an isolated individual here or there who still entertains this idea in his thoughts and hopes for better times—which is to say worse times—in which he might once again be in a position to mobilize these instincts.

Let no one be deceived! We have the power to prevent that, and we are resolved to prevent it under all circumstances, and to do so on both sides. Secondly: we are presently engaged in arriving at a material solution to the differences underlying this class struggle. We are fortunate to be able to enforce this material solution because we ourselves are above such differences. I might well say that I view myself as the most independent of men in this context; obligated to no one, subordinate to no one, indebted to no one—instead answerable only to my own conscience. And this conscience has but one single commander: our Volk! The German Volk and its elite, united in the Movement, in the National Socialist Party!

Following further pontificating on the power of the ideal and the corroding poison of Bolshevism, Hitler called upon his audience to make sacrifices for the Volksgemeinschaft, stating:

Now one might say, “if the economy cannot solve everything, why do you not have the State solve it?” But what is the State? Volksgenosse, you are the State! And the State should not force you to fulfill this natural duty; rather, you yourself should express in real terms your feelings for the Volksgemeinschaft, you must come forth and make voluntary sacrifices! []

Don’t tell me, “All right, but it’s still a bother to do all this collecting.” You have never known hunger, otherwise you would know what a bother it is to

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be hungry. You have never experienced what it means to have nothing to eat, much less what it means not to be able to give one's loved ones anything to eat!

And if the other then says, "But you know, all these stew Sundays²³¹—I would like to give something, but it's my stomach, I have stomach problems all the time anyway, I don't understand it. I'd give ten pfennigs just the same." No, dear friend, there is a reason behind everything we do. It is particularly useful for you, someone who does not understand, if in this way at least we can guide you back to your Volk, to the millions of your Volksgenossen who would be happy if they only had that stew all winter long that you perhaps eat once a month. We did this intentionally and will never depart from it. On the contrary: we are convinced that this is a great day in the German nation and that he who would play truant is without character and a pest within our Volk.

We hold that, by such visible demonstrations, we are continually stirring the conscience of our Volk and making each of you once more aware that you should perceive yourself as a Volksgenosse, and that you should make sacrifices!

Do not say, I would gladly give! You should give, even if it means forbearing on your part, for you should make sacrifices for others. We too might have done things differently. But no, we want to show the whole world and our Volk that we Germans perceive the word "community" not as a hollow phrase, but that for us it really does entail an inner obligation.

That is our war! We are engaged in the greatest campaign of conquest in world history; in other words, we are making the conquest of our German Volk.

That is the most splendid conquest there can be—if one has possession of a Volk which shares one mind, one heart, one will, and one action. If this conquest is successful, Providence will not withhold from us our earthly reward in other respects, either.

We National Socialists view this as our tremendous, great task, the most splendid mission there is, the most wonderful battle we can imagine. Anyone who has once found access to this world of ideas will be infinitely and richly rewarded. He will then no longer view it as something painful, as a series of deprivations, but will finally achieve true happiness, namely the happiness of being able to help others and thus to make progress on the road to pure idealism.

Therefore this Winterhilfswerk is a proud affair of the heart to us National Socialists. We are truly proud in feeling that, with it, we have built up something which the world has hitherto not known the likes of, nor we ourselves. If we take only the achievements of peace, of our rich age of peace, as a comparison—how deplorable that was!²³² That is the way of things: first our Volk had to be beaten so that it could finally find its way to its own.

Hence we are once more appealing to the Germans. And we are not miserly regarding the outcome of this project. We do not exclude anyone! We are fighting with the Communists here, and we will beat them into the ground if necessary. But should they say, "I'm hungry"—fine, then let them have

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something to eat.²³³ We are not fighting them in order to kill them, but in order to preserve our Volk from madness. But if they come to their senses and return to their Volk, they shall be welcomed with open arms. We rejoice in every person who has found the way to his community. We are just as resolved to defend this community as we are generous in winning over members for this community.

On October 19, Hitler spoke in the Coburg City Hall on the occasion of a roll call of the leaders of the NSKK. He recalled the significant role Coburg had played in the struggle for power and, before the assembled Old Fighters, declared that he would never capitulate.²³⁴

The next day, a volume entitled “Hall of Fame to those killed for the Third Reich,”²³⁵ was published, for which Hitler had written the following preface:

The men of whom these pages speak lost their lives as soldiers of the National Socialist Revolution in the battle for Germany’s liberation and new order. Their great dream has today come true. From their blood has sprouted the seed of a better future, the sacrifice of their lives has become a bulwark bearing their former insignia as the flag of the Third Reich.

Adolf Hitler

The last *Wanburgfestz*²³⁶ of the *Deutsche Burschenschaft* (fraternity), the largest academic association, took place on October 18. In the words of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, on this day the German Fraternity members “laid down their colors on the altar of the German Volksgemeinschaft,” and were subsumed into the NS Students’ League. The other student fraternities and organizations—the *Landsmannschaften*, the *Deutsche Sängerschaft* (choir), etc.—followed suit within the next several days. Again Hitler had succeeded in eliminating organizations which had once exerted an influence upon the course of German politics. No one but himself and the bodies under his control was ever to be allowed to wield power. Within merely a few days’ time, the Stahlhelm, too, would be forced to disappear.

Field Marshal von Mackensen had aided Hitler in defeating the Stahlhelm by renouncing his honorary membership in that organization on July 31, because “the most important battle aim of the Stahlhelm” had been “realized with the reinstatement of general conscription.”²³⁷ In return for this support, Hitler assigned to Mackensen the title to the ancestral estate²³⁸ Prüssow near Stettin—which was state property—on October 22. It was a well-known fact that Hitler showed a marked generosity in bestowing material and financial endowments upon persons who were devoted to him.²³⁹

On October 23, Hitler dispatched a telegram expressing his condolences to the widow of Gauleiter and Reichsstatthalter Loeper in Dessau who had died following a prolonged illness.²⁴⁰ The same day, he consulted with the head of the Reich Veterans' Association (Kyffhäuserbund), former Colonel Reinhardt. The talks were obviously related to the planned dissolution of the Stahlhelm.²⁴¹

On October 26, Hitler attended Loeper's funeral in Dessau, calling him an "apostle of the Movement" in his eulogy delivered at the Friedrich Theater.²⁴²

When Fate is especially fond of a man and wishes to bestow upon him the best thing in the world, it will give him loyal friends, men who are resolved to share with him equally both joy and sorrow, men whom nothing can lead astray, men who, particularly in days of need, stand by him firm and resolute. I have been given a most generous share of this happiness and good fortune such as perhaps only few people in this world have.²⁴³

Yet this happiness of so many years turns to pain when I now see how this and that member of the community of fighters is called to his Maker. When I speak here today, I am speaking as the happy—yet now so unhappy—Führer who must now accompany a member of his old guard to the grave, a man the likes of whom are rare even in our Movement.

Once he came to me when one could expect nothing more from this Movement than sacrifices and troubles, persecution and abuse. And truly it was only love of Germany which led him to that host of inseparable men who were determined to take up and pursue the battle for a new Germany against all odds. This man, with his boundless love of Germany, also had an unshakeable faith [in Adolf Hitler]. This faith was combined, in his case, with a unique loyalty [to Adolf Hitler]. He was one of the most loyal members of the old guard. During the time of struggle, we never spoke about it; no one would have understood it anyway. But today, at the bier of my dead comrade in arms, I must express it in words for German youth, that they may aspire to the same.

The new Reich was not given to us; it had to be hard won in battle, and in this fight only an overabundance of love for Germany, of faith, of willingness to sacrifice, and of loyalty allowed [us] to triumph. That is something the German Volk must know. For it is my wish that the names of these first apostles of our Movement go down in German history for all eternity. Party comrade Loeper was a zealot, but he was more than that: a strong, selfsufficient man as hard as granite. He was persistent as only few are, untiring in his work and never swaying from the conviction: in the end we must succeed!

Hence for many of us this Party comrade was a model, in his unselfish modesty too, in his personal simplicity and in his lack of emotionalism: he was strictly a helper devoted to our great mutual cause.

Formerly the captain of the pioneers of the World War, he became a captain and pioneer of the National Socialist Weltanschauung, of our

Revolution, and thus of our new German Reich. By having waged this battle in his lifetime, he lives on for us in death. He is a man for the German future. He deserves to be distinguished from the masses of hundreds of thousands and millions and be held up before the nation for all time! And this applies particularly to German youth. They shall hear this, and they shall learn from it. They shall once again realize that the old fealty was not only a virtue of the Teutons. The new Reich was built up with this virtue as its basis. This Reich would not be standing today were it not founded upon this fidelity [to Adolf Hitler].

A wonderful life has thus come to a close. Yet today we are all overcome by deep sorrow that our Party comrade, our Gauleiter and our Reichsstatthalter has been forced to leave us so soon, one of the old guard. Our hearts bleed when we see how our ranks slowly begin to thin out.

But as the old passes, so the young grows to take its place. For this old guard did not live in vain, did not struggle and fight in vain. From their work and their influence has sprung forth the richest of blessings—and Party comrade Captain Loeper was one of the most blessed of men.

On November 3, Hitler delivered a speech at the official opening of the rebuilt Ludwig Bridge in Munich.²⁴⁴

It was his hope, he stated, that the many sad events which this bridge had been made to suffer²⁴⁵ in the past would not be repeated in future and that the train twelve years before would hopefully be the last dismal incident on this bridge.

The same day, the roofing ceremony for the new Party buildings at the Munich Königsplatz (built according to the plans of Professor Troost) took place, and Hitler made use of the occasion to speak to the construction workers in the Löwenbräukeller. There he once more announced the coming of “Party buildings as large and as rock-solid (*steinhart*) as the Movement itself.”²⁴⁶

On November 5, Hitler signed the Decrees on Flags and National Emblems.²⁴⁷ He had already “decreed” the existence of a new Reich service flag on October 31,²⁴⁸ showing the swastika with a black and white border and the sovereign symbol of the Party in the upper inner corner. The first of the November 5 decrees provided, “the Reich shall use as its national emblem the sovereign symbol of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party.”

With the second decree, Hitler introduced a new Reich naval ensign similar in design to the old imperial ensign.²⁴⁹ The white background was, however, now red, and the imperial eagle in the circle at the flag’s center was replaced by the swastika with its black and white border. In the upper inner corner, the old iron cross on the imperial ensign had been retained.

Still on November 5, Hitler received the International Olympic Committee headed by Count Baillet-Latour in the Chancellery, where arrangements for the 1936 Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Berlin were discussed.²⁵⁰

Two days later, the recruits of the first age-group of general conscription²⁵¹ swore their allegiance to the new Reich naval ensign. Hitler had the following order of the day read aloud:²⁵²

Berlin, November 7, 1935

Soldiers of the Wehrmacht!

As of today, I hereby present to the resurrected Wehrmacht of general conscription duty the new Reich naval ensign.

May the swastika be for you a symbol of the unity and purity of the nation, a sign of the strength of the National Socialist Weltanschauung, a pledge of the freedom and strength of the Reich. The iron cross shall be a reminder to you of the unique tradition of the old Wehrmacht, of the virtues which inspired it, of the model it gave you.

It is your duty to do loyal service in life and death to the Reich colors of black, white and red. To follow the flag shall be a matter of pride to you. The former Reich naval ensign²⁵³ will be taken down in honor. I reserve for myself the right to have it raised on special days of commemoration.²⁵⁴

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

Hitler made use of this day of triumph, on which the Wehrmacht throughout the country was forced to accept the flag he had designed as naval ensign, to give the Stahlhelm its final deathblow. As so often before, he once again killed two birds with one stone.

On November 7, he sent the following letter to the Bundesführer of the Stahlhelm, Franz Seldte:²⁵⁵

As of today, the reconstruction of the German Wehrmacht has achieved its crowning glory in that the recruits from the first age-group of conscription have sworn their allegiance to the Third Reich and its flag. Hence the German Wehrmacht has once again become the bearer of German arms and the preserver of their traditions for all time to come. The shaping will and the expression of political power is the Party. Under these circumstances, I no longer consider the requirements for a continuation of the "Stahlhelm" to be given.

For it was the Stahlhelm's aim to preserve the traditions of the old army and to link with them a striving to re-establish a strong Reich which shall, in a new Wehrmacht, possess its own certain means of protecting and defending its freedom.

Now that this goal has been achieved, I would like to express to you, the leader of the Stahlhelm organization, and all its members my sincere gratitude for the work and the great sacrifices you have made in the service of this ideal. In order to give the old members of the NSDFB (Stahlhelm) who had already

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fought for the liberation of the Reich even prior to the take-over the opportunity to take part in the ongoing struggle to shape and form the National Socialist Third Reich, I hereby lift the existing general ban on membership in the NSDAP for such persons. These old members of the Stahlhelm cannot be incorporated as a body, but only by individual application. In addition to the general conditions for being admitted into the NSDAP and its organizations, i.e. the SA, SS and NSKK, I hold that special terms must apply which are to be stipulated with the Reich Treasurer or, respectively, the heads of these organizations.

The final decision regarding membership in the NSDAP is to be made mutually by the Reich Treasurer and the respective authorized representatives of the Party (Gauleiters, Ortsgruppenleiters, etc.).

The decision on the membership of former Stahlhelm members in the SA shall be made by the SA Chief of Staff.

The decision on the membership of former Stahlhelm members in the SS shall be made by the Reichsführer SS.

The decision on the membership of former Stahlhelm members in the NSKK shall be made by the NSKK Corps Leader.

These parties shall base their decisions on their own dutiful discretion. In order to afford those members of the Stahlhelm who are not moved by a will to take on a political function or be politically active the opportunity to continue to foster their soldierly recollections, I recommend joining the Kyffhäuserbund.

The liquidation of the NSDFB (Stahlhelm) and its financial institutions and enterprises shall be effected by the Bundesführer or his appointed representative. The Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP is willing to assist in a strictly advisory capacity at such liquidation, but will not, however, assume responsibility for any ensuing proprietary obligations.

In thanking you, Pg. Seldte, and your former fellow fighters once more for their great idealistic work and the many sacrifices made to resurrect a new Reich, I am at the same time certain that history, even in distant ages, will never forget this contribution to the uplifting of the German nation. Thus this tribute must be all the higher, the more unified and close-knit the result of all efforts toward resurrecting a new Reich will be.

Hence what may today seem to be a great sacrifice for many former members of the Stahlhelm is nothing other than the historic enhancing of the work and achievements to date. For we will only be in a position to ably hold our own before the future of our Volk when we are capable not only of ceasing to maintain the age-old ill of German fragmentation as a basic component of our very nature but also of successfully overcoming it.

One Volk, one Reich, one political will, and one sword!

I now ask you and your fellow fighters to continue to do your part in this tremendous task of asserting German life.

Adolf Hitler

Instead of protesting, Seldte even dispatched the following exuberant reply:

November 7, 1935

Mein Führer!

I acknowledge with sincere gratitude the receipt of your letter of today. My comrades in the NSDFB join me in thanking you for the generous words of recognition with which you paid tribute to the struggle of this association for the internal and external liberation of the German nation. The gratitude we feel is all the more sincere and joyful because it is addressed to the man and front-line soldier who once more gave to the German Volk its internal and external freedom, which fact has been manifested most visibly in the re-establishment of military sovereignty. With that, the desires and the struggles of the Stahlhelm, too, have achieved the end my comrades and I had unrelentingly striven for with all our hearts and with the best of our knowledge and belief.

My comrades and I are particularly grateful that you have recognized the purity of our motives in that you are giving members of the Stahlhelm the opportunity to join the Party and its organizations.

On the historic day when the Wehrmacht resurrected by virtue of your order raised the flag you gave us, we old comrades of the NSDFB (Stahlhelm) view it as a symbolic act when, on that same day, we take down our old flag and declare our purpose as having been fulfilled. We do so with the gratitude of the fighter who has been able to live to see his goals accomplished and his ideas realized.

Once more I may thank you for your good wishes and the appreciation you have shown to my comrades and the association. I hereby report to you, mein Führer, that I have ordered the dissolution of the NS Deutscher Frontkämpferbund (Stahlhelm).

Heil Hitler!

Franz Seldte

On November 7, Hitler also attended the opening of the remodelled State Theater at the Gendarme Market in Berlin before proceeding to Munich for the commemorative activities on November 8 and 9. This year's orchestration provided for a great deal of pomp: the sixteen members of the NSDAP who had lost their lives in 1923 were to be exhumed from their burial sites and reinterred in special pantheons at the Königsplatz in Munich. The imposing ceremonies marking the occasion were to drown out any discord connected with memories of the Röhm affair the year before. Under cover of this pomp and circumstance, Hitler could afford to once more schedule the commemorative march to the Feldherrnhalle which had been dispensed with in 1934.

At 8:30 in the evening of November 8, Hitler delivered his memorial speech in the Bürgerbräukeller.²⁵⁶ Following the customary long-winded "party narrative," Hitler went into the events of November 1923 and once more alleged that, by staging a putsch himself, he had forestalled a coup attempt on the part of the separatists. Whereas the

year before he had claimed having taken action four days before, now he recalled it had been “at least twenty-four hours.”

By the summer [1923] we had already realized that the dice would have to fall one way or another in Germany. At that time we were aware that, although we were perhaps weakest in terms of numbers, in terms of quality we were at the top by a long margin. When the fall came and the events began to pile up, it became more and more evident that unscrupulous scoundrels (*gewissenlose Halunken*) were aiming, under the pressure of the occupation of the Ruhr, to ultimately tear Germany apart. At that point there grew in us—I can admit, there grew in me the resolve that, if things were ever to progress that far, we would take the law of action into our own hands at least twenty-four hours before and not wait until the other side found the courage to make a decision and thus take action. One thing was clear: whoever summoned up the courage to take action in that inflationary time when absolutely everything was collapsing, was certain to have the Volk behind him.

Had a different flag been raised, the foreign powers would have immediately declared: we will no longer tolerate that this “liberation”—for that was how Germany’s fragmentation was described—is halted yet again by the attempt to restore the hegemony of one or the other Federal States. We knew that. And it was out of this urgent feeling for the hour and out of the need of this hour that we resolved to take action.

Today there is no reason for me to reveal all the details. I will do so when I no longer live.²⁵⁷ What happened then is something one not yet need know today, but one thing I can surely say is: it was the most daring decision of my life.

When I think back on it now, it makes me dizzy. The decision to strike a blow at a part of Germany and to capture the enemy’s consolidated forces at one fell swoop—it was a bold decision, bold because one needed the courage to take over power with the existing means—and they were limited. Yet this decision was necessary and unavoidable. It was the only thing that could be done.

In that hour, someone had to take a stand against the treason and confront those traitors with the national slogan. Who did it was of no consequence in the end. We did it. I dared to do it.

Then Fate was on our side. It did not allow an action to succeed which, had it succeeded, would necessarily have failed in the end due to the inner immaturity of the Movement and the defects of its organizational and intellectual foundations at the time. Today we know this! Our own deeds back then were manly and brave. And Providence acted wisely. But those brave deeds were not in vain. For in the end, the great national Movement came of them; in other words, this explosion attracted the attention of Germany as a whole to the Movement at one fell swoop. And while our opponents believed they had destroyed us, in reality the seed of the Movement had been hurled out to fall all over Germany at one fell swoop.

When the big trial took place, we were able—for the first time before such a tremendous German and international forum—to stand up for our ideals.

We scorned to say as the others did: we didn't mean it like that; no, we said: we want to destroy Germany's traitors. Unfortunately we did not succeed. At that time we solemnly declared, "We have the responsibility, and we bear the responsibility. We regret only one thing: that we did not succeed."

When we were engaged in the first trial and were waging that battle, it was still natural—because they were all, in fact, leaders—that each individual was to stand up for his actions and take the entire responsibility. But there was one thing I feared. Following us were nearly 100 Party comrades to come, men from minor combat patrols, members of certain SA storm troops. They, too, would be dragged before the judge. I was already in the fortress when these trials began to unwind. And I had only one fear, namely that under the pressure of being held in detention etc. or of all these methods of conducting trial, one or the other of them might perhaps weaken and try to save himself by declaring, "But I'm innocent, was forced to do it, I had no choice."

My heart overflowed when I saw the first report of these trials and when I read in the *Münchener Post* (at that time it was delivered to us): "The people from the combat patrols are just as brazen and impertinent as their lord and master." Then I knew: Germany is not lost. The spirit will find a way to survive! It was one thing they would not be able to stamp out.

And these same people from the combat patrols and these same SA men later became the largest organizations of the German Movement, the SA and the SS. And the spirit has remained and proven itself ten thousand times over, hundreds of thousand times over.

Because you see, that is what we owe to these dead: the example they gave us in a most terrible time in Germany. As we marched forth from here, we knew that it was no longer a triumphal march. We went forth in the conviction that it was the end, one way or another. I remember one man who said to me outside on the stairs as we were leaving, "This is the end." Each of us carried this conviction with him.

At this point I must pay tribute to a man who is not with us today, whom I asked at the time not to march at the head—General Ludendorff—and who replied to me, "I will stand at the head." And who then took his place in the foremost rank.

But that was the point, that in spite of this premonition the company was determined. When that blood had been shed, the first act of the German drama came to an end. There was nothing else one could do. Now the legal power stood armed against the national liberation movement. And it was then the realization had to dawn that this path could no longer be taken in Germany. That was over. And now comes the second infinite accomplishment of those who died. For nine years I was forced to fight legally for power in Germany. Many were those who had tried that before me. But because they preached legality, they got only weaklings, only the cowardly, to join their movement.

The revolutionary men, the men of action, stood outside their ranks. Had I not attempted this revolution in November 1923, staged a coup, and had blood not been shed and so many killed in the process, I would not have been able to say for nine years, "From now on there will be legal fighting only." Or I, too, would have got only the half-men.

Only thus did I later have the energy to persist in adhering to my course, which was now obviously the only right one. As we know from the history of the Party, there were many who opposed me, who reproached me, saying, "How can it be done legally?" But I was able to tell them, "Gentlemen! What do you want, do you want to teach me how to fight? Where were you when we launched our attack? I don't need you to tell me anything about revolutions or legality. I've done all that myself. You couldn't summon up the courage. So hold your tongues now!"

In this way I was able to build up a movement made of men, a movement which took the only path it was possible to take. And we are infinitely grateful for that. For we are not alone in this world. Surrounding us are huge states looking upon every type of German uplifting with suspicion. We can only hold our own against them if we are strong not only in terms of *Weltanschauung* but also in terms of weapons. And there was no doubt about that. That was not to be accomplished by our destroying the existing arms institution, but by reconciling it absolutely and in its entirety as a unified whole with the National Socialist idea and the realization of this idea, and hence founding this new federation which allows Germany once more to become so strongly manifest for all the world to see.

I saw that the moment the echoes of those shots here died. If you go back and read my final speech in the major trial, you will most likely be able to say that I prophetically foresaw the only possible course of events; I voiced it, and I adhered to that course persistently for nine years. I was only able to adhere to it because this action had taken place before, and because men had died for this course before.

The fact that a new naval ensign was raised yesterday in the German Reich constitutes a tremendous event. Just imagine: we can follow the German Volk throughout history for nearly 2,000 years, and never was the Volk as united in the form of its inner convictions and its actions as it is today. For the first time since Germans have inhabited the world there is one Reich, ruled by one *Weltanschauung*, shielded by one army—and all this joined under one flag.

Truly the palls of these sixteen fallen soldiers have celebrated a resurrection unique in world history. They have become the freedom banners of their Volk. And the most wonderful thing is that this great unity in Germany, this victory of a movement, of an idea, followed by the obligation of the entire Volk, evolved from this sacrifice. And all of this we owe to these first men. For if I had found no one at that time to support this Reich with life and limb, it would also have been impossible at a later point. All of the ensuing blood sacrifices were inspired by the sacrifices of those first men.

That is the reason why we are bringing them forth from the depths of oblivion to stand for all time before the great public eye of the German Volk. In killing these sixteen, the opponents believed they had killed the National Socialist Movement. But they succeeded only in stirring the river of blood which has been flowing ever more strongly since. Today, this tie, this armband from back then, embraces the whole of the German Volk and reaches far beyond. For today Germans everywhere—and that is the miraculous thing—recognize no other symbol of fraternity than what you, my Party comrades

and Volksgenossen, wore even then on your arms. And it is truly a miracle to follow the evolution of our Movement. It will seem like a fairytale to posterity. A Volk is shattered; then a mere handful of unknown men stands up and embarks upon a crusade whose beginning is zealous and whose course continues to be zealous. Only a couple of years later, these few people and unknown nameless have given rise to numerous battalions, and a few more years later these battalions have already become regiments and divisions; Ortsgruppen become districts (*Kreise*) and Gaus. And again but a few years later, this Movement sends numerous deputies to the representative bodies. And it wages its battle untiringly on the street. Again and again there are new holes in its ranks, thousands are injured—but the river swells nonetheless and fights its way through to power. And then it raises its standard to fly over an entire state. A splendid crusade! It will go down as one of the most miraculous and remarkable phenomena in world history. And history will attempt to find analogues and parallels, but it will hardly find a parallel in which, beginning with such a birth, an entire Volk and a state could be totally conquered in so few years.

This miracle is something we have wrought. We are the fortunate ones who are not learning about it from books, but were chosen by Fate to live through it. We, my comrades in arms, can be proud that history has appointed us to accomplish such a mission. Many years ago I said to my followers, "Perhaps there are those among you who would ask, 'What's in it for me?' My Party comrade: the day will come when you will be particularly proud of this armband, you will inscribe upon it the year of your enlightenment and be pleased to be able to say: I've been with the cause all this time."

This is what joins us all and welds us together; coming generations will learn it one day. But we can say: we were there. That is our accomplishment! Other generations learn from heroic sagas and heroic crusades. We have lived this saga and marched in this crusade. Whether the name of a certain individual among us lives on in posterity is of no consequence. We are all bound together in a single, great phenomenon. It will live on.

It will nevermore die out in Germany, and from the sacrifices of the first fighters will come forth the renewed strength to make sacrifices. Thus our gratitude to those who made the first sacrifices is undying. Undying because the Movement is undying and because it must always remember to whom it owes all this. One should not ask, "How many are dead or wounded?" but rather, "How many marched back then?" Only then can one get a picture of the dimensions of that instance. And one must also ask, "How many did they march against?" For was ever in Germany such a battle taken up against such superior forces? It certainly required courage. And because they demonstrated courage back then, we shall never forget them.

Just as it was clear to me that, if Fate were once to give me power, I would take these comrades out of their cemeteries and honor them and show them to the nation; just as I constantly kept sight of this resolve, so have I now fulfilled it. They are now attaining German immortality. Back then they could not yet see today's Reich, but only sense its coming. Fate denied them the chance to personally witness this Reich. However, because they were no

longer allowed to personally witness and see this Reich, we will make certain that this Reich sees them. And that is the reason why I have neither laid them in a vault nor banned them to some tomb. No, just as we marched back then with our chest free so shall they now lie in wind and weather, in rain and snow, under God's open skies, as a reminder to the German nation. Yet for us they are not dead. These pantheons are not vaults but an eternal guardhouse. Here they stand guard for Germany and watch over our Volk. Here they lie as true witnesses of our Movement.

Back then we and our generation fulfilled our duty to these dead comrades. We did not forget them, but cherished them loyally in our hearts and, as soon as we could, we made certain that the entire Volk was once more made aware of their sacrifice, that the German nation would never forget this sacrifice.

To you yourselves, my old fellow fighters, I would now like to extend a welcome. Twelve years ago we were in this hall, and now we are here again. But Germany has changed. What I was able to predict would follow the uplifting twelve years ago has come to pass. Today the German Volk is united in its political leadership and in the structuring of its inner life as well as in carrying the sword. We have once more become a strong state, a powerful Volk, no longer helplessly at the mercy of others. Today the flag is firmly anchored, pennant and standard for the German resurrection, for the new Reich.

And once again, as so often before, I would like to thank you for finding your way to me back then, for joining an unknown man, falling into his ranks and taking up the march with him; for sending representatives to my rallies and thus clearing the way for the weapon of the spirit. Hence I ask you to think back on this time again and again. For it is a wonderful thing to be able to harbor such memories.

It is something granted to but few generations in thousands of years. You have been chosen by Fortune. You have joined the right flag. And you shall stand by this flag as the Old Guard of the National Socialist Revolution.

Long live our National Socialist Germany! Long live our Volk! And may today the dead of our Movement, Germany and its men, living and dead, live on! *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

Following the speech, Hitler proceeded to the Feldherrnhalle where the sixteen caskets had been brought on gun carriages. The solemn procession had led through the Siegestor (Victory Arch) and the Ludwigstrasse, past the burning pylons. It was doubtless an impressive ceremony, this laying out of the dead in the dark of night, witnessed by scores of honorary formations acting as guards of honor.

Hitler ascended the stairs to the Feldherrnhalle alone to spend a few minutes by the caskets draped with their swastika flags. Only after some time did other Old Fighters join him to pay their last respects to the dead while the strains of *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden* filled the air.

The march to the Feldherrnhalle the next day was also marked by extraordinary pomp and circumstance. Pylons bearing the names of all “blood witnesses” of the Movement lined the streets, and all those participating in the procession wore the *Blutorden* (Blood Order).²⁵⁸ A guard of honor formed by the Sixty-First Infantry Regiment had been stationed at the Odeonsplatz; officers of the Wehrmacht and the police who were bearers of the Blood Order had also taken up posts there.

Among the guests of honor were high-ranking officers, including the new commanding General of the Seventh Army Corps (Munich), Lieutenant General von Reichenau, formerly Hitler’s loyal head of the Wehrmacht Office in the Reich Ministry of War.²⁵⁹ When the procession reached the Feldherrnhalle, the artillery fired a salute of sixteen rounds from the courtyard. Hitler then laid a wreath at the base of the memorial. With the sixteen dead on horsedrawn gun carriages at its fore, the procession made its way to the Königsplatz, where the caskets were installed in the pantheons with impressive ceremony. Here they were to act as an “Eternal Guard” in their bronze sarcophagi between the two central party buildings.

One can assume that Hitler, too, wished to have his final resting place here—most likely in the middle of the Königsplatz, which had been renamed *Königlicher Platz* (Royal Square) since 1935 at his bidding.²⁶⁰ Perhaps he envisioned himself interred under a colossal monument bearing only the words “Adolf Hitler,” a shrine to which pilgrims would flock from every corner of the globe to pay homage to the greatest German of all time.

In the afternoon, the Italian Ambassador Attolico laid down two large wreaths in the two pantheons—a telling demonstration of Italy’s present predicament.²⁶¹ At 10:00 p.m. that evening, Hitler gave an address at the swearing-in ceremony of new SS recruits in front of the Feldherrnhalle and reminded them of their duty to be prepared to die for him at all times.²⁶² The SS Verfügungstruppe had been represented at the ceremonies of November 8 and 9 particularly by its SS Standarte *Deutschland*. From this point onwards, SS sentries stood guard at the pantheons day and night, year in and year out, until at the end of the Second World War they, too, were banished.²⁶³

Still on November 9, Hitler issued a decree granting “Honorary Support for the Disabled of the NSDAP” which read as follows:²⁶⁴

In the self-sacrificing struggle of our Movement, many National Socialists suffered most severe injuries. It is an honorable duty of the NSDAP to thank

them for their efforts in the service of the National Socialist idea. Thus I proclaim this 9th of November 1935:

1. For the Party's disabled who, while voluntarily fulfilling their duty in the struggle for the Third Reich, suffered lasting, severe, physical injury which permanently impaired their earning capacity, the sum of half a million Reichsmark will be set aside annually from Party funds as honorary support.

2. The distribution of this amount shall be determined according to the degree of physical disability and the social and economic circumstances of the applicants.

3. The implementations will be issued by the Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP.

Munich, November 9, 1935

Adolf Hitler

On November 11, Hitler attended a funeral ceremony for Frau Förster-Nietzsche, Friedrich Nietzsche's sister, who had died at the age of ninety. Frau Winifred Wagner was also present.²⁶⁵

On November 15, Hitler sat in on a session of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the Philharmonic Concert Hall in Berlin. He also attended a performance of *Die Meistersinger* marking the opening of the newly renovated German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg.²⁶⁶

Hitler received the French Ambassador François-Poncet in the Chancellery on November 21 for extensive talks.²⁶⁷ The French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, had arranged the meeting with the aim of improving Franco-German relations, if possible, but above all in order to pacify Hitler in respect to the Franco-Russian pact of May 2 and to stress its defensive character. Apparently Paris had not forgotten Hitler's remarks of May 21 and his dark threats regarding the possibility of repercussions to the Locarno Pact. However, Hitler's plans to occupy the Rhineland stood firm. Any steps Western diplomats took at this point served only to strengthen his conviction that France—and the Western Powers as a whole—had grown feeble as a consequence of their democratic and parliamentary system of government and would put up no resistance to his military schemes.

To both Great Britain and the United States, Hitler presented himself as a bulwark against the bogey of Bolshevism. He believed himself capable of bluffing these countries just as he had the German Nationalists: because of their fear of Communism, the Anglo-Saxons would not interfere, but instead allow him free rein in the East. The interview the German dictator granted in late November to the American journalist and President of the United Press, Baillie, bore witness to this tactic.²⁶⁸ There Hitler stated:

“Germany is the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism and will fight propaganda with propaganda, terror with terror, and violence with violence to combat it.”

In response to a question as to the reasons behind the Jewish legislation in Nuremberg, he replied:

“The necessity for combating Bolshevism is one of the main reasons for Jewish legislation in Germany. This legislation is not anti-Jewish, but rather pro-German. It is designed to protect the rights of Germans against destructive Jewish influences.”

Hitler then pointed out that nearly all the Bolshevist agitators in Germany had been Jews and further that Germany was separated from Soviet Russia by only a few miles, which meant that effective defense measures were called for at all times to protect Germany from the machinations of the mostly Jewish agents of Bolshevism.

In the further course of the discussion, Hitler noted that the tens of thousands of officers who had been dismissed after the War had evolved into an intellectual proletariat of sorts, and that many of them, although they were academically educated, had had to take work as street sweepers, drivers and in similar occupations in order to eke out an existence. On the other hand, the Jews—who made up less than one percent of the population—had attempted to seize for themselves the cultural leadership and swarmed into the intellectual professions such as jurisprudence, medicine, etc. The influence of this intellectual *Judentum* in Germany had left its subversive mark at every turn.

“For this reason it was necessary to take steps to put a halt to this subversion and bring about a distinct and pure division between the two races.”

The basic principle governing the handling of this question in Germany was that Germans were to be given that to which Germans were entitled and Jews that to which they were entitled. He stressed that this also served to protect the Jews, citing as evidence the fact that since the restrictions had been established, anti-Jewish feeling in the country had lessened.

In reply to Mr. Baillie’s question whether further legislative measures were to be expected on this point, Hitler answered that it was the main endeavor of the Reich Government to prevent by means of legislative measures that the Volk take the matter into its own hands—for that could give way to dangerous explosions—and by means of such measures, to maintain peace and order in Germany as hitherto. On the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin there were just as many Jewish shops as in New York and other major cities, and, as a close look would show, these shops were operating without any disruption whatsoever. He believed that new tensions had likely been averted by means of the Nuremberg Laws.

However, should new tensions arise, among other things further legislative measures would become necessary.

Turning to the question of Bolshevism, he declared that Germany was the bulwark which protected the West from Bolshevist expansion spreading from Soviet Russia.

In the United States, a country geographically far distant from Soviet Russia, this would probably not meet with understanding on every front! However, the context would be readily understandable for anyone who viewed the situation from Germany's perspective, i.e. from that of a country which was only very few hours' distance from Russia by airplane or fast train. "Germany will continue to fight Communism with the weapons which Communism itself uses."

Asked to comment on the buildup of the German Army, Hitler stated: "The purpose of restoring the German Wehrmacht is to protect Germany from attacks by alien powers. Germany is a major power of the first rank and has a right to have a first-class army."

In response to a question as to the size of today's German Wehrmacht compared to military strength in 1914, Hitler stated that an army of millions such as the one Germany had raised in 1914 could only come to be under pressure of the demands of a new war—a new war from which God, as he confidently hoped, would preserve Germany and the coming generations. Furthermore, he drew attention to his earlier proposals for stabilizing the size of European armies at 200,000 to 300,000 men. These proposals had been categorically rejected at the time.

When discussing German military strength, one was also to take into consideration Germany's geographical position. If a strip of land 100 kilometers wide were occupied by an enemy in America, this would be but a minor bruise which America could easily bear. By way of contrast, in the event of invasions which would perhaps be but minor for the United States, Germany would be crippled.

Finally, Mr. Baillie asked the Führer and Reich Chancellor whether Germany was endeavoring to recapture colonies. Hitler answered that Germany would never relinquish its colonial claims.

On November 29, Hitler gave a speech at the inauguration of the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin²⁶⁹ in which he looked back on his three years in office. In a pessimistic mood, he attacked "know-it-alls" and vowed:

The Volk that called me will never abandon me. [—] He who has once inspired a Volk with an idea cannot believe that the Volk will change from one day to the next.

While the German Volk had in fact not changed, it did sense Hitler's change in tune since the *Machtergreifung*. He who had once credibly stated that his one and only aim was to promote the well-being of the German Volk now made it increasingly evident that he had only his own ambitious schemes in mind and viewed the well-being of the public as secondary.

The year finished relatively quiet. On December 6, Hitler sent a telegram congratulating von Mackensen on his eighty-sixth birthday.²⁷⁰

On December 8, Hitler gave a speech marking the hundredth anniversary of the German Reichsbahn (railroad system) in Nuremberg in which he declared:²⁷¹

This enterprise, guided and organized according to high ethical and moral concepts, is at the same time the most modern transportation enterprise in existence today.

Later that day he addressed the Ortsgruppe of the NSDAP in Landshut at the celebration of its fifteenth anniversary,²⁷² taking critics and carpers to the task with relish and stating, "He who has the courage to conquer the state with seven men also has the courage and the power and the confidence to maintain that state."

On December 13, Hitler received British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps in the Reich Chancellery and deliberated with him the possibilities of arms limitation and the Anglo-French proposal for an air pact.²⁷³ On December 17, Hitler toured the barracks of the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in Berlin-Lichterfelde and spent several hours there. In the afternoon, he made a speech to "his loyal soldiers of the Movement."

The *Völkischer Beobachter* reported as follows:²⁷⁴

There was nothing more splendid than an elite such as that which the *Leibstandarte* represented. The Führer underlined in particular the SS men's task of recruiting for the Party. To great applause, he stressed that "no one would bend or sway us; he would have to break us, and then he would see whether he himself might not be broken first."

At the close of his speech, Hitler emphasized that nothing was more splendid than knowing that the wonderful regiment of the *Leibstandarte* bore his name.

On December 24, Hitler delivered his customary speech at the Christmas festivities of the Old Fighters at the Wagner Hotel in Munich.²⁷⁵ At the end of the year, the following "Notice to the Wehrmacht" was published:²⁷⁶

Berlin, December 31, 1935

Soldiers!

A decisive year in the history of the German military lies behind us. The Reich is once again free and strong.

To all soldiers and all those who have otherwise helped to build up the Wehrmacht I may extend my thanks and my recognition for the achievements of the past year. The motto for 1936 is: Forward march again and again for the peace, the honor and the power of the nation.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

The year 1935 had brought Hitler a series of domestic triumphs which were extremely important both for his own self-confidence and for his future plans.

January 3: unconditional subordination of German leadership (Party and Wehrmacht) to Hitler's will;

March 16: introduction of general conscription;

May 21: passage of the new Military Service Act and the elimination of the term "Reichswehr;"

September 15: presentation of the new armed SS Verfügungstruppe and its regiments at the Reich Party Congress; Hitler's swastika banner becomes the national flag by virtue of a law passed by the Reichstag;

September 16: the German generals march by Adolf Hitler in salute;

October 18: dissolution of the *Deutsche Burschenschaft* and, in rapid succession, of all other student fraternities;

November 5: the sovereign symbol of the NSDAP is declared the national emblem of the German Reich; decree establishing a new Reich naval ensign (swastika flag);

November 7: swearing-in of the recruits of the Wehrmacht to the new Reich naval ensign; dissolution of the Stahlhelm.

In spite of these major accomplishments, Hitler's mood in the last three months of 1935 was marked by constant annoyance at his critics in intellectual circles.

Moreover, an instinctive mistrust spread among segments of the population which had hitherto gladly followed their leader. Even if they were not completely conscious of the reasons, the faithful devotion and trust of the early years were gone. The Austrians and the Sudeten Germans—who did not join the Third Reich until 1938 and thus had not witnessed the developments since 1933—were still capable of demonstrating their unbounded exuberance. The Reich Germans, on the other hand, had already been robbed of many of their illusions by this time, and hence there was a marked difference in the enthusiasm with which Hitler was greeted on the respective sides of the old Reich borders.

THE YEAR 1936

Major Events in Summary

In 1936 Hitler intended to surpass the victories of the previous year with new triumphs of a military nature. He set himself the goal of extending the military sovereignty of the Reich to the Rhineland. In addition, he planned to prolong the one-year compulsory military service to two years. He had earlier chosen the shorter term of service only to make its introduction politically and psychologically more acceptable.

Hitler attained these goals on March 7 and August 26. He took full advantage of the staging of the 1936 Winter Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the Summer Games in Berlin. Through the games, he was able to divert the attention of the German public and the international community at large away from military and political activities.

Further, by means of the German participation in the Spanish Civil War, Hitler gained a magnificent training ground for German troops and armor. For the subsequent three years in Spain, the new German combat planes, tanks, etc., would be put to the test. For them, it was a valuable hands-on “live” training experience.

In Austria as well, Hitler could claim a significant interim victory for himself. Italy’s backing of the Austrian Government had waned as a result of the substantial moral and economic support Hitler had accorded Mussolini’s aggression in Abyssinia. The Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg was forced to reach an understanding with Hitler. On July 11, von Schuschnigg found himself cornered into accepting an ill-disguised National Socialist as a member of his cabinet, namely, the Director of the Austrian War Archives, Edmund Glaise-Horstenau.¹

Agreements with Italy (Rome-Berlin Axis) and Japan (Anti-Comintern Pact) in November, strengthened Germany’s position; they were not in main aimed—as pretended—against Bolshevism, but to impress the Western Powers.

Report and Commentary

1

At 2:00 p.m. on January 1, Goebbels read Hitler's New Year's address to the German people in a radio broadcast. It began with the following words:²

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

The new Reich is ringing in the New Year for the third time. At the beginning of the twelve months past, the imminent collapse of the National Socialist regime was prophesied—for the third time.

And for the third time, under this regime Germany has become stronger and healthier in every area of its national life.

After reflecting on the significance of events from 1933 through 1935, Hitler defined the new German state as “a bulwark of national European discipline and culture against the Bolshevist enemy to mankind.” He appealed to the party members:

I am conscious that, no matter what might happen to Germany, the Party will remain a stable and indestructible foundation for the German will to live, just as it has been in the past fifteen years. A zealously devoted community of German men, German women, and German youth will stand behind me: as it did in the past in both good times and bad, so it will in the future!

Hitler proceeded to express his gratitude to all party formations which, through their “unflinching support and loyalty,” had rendered it feasible for him to make “the most difficult political decisions.” He then thanked millions of German peasants and praised Germany's women “who, through their newborn young, enable our Volk by their bravery to benefit from our fight at a future date.” Hitler closed with the words:

January 1, 1936

May the year 1936 see us filled with a new and sacred enthusiasm to work and stand up for our Volk.

May it see us all united in the consciousness of the common task assigned to us. But today we wish to thank the Almighty who has given our work His blessings in the past. And we wish to join together in our humble request to Him that He not desert us in the future.

Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our united German Volk and Reich!

Berlin, January 1, 1936

Adolf Hitler

On January 4, Hitler went to see an ice-skating show, featuring Sonja Henie, in the Prinzregenten Stadium in Munich.³ Two days later, he was the first to drive down the newly completed Autobahn segment connecting Munich and Rosenheim.⁴ In Munich on the next day, von Papen presented Hitler with the latest acquisition of the Bavarian State Library, a 14th century handwritten scroll from the Austrian convent Kremstünster. A tour of the State Library followed the official presentation of the gift.⁵

Hitler spent the first days of 1936 much to his own liking. Indeed, arguing that the reception of the Diplomatic Corps had ruined his 1935 New Year's celebration, Hitler for the first time postponed it (to January 10). On the tenth, at approximately 11:00 a.m., Hitler received the well-wishes of the Wehrmacht, presented to him by Blomberg, Fritsch, Raeder, and Göring in the Chancellery. Fifteen minutes later the traditional reception of the *Halloren* (saltworks at Halle) took place.⁶ By noon, Hitler was at the "House of the Reich President," where the Apostolic Nuncio Orsenigo, on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps, extended his best wishes for the new year to Hitler in a short address. He placed particular emphasis on peace. Attired in a formal tailcoat, Hitler responded to the cleric's words:⁷

Your Excellency!

May I express my most sincere gratitude to Your Excellency for the New Year's wishes you have extended to me, my staff, and the entire German Volk on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps and on behalf of the Heads of State represented here.

I am particularly grateful for the heartfelt words you found for the professional ranks of Germany's working population; they will meet with a lively echo everywhere. We are able to note with satisfaction that the year 1935 brought with it important steps forward for our Volk. We have succeeded in assigning new work to yet another enormous number of unemployed Volksgenossen and thus provided better food, shelter and family care for ever-increasing circles of comrades with a will to work. In the past year, the German economy has continued to stabilize.

January 10, 1936

The understandable desire of our Volk—a desire common to all peoples—to establish an external safeguard for the fruits of its labors against the vicissitudes of an age of political turmoil has finally become a reality in this past year. Hence we look back on the year 1935 with gratitude to Providence which has blessed our labors and enter the new year with the firm resolve to successfully continue the work we have begun.

Filled with a yearning to live in peace with the other peoples on earth and to cooperate with them in every area of life in common understanding for the well-being and progress of mankind, the German Volk earnestly wishes to meet with the same aspirations toward trusting cooperation and mutual consideration in all the other peoples. The Reich Government, myself and the entire German Volk thus join you, Your Excellency, in the hope that the new year may bring both an eagerly awaited détente and tranquility and genuine peace to the peoples.

With this hope, may I extend to you, Your Excellency, and to each of you gentlemen—and at the same time to your Heads of State, Governments and peoples—in my name and in the name of the German Volk, the warmest wishes for the New Year.

On January 12, Hitler sent Göring a congratulatory telegram:⁸

My dear Göring,

Please accept my heartfelt best wishes for the birthday you are celebrating today.

With the kind regards of old friendship,

Your Adolf Hitler

On the first anniversary of the Saar plebiscite on January 13, Hitler and Gauleiter Bürckel exchanged telegrams.⁹

Two days later, this time in the Detmold air plane hangars, Hitler commemorated the NSDAP's 1933 victory in the Lippe-Detmold election.¹⁰ This anniversary was far more significant for Hitler than the 1935 Saar plebiscite. The events of 1933 had proven Hitler's assessment of domestic policy to be correct and therefore, he reasoned, his prophecies would also stand the test of time. On January 15, Hitler declared:

If future historiographers aim to record the entire contents of these three years [1933-35], they will require more pages than they would in other times for perhaps ten, perhaps twenty, fifty, or even a hundred years.

After the usual "party narrative" in his speech at Detmold, Hitler's words betrayed his true intentions. Back then already, he remarked that in the end all would depend on which side would have the "last battalion" to throw at the enemy.

Decisive in a battle are not the total losses; rather, he alone who remains with the last battalion has won the great battle. [—] You all know that the

future is not a bed of roses, but that everything we need and must have must be fought for and a price paid.

The final triumph will always be accorded to that person who remains steadfast and never loses his nerve.

In order to conquer “everything we need and must have,” Hitler added that it would be necessary to submit to certain exigencies: “It must always be one will that decides.”

Naturally, the will he referred to here was his very own. However, as mentioned earlier, Hitler was constantly plagued by the fear that someone could dispute his claim to sole proprietorship of the supreme will.

Hitler’s effort to ascertain his role of prominence in Germany by means of his Detmold speech is particularly evident in the following excerpt of the speech, as witnessed by the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*:¹²

Time has shown that we were right. We held our own in the fight, and we have learned a lesson for the future. It may be that difficulties will arise at some point in the future, too. But wait until you get to know me better. I see here my Volk, and I see history and understand its lessons. I raised the entire Movement according to my ideals.

Our opponents do not understand that, but I can’t help them. National Socialism governs according to its ideals, and the others will have to fall in line. By no means do we intend to surrender our ideals and adopt new ones. And there is something else we can learn for the future from the election campaign back then: at that time, the Movement was guided by one will which swept everything along with it.

Where would we have ended up in Germany had there not been one Movement, but instead thirty-six or forty-five? If a leadership really wants to be a leadership, it must have the courage to elevate its opinion to the opinion of the nation; otherwise it should resign. There is only one central power, and it assigns authority and sovereignty. But it can also revoke these immediately from any person and any thing. We think back on that campaign battle in Lippe with a deep inner stirring and emotion. We defeated our opponents on their own democratic ground. I am of the conviction that our opponents of that time would not be able to defeat us on our own ground. Yet that is what they would have to do now, and thus I look forward to the future with boundless confidence.

It is completely futile for anyone in Germany to attempt to change this regime. Whoever would attempt it nonetheless can rest assured that he will be dashed to pieces like glass.

The Movement does not stand on one person alone; today there is a regime whose succession is assured without being linked to any particular individual. I admit that the National Socialist ideal, in its ultimate consummation, stands over mankind like the North Star. And man will always need a star to

gain his bearings. Were man to grasp that star, he would no longer be able to see it. We are on the right path, and we have the right goal. We will improve upon the German Volk for centuries.

On January 19, Hitler sent the following telegram to the gravely ill King George V:¹³

I have just received word of the grave illness of Your Majesty and would not like to fail to convey herewith my most sincere and heartfelt wishes for Your Majesty's recuperation and complete recovery.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

After George V's demise, Hitler extended his sympathies to the Heir to the Throne, Edward VIII, and to the Queen Dowager, in a telegram dated January 21.¹⁴ Another telegram left Hitler's office a day later, addressed to General von Litzmann congratulating him on his eighty-sixth birthday.¹⁵

The interview Hitler had granted to Madame Titayna, the correspondent of the French newspaper *Paris Soir*, was published on January 26.¹⁶ In view of his plans to reoccupy the Rhineland, Hitler was very anxious to get good publicity in France during the months of January and February 1936. His intent is mirrored in the January conversation with Madame Titayna, as well as in the interview accorded to Bertrand de Jouvenel on February 21.¹⁷

Madame Titayna's description of her meeting with Hitler began with the following observation:

No matter which political ideals we espouse, it will always be the personality of the man who, like Adolf Hitler in this case, enters into the history of his people and therefore of the world, that captivates us most. No one can escape this enchantment. As soon as I was informed that the German Chancellor was willing to receive me and that he would grant an interview to the readers of *Paris Soir*, my elation, resulting from my professional interest in the matter, was superseded by the thrilling sensation that now finally I would know who 'he' is and how 'he' speaks. Maybe then I would come to understand the power he exercises over the crowds rallying to him.

The palace in the Wilhelmstrassc, in which the Führer lives and works, is characterized by an austerity of architectural and interior design reflecting the straight-forward nature of the new Germany: a wide and well-lit staircase leads to a gallery, through unassuming rooms to the office of the Führer.

I did not have to wait long. Five minutes to eleven I arrived; the interview was set for eleven o'clock. State Secretary Funk¹⁸ led me out of the anteroom, which was equipped with numerous modern and comfortable easy chairs. The minute I had sat down in one of them, I was reminded of the reception I had received a few months earlier from Mussolini. At the time I had been

made to wait for the Duce in a room filled with uncomfortable, wooden Gothic chairs. Once I had entered the Italian dictator's office, I saw him standing about thirty meters away from me, where he had posed himself between window and desk, seeming all the more remote since we were separated by a parquet appearing to be endless.

Today my experience at the Führer's is quite to the contrary, everything is marked by modesty and great simplicity. The Führer comes up to me with his hand extended in greeting. I am surprised and astonished by the vivid blue of his eyes, which on photographs had always appeared to be brown. I remark that indeed he does look very different from any pictures I have seen of him. I much prefer the real life Hitler, that face that radiates intelligence and energy, and emits a special glow when he speaks. At this very moment, I understand his magical appeal to the masses and the power he wields over them.

When I was called to Berlin by wire, I had prepared a good dozen of questions at night on the train, which no matter under what circumstances, I intended to pose. In any case, only the answers to these questions could be indiscreet. Within the first few words he utters, I can tell that the Führer has no intention of hiding out behind diplomatic phrases, but rather that he wishes to speak openly and honestly to the French people.

In the room, I hear my voice sound uncertain while speaking German. I try to explain my own, and thereby the fears of all of us:

"The French are afraid of and despise war more than anything else, and because constantly preoccupied with this fear; we are prone to see war lurking just around the corner. I would like to hear from you that Germany's foreign policy is solidly based on pacifist principles."

The man sitting across from me reflects for just a moment and then responds:

"The word 'pacifism' has two meanings, and does not have the same meaning for France as for us. We cannot accept a pacifism that means forfeiting one's vital rights. For us, pacifism can only become a reality if it is built on the basic human premise that each and every people has a right to live. I said 'to live,' and not 'to vegetate.'¹⁹ Whoever truly wants peace must first acknowledge this right of the nations. In other words, there is not a single German who wants war.²⁰ The last one cost us two million dead and seven-and-a-half million wounded. Even if we had been victorious, no victory would have been worth paying that price."

To my question, whether it would be possible to revise the Treaty of Versailles without endangering the interests of other nations, Hitler replies: "The Treaty of Versailles had two consequences. It confirms the fact of a territorial conquest, and it establishes a moral conquest. Every territorial solution has its weak points. In all territorial questions, the voice of the Volk and its economic needs should alone decide.²¹ But seen from the moral point of view, it is outrageous and inadmissible to humiliate and discriminate against a Volk. In the case of the Treaty of Versailles, the human conscience should give justice priority over interests and parties.

"Each Volk has the right to live on its own soil with its own faith, history, customs, and economic potential. To favor some to the detriment of the others

is absurd, for this destroys the balance of human society. In European politics, too, peace can issue only from a balance, in other words from justice. We have sixty-eight million inhabitants in Germany, sixty-eight million creatures who want food, clothing, shelter, and a place to live. No treaty in the world can change that. The statesman too must give his Volk what it needs.”

“Certainly. *We are touching upon a very serious question. The population policy being advocated in Germany by necessity creates a desire to expand the Empire in order to accommodate the additional countrymen—that means war. You complain of not having enough bread to go around, and then you want more mouths to feed*”

“There are talented and untalented peoples in the world. The European countries belong to the former category. One must become conscious of the fact that, in this sense, they comprise a community of peoples, though they are sometimes a quarrelsome family.”

I am silent for a moment, since I myself share his opinion. Through my travels I too have become aware of an inequality among the races, and of the significance of the term European.

“Does this mean that because of the more numerous population, Germany will need to subdue colonies?”

“Wouldn’t you agree?” Hitler replied.

To the question of how he intends to turn this ambition into a reality, Hitler states:

“If the conscience of the other peoples were receptive to the idea of a balance and of justice, then it would be easy to arrange the material details. What concerns me most at the moment is the world’s awakening to the insight that the good will of the peoples must combine in a cooperative effort, without ulterior motives, to make possible a better life for each separate people.”

“*I will be traveling to China within a few days, because the Far East . . .*”

“How lucky you are,” Hitler interrupted me. “Unfortunately, I myself am unable to travel. You will see Japan where, under completely different working conditions, those goods are manufactured which are flooding the world market. One day, that will apply to Russia, too. If necessary, Moscow’s rulers will allow a part of the population to die to safeguard the export trade. Communism can survive in Russia because it has established itself at the fore of a population devoid of needs in an enormous, undeveloped territory. But if Communism had come to Germany, there would have been a catastrophe of unforeseeable proportions, because in Germany only 25 percent of the population live in the country and 75 percent inhabit the cities, whereas in Russia 92 percent live in the country and 8 percent in the cities. And because a much more complicated apparatus would have fallen prey to the destruction.”

“*What is your opinion with regard to the Anschluss?*”²²

“That is a question no one here is excited about. In Vienna, they need this bogey for reasons of domestic politics. In Berlin, the Anschluss question is not acute.”

The hands on my watch keep moving relentlessly forward; I fear I am running out of time and that I will not be able to pose all the questions I had intended to, nor hear the responses to them. Quickly I ask:

“What about the role of the women? Do you honestly believe they are only there to bear the children of men?”

This time the Führer laughs: “Who told you that?”

“The press!”

“I accord women the same right as men, but I do not believe they are alike. Woman is man’s life companion. She should not be burdened with work for which men are made. I am not envisioning women’s battalions; I believe they are better fit for work in the social sector. But in any event, a woman who does not marry—and we have many in Germany, because we do not have enough men—has the right to earn her living just as a man does. Incidentally, I might remind you that it was a woman who made the great Party Congress film, and a woman will shoot the Olympic film.²³

“Just one word on the Olympic Games. We are quite happy, we are looking forward to welcoming the French here—hopefully a great many of them. We will do everything to show them they are welcome here and that they are encountering a supremely hospitable German Volk. I sincerely hope that your travelers will come not only for the sporting events, but will also visit our country, the whole country. They will not find prearranged propaganda trips which would steer them away from the truth. We will not tell them that Germany is a paradise, for there is no such thing in this world. And they can roam about freely here and see for themselves that Germany lives in peace and order and in work. They will see our upswing, our efforts, our will for peace. That is all I want.”

The Führer rises. I have been able to ascertain that he is in the best of health and that rumors of an illness are unfounded. I retreat, happy to be in a position to communicate his ideas to the French people. The entire conversation took no longer than fifty minutes.

Hitler had proven himself to be a charming conversationalist in this interview and had demonstrated an agility in avoiding compromising issues. The naivety and openness he displayed obviously did not fail to impress his French guest.

However, Hitler’s rhetoric failed him miserably when he had to face representatives of the Great Powers, be they British, American, or Russian. Yet to a certain extent, his oratory impressed people coming from small countries or neighboring states, who shared an affinity with German culture. This was, above all, the case with regard to representatives from the Balkans, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Italy. Sometimes, his rhetorical versatility even left its mark on some people from the Netherlands, and he also managed to impress Frenchmen sympathetic to the German cause with his eloquence such as Laval,²⁴ de Brinon²⁵ and others. At times the French Ambassador to National Socialist Germany, André François Poncet, could not help coming under the influence of Hitler’s powerful oratory as well.²⁶

On January 25, Hitler spoke at the ten-year-anniversary celebration of the NS Students' League at the Zirkus Krone in Munich. There he gave a speech, to cite the terminology employed in the official press statement, on the "philosophical principles of the state and the basic laws for the life of the nation."²⁷

After the obligatory "party narrative," Hitler switched to a more learned style of discourse to impress his academic audience. Thus emphasizing his competence in the matter, he further discussed the evolution of the system of modern states and contrasted the "bourgeois economic world view with the National Socialist heroic Weltanschauung," which he advocated.

He then continued to argue that parliamentary democracies were actually communist in nature, since they were based on the assumption that all men are essentially equal. In economic matters, to the contrary, their theoretical structure rested upon a stringent individualism.

In the midst of his philosophical rampage, Hitler was overcome once again by his disdain for the constant carping criticism of the "stubborn German Volk." Even the "great emperors of our past" had been compelled to employ force in order to overcome this destructive trait of the Germanic tribes. Hitler declared:

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

Singling out those narrow-minded Philistines who actually believed that "our German uniqueness" was lost to Nationalist Socialist centralism, Hitler retorted:

I know what you are losing, but I also know what I am giving you in exchange. You are losing the past, but you are winning the German future. To be German means to be clear;²⁸ to be clear means to think and act logically; to act logically means to act with a purpose; and I am acting with a purpose when I give the Volk a Constitution which will make it strong.²⁹ The German Volk will survive longer than the Bavarian or Prussian Parliaments have survived.

Hitler concluded his "lecture" with an appeal to the students to become "supporters of the will and authority of those leading our state." This appeal returned Hitler to his original and favorite topic, himself.

On January 28, Hitler attended the funeral service for the deceased George V in the English St. George's chapel in Berlin. The British

Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps accompanied Hitler to his seat.³⁰ The following day, Hitler received the newly appointed Chilean ambassador at the Chancellery³¹

For the next day, Hitler had decided that holding a Reichstag session would be inappropriate and disturbing to the commemoration of as important a date as January 30. While it had been the reintroduction of general conscription the previous year, that had made the discussion of general political questions before such a forum as the Reichstag inconvenient, this year it certainly was not opportune to have such a body convene immediately prior to the military reoccupation of the Rhineland.

Nonetheless, Hitler felt himself called upon to rally his followers once again by assuming the countenance of a long-awaited Messiah and by speaking to his comrades in arms as Jesus had once spoken to his disciples. To this end, Hitler had 30,000 SA men³² brought to Berlin from all over the Reich, comprised of the two eldest Kämpfer of each SA unit.

At noon on January 30, these large crowd of SA men marched up in the Berlin Lustgarten, with Goebbels leading them, shouting their battle cry: "*Führer befehl! Wir folgen!*" Hitler began his speech with the following words:³³

Men of the SA! National Socialists! Party Comrades!

When we take a retrospective look today, it does not end in the year 1933, but must go back further. What was a moment of surprise back then for many who did not know our Movement, was for us and for you, my Old Fighters, but the hour of fulfillment.

There were many, particularly outside Germany, who may have been amazed on January 30 and in the following weeks and months at the miracle which had taken place before their very eyes. Yet you, my comrades, and I had together awaited this hour for a decade, had believed in it and placed our hopes in it. For us, it was not a surprise but rather the culmination of fourteen years of hard fighting. We set forth not blind, but seeing and believing. And thus when I look back on that day I am gripped with a deep gratitude, gratitude to those who enabled me to experience this day three years ago. Today they are gathered here from throughout the German Reich as the pioneers and banner bearers of our Movement, the two eldest from each storm troop. They all experienced first-hand the evolution of our Movement, the evolution of its struggle, its fight and its conquests. And I myself stood over this fight for fourteen years. I conducted the fight for fourteen years; I also founded this SA and, in its ranks and at its fore, led the Movement onward for fourteen years. I have come to know you. And I know: everything you are, you are through me, and everything I am, I am through you alone.³⁴

January 30, 1936

Hitler announced that on January 30, 1933, he already had the backing of the vast majority of the Volk. Only the narrow-minded, intellectual, constant doubters, who would never comprehend the Movement, had still opposed him at the time. According to Hitler, those who still argued against the National Socialist doctrine in 1936, however, were no less than self-proclaimed enemies of the German Volk.

The best core of the German nation already stood in our ranks that day. The best of our Volk had already chosen us that day. Only the petty doubters and the unreasonable were still standing to the side. But now these ranks have been markedly diminished. For what stands against us today is not standing against us because we are National Socialists, but because we have made Germany free and strong once again. Those are the enemies of our Volk in our own land whom we know from the time of the Great War, from the time of the regrettable revolt in 1918, and whom we know from the time of our worst decay. They are the only ones who not only do not want to find their way to us, but who will also never be able to find the way—and whom we ourselves can do without.

Then Hitler proclaimed that all those who counted on a collapse of the Movement after his death would be sorely disappointed.

The Movement has given to the German Volk an element of oneness and unity which will long have an effect, far into the most distant future. Those who believe that this Movement is still bound today to a single person are mistaken. I was its herald. And today from this one herald have come millions. If one of us draws his last breath today, he knows that after him come ten others! This Movement will fade no more. It will lead Germany on, and even if our enemies refuse to accept the fact, Germany will never again lapse into a state of that most sorry disgrace we were forced to endure.

And you, my oldest Party fighters, men of the SA and SS and political soldiers, are the guarantors of this being as it is. You are the guarantors that this spirit shall never die out. As you stand here, members of the entire German Volk, of all professions, all ranks, and all classes, from every confession, joined to form a whole, blind to all but this Germany and your service to it, there will grow forth from among you a young generation, inspired by the same spirit, seeing in you their model and following you.

Germany will not live through the times of November 1918 again. Let every man relinquish the hope that the wheels of world history could ever be turned back.

As usual, Hitler laced his speech with a few solemn declarations on the preservation of peace and declared:

At the same time, just as we have always preached peace to our Volk at home, we want to be a peace-loving element among the other peoples. We

cannot repeat that often enough. We seek peace because we love peace! But we stand up for honor because we have no desire to live without it.

Hitler then recounted the successes of the previous three years, and maintained that the Germans had in the meantime become free and self-assured “world citizens.”

Today we can proudly stand up before the world as Germans. For particularly in this last year of our regime, the German Volk has been given back its honor before the world. We are no longer defenseless Helots but have become free and self-assured ‘world citizens.’

It is with pride that we can allow these three years to pass before our mind’s eye. They constitute an obligation for the future as well. The coming years will not require less work. There are individuals who believe themselves capable of striking a blow at National Socialism in that they claim, ‘Yes, but all of that requires sacrifices.’ Yes, my worthy petits bourgeois, our fight has required constant sacrifice. But you did not go through that. Perhaps you imagine Germany has become what it is today because you did not make any sacrifices. No! It is because we were able to make sacrifices and wanted to do so that this Germany came to be! So if someone tells us, ‘That means the future will require sacrifices, too,’ we say ‘Quite right!’

National Socialism is not a doctrine of lethargy, but a doctrine of fighting. Not a doctrine of good fortune, of coincidence, but a doctrine of work, a doctrine of struggle, and thus also a doctrine of sacrifices. That is how we did things before the fight, and in these past three years this has not changed, and it will remain so in the future!

At this point, Hitler announced, not only to the “worthy petits bourgeois” but to the entire German people, that the sacrifices he demanded would not be made in vain.

Only one thing matters: for millenniums our Volk has had to make sacrifices for its chosen path in life and its life-struggle. It has been given nothing, but only too often the sacrifices have been for naught. Today the Movement can give the German Volk this guarantee: whatever sacrifices you, German Volk, make, will no longer be in vain; rather, these sacrifices will always win you a new life.

Hitler ended his speech with the following “battle cry”:

And I would like to ask you to join me once again in uttering the battle cry for what means most to us in this world, for which we once fought and struggled and triumphed, which we did not forget in the time of defeat, which we loved in the time of need, which we adored in the time of disgrace, and which is sacred and dear to us now in the time of victories.

Our German Reich, our German Volk, and our one and only National Socialist Movement:

Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

On February 4, Hitler mailed the telegram below to the widow of the Landesgruppenleiter of the German National Socialists in Switzerland, Wilhelm Gustloff, who had been assassinated by a Jew:³⁵

On behalf of the entire German Volk, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences for the loss you have been made to suffer. The cruel crime which put an end to the flourishing life of a truly German man has deeply moved and appalled the entire nation.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler received the former British Minister of Aviation, Lord Londonderry, at the Chancellery.³⁶ There he made an all-out effort to convince the Englishman that the English were related to the Germans by blood, indeed that they were part of the German Volk.

How often did I say to myself during the World War as a simple soldier, lying across from the English troops, that it was absolute madness to combat these people—who could be members of our own Volk—with arms. Such a thing must never be repeated!

Still on February 4, Hitler established a German “Olympic Honor Badge.”³⁷ A day later, the Swedish King Gustav V came to the Chancellery to pay his respects to Hitler, while journeying to the South.³⁸

Hitler attended the opening ceremonies of the Olympics in the new Skiing Stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen on February 6. According to the usual practices at the Olympic Games, these were conducted under the auspices of the head of state of the host nation, meaning Hitler in this case. After the participating nations had ceremoniously marched into the Stadium at 11:00 a.m., Hitler spoke the following words “with resounding clarity,” as the German News Bureau phrased it:³⁹

I hereby declare the Fourth Winter Olympics of 1936 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen open to the public!

Later he himself congratulated every victorious German athlete by sending a telegram.

On February 12, the funeral of the assassinated Swiss Landesgruppenleiter Wilhelm Gustloff took place in Schwerin. It is interesting to note how differently Hitler reacted to the Gustloff case in comparison to his behaviour in 1938, when the German Legation Counsellor Ernst vom Rath was murdered in Paris.⁴⁰ In essence the cases were remarkably similar. In both instances, a fanatic foreign Jew assassinated a representative of National Socialist Germany in order to

protest against the persecution of the members of his own creed and race in Germany.

In the 1938 case, Hitler instigated a pogrom for reasons rooted in his foreign policy, to exert pressure on the Western Powers. In 1936 as well, Hitler's reaction to the Gustloff case was determined largely by foreign policy considerations. At the time, however, moderation seemed opportune. Hitler was about to invade the Rhineland, which made him wary of unnecessarily outraging international public opinion.

In addition, the assassination had taken place in Switzerland, a country from which Hitler had always kept a remarkable distance. Given the fact that most Swiss were of German descent, one would have expected Hitler to demonstrate an interest in the country, if not to more or less forcibly annex at least the German-speaking territories to the German Reich. During the days of Hitler's rule, the Swiss on several occasions feared just such an intervention on the part of the Germans. They were even more astonished that with regard to this matter, Hitler demonstrated more diplomatic sensitivity than for instance Napoleon once had. For Hitler, Switzerland's importance as a neutral territory and financial center, as well as its role in international communications and intelligence services, and in matters such as the treatment of war prisoners, by far outweighed any territorial or military advantages that could be gained through annexation.

Therefore in the case of Gustloff no domestic or foreign reprisals took place. Hitler contented himself with delivering a—for his standards—moderate speech at Gustloff's casket. He extolled the willingness to sacrifice of the National Socialist fighters and demonstrated satisfaction that the "Jewish foe" had this time been forced to operate himself, and not through middlemen as previously.

In his eyes, it was a "glorious chapter" for the Swiss that not one of their fellow countrymen had let himself be prodded to carry out the deed. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech at Schwerin was the following:⁴¹

My German Volksgenossen! National Socialists! My dear deceased Party Comrade!

It is a painful path the peoples must take to find their fortunes. The milestones along the way have always been graves, graves in which their best men lie buried. Movements, too, can reach the goal of their desires—if truly worth striving for—only by way of this same painful path. Happiness cannot be had for nothing in this world. Everything must be hard-won and bitterly

earned, and every fight will require sacrifices and result in victims. The fact that these victims are witnesses of the holy conviction upon which such a fight is based makes them guarantors of victory, success and fulfillment!

Our own National Socialist Movement did not begin by demanding sacrifices from others. Back then we stood in the front lines of the World War as soldiers, and there did our duty for Germany. And when this Germany was delivered a lethal stab at home in those November days of 1918, we attempted to convert those who, at that time, were the tools of a terrible supranational power. We were not the ones who victimized our Volksgenossen who rose up against Germany. During those November days the bloody red terror began to rage openly in Germany for the first time. In Berlin and many other places, German men were murdered: not because they had done anything wrong—no, only because they were devoted to Germany and wanted to remain devoted to it. In the heavy fighting of the first quarter of 1919, German men everywhere sank to the ground, struck by the bullets of their own Volksgenossen.

They did not die because they harbored any hatred for these Volksgenossen, but merely because of their love for Germany. Because they refused to believe that a free and honorable Germany had come to an end, because they wanted to devote themselves to the future of this German Volk; that is why they were shot, stabbed, murdered by mad, blind people!

Yet behind this mad blindness we see at every turn the same power, at every turn the same phenomenon which led these people on and stirred them up and finally equipped them with rifles, pistols, or daggers!

The victims multiplied. The soviet republic broke out in the south of the Reich, and for the first time now we are seeing victims who had already made an inner, albeit unconscious, choice to take the path leading to National Socialism. These hundreds who were murdered back then in their drive to help Germany and to save Germany have now been joined by eleven Volksgenossen, ten men and one woman, who consciously supported a new idea, who had never harmed a single opponent, who knew but one ideal, the ideal of a new and purified, better Volksgemeinschaft: the members of the Thule Society.⁴² They were savagely slaughtered in Munich as hostages. We know who the principals are. They too were members of this disastrous power which was and continues to be responsible for the fratricide in our Volk.

Then the National Socialist Movement set out on its path, and I must put one thing straight here: on this, the path of our Movement, lies not a single opponent murdered by us, not a single assassination. We rejected that from the very first day onwards. We have never fought with these weapons. However, we were just as determined not to spare our own lives, but to defend the life of the German Volk and the German Reich, and to protect it from those who would not shrink from the most treacherous murder, as history has so often taught us.

Then comes an infinitely long list of murdered National Socialists, murdered by cowards, nearly always ambushed and beaten to death, stabbed or shot. But behind every murder stood the same power which is responsible for this murder: behind the harmless, insignificant, indoctrinated Volksgenossen

who were driven to sedition stands the hate-filled power of our Jewish foe, a foe to whom we had done no harm but who attempted to subjugate and make of our German Volk its slave, who is responsible for all the misfortune which came upon us in November 1918 and responsible for the misfortune which plagued Germany in the years thereafter! They all died, these party comrades and good comrades, and so were others, too, to die; many hundreds have survived as cripples or badly wounded; many have lost their power of sight, are paralyzed; more than 40,000 others were injured. Among them were so many loyal men whom we all knew who were dear and close to us, of whom we knew they were incapable of doing harm to anyone and who never had done harm to anyone but been guilty of a single crime, namely, of having devoted themselves to Germany. One who stood in the ranks of these victims was Horst Wessel, the singer who gave the Movement its song, never suspecting that he too would join the spirits who march with us now and have marched with us in the past. Thus National Socialism has now registered its first conscious martyr (*Blutzeuge*) abroad. A man who did nothing but stand up for Germany—which is not only his sacred right, but also his duty in this world; who did nothing but be mindful of his homeland and loyally pledge himself to it. He too was murdered exactly as were so many others. We know this method. Even as we took power three years ago on January 30, exactly the same incidents were taking place in Germany: in Frankfurt an der Oder, then again in Köpenick, and again in Brunswick. The same procedure was used each time: a few men appear, call the man to come out of his house, and then stab him to death or shoot him down.

That is no coincidence; a guiding hand organized these crimes and will continue to do so. Now, for the first time, the party responsible for these deeds has become visible. For the first time this party has not employed a harmless German Volksgenosse. It is a glorious chapter for Switzerland and for our own Germans in Switzerland that no one let himself be hired to do this deed, thereby forcing the spiritual author to himself become the perpetrator. Thus our Party Comrade was struck down by the power which is waging a fanatical battle not only against our German Volk, but against every free, autonomous, and independent people. We understand the declaration of war, and we will respond! My dear Party Comrade, your death is not in vain!

Our dead have all come back to life. They are marching with us not only in spirit; they are alive, too. And one of those who will accompany us into the most distant future will be this dead man. May that be our sacred vow in this hour, that we wish to ensure that this dead man take his place in the ranks of our Volk's immortal martyrs. From his death shall hence come forth life a millionfold for our Volk. That Jewish murderer did not suspect or foresee that, by killing one, he would awaken millions upon millions of comrades to a truly German life long into the most distant future. Just as it was formerly impossible to hinder the triumphant march of our Movement by means of such deeds, for the opposite was the case—these dead became the banner bearers of our idea—so shall this deed too in no way hinder Germans abroad from belonging to our Movement and to the German Fatherland. Quite the contrary, now every Ortsgruppe abroad has a National Socialist patron, a sacred martyr for

the Movement and for our idea. From now on his picture will hang in every headquarters. His name will be engraved upon every heart, and he will nevermore be forgotten for all time to come.

That is our pledge. This deed will fall back upon its doer. It is not Germany that will be weakened by it, but the power which committed this crime.

The German Volk has lost one of its living in the year 1936, but has gained an immortal for the future!

Three days later, Hitler inaugurated the international Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin by delivering a lengthy speech.⁴³ The first part of his talk consisted once again of a lecture on “economics and philosophy.” In this particular instance Hitler’s rendition of his theory on the primitive nature of Bolshevism does merit attention. Of all of Hitler’s theories, the economic ones were the best. However, correct realizations on his part were deluded by his political preconceptions, which had haunted him ever since 1919. Examples of these included the idea that the English were becoming increasingly more senile and, as mentioned above, that the Bolshevists were of a primitive nature. Hitler simply projected his own personal experiences with the German Nationalists and the German Communists to the international arena, and he characteristically saw the motorization question in a similar way. Indeed, the government of the Weimar Republic had not done much for traffic concerns, doing more to impose restraints upon it than to seek its advance. In Hitler’s eyes, this was the obvious outcome, which the misbegotten conception of the equality of all men had led to. In the end, all it had brought about was an equally low standard of living for all. As Hitler maintained, the percentage of cars per person in Germany had been so low in 1932 that only the Russians possessed even fewer automobiles. He regarded the low level of motorization in the Soviet Union as proof of the primitive nature of Bolshevism. Imagine his surprise when in World War II, the supposedly primitive Russians threw row after row of motorized vehicles and tanks at the German lines.

On February 15, 1936, however, Hitler was still undaunted to voice the following “profound” insights in a speech before representatives of the German automobile industry:

I believe it is particularly fitting on a day such as this, if merely to counter the forgetfulness of mankind, to stress those factors which have been psychologically responsible for the sorry decline of our automobile industry and thus of our transportation industry as a whole, that is to say of that industry

which can currently be described as the single most powerful industry and which is thus called upon to put its unique and characteristic stamp on today's age.

1. One factor responsible for this decline on the part of the consumer was the view originating in the social-democratic theory of equality, that it was necessary for the human race to become a race of primitives, which was to be accomplished by proletarianizing the standard of living for all so as to arrive at a level shared by as many as possible. This more than primitive idea proceeded on the limited assumption that human progress was rooted in the collective masses and was therefore to be valued or rejected as a collective manifestation. The fact is, however, that every act of human progress, seen from a mental and objective point of view, originates with a very few individuals; from a mental viewpoint, because the invention is born only of the imagination of individuals and not of the cross-section of a collective endeavor; objectively, because each human invention, regardless of whether its value is recognized or underestimated, always appears initially to be an additional pleasure in everyday life and thus a luxury article for a more or less limited circle. It is not an isolated incident, but rather unfortunately quite often the case that this circle is regarded by the amiable collective of fellow mankind as being crazy—as this was, in fact, the case with our great inventors Benz and Daimler. Thus a truly progressive development is only possible given respect for individual creative power and for the similarly unique mental receptivity and actual marketability. It is not proof of the falseness, but rather proof of the accuracy of this statement that the Marxist state, in order to limp along after mankind on its mental collective crutches, practically borrows the individual engineers, draftsmen, managers, inspectors, chemists, etc., from individually organized economies to enable it to cultivate its original Marxist economy with their generous assistance. This merely serves, of course, to show that just as the rest of the world was able to achieve culture without Bolshevism; Bolshevism itself would be unable to survive as a Communist entity all of its own without the help of the rest of the world.

This insight is significant because concentrated support particularly for our modern transportation industry is dependent upon the complete liberty of a Volk to make use of it, not only in terms of legislative liberty, but above all in terms of psychological liberty. It is just as antisocial to buy oneself an automobile as it once was to insert a piece of modern glass in one's window instead of using the traditional oiled hide. The evolution of such an invention necessarily proceeds from a very few persons, also its being put into practice, to then spread to increasingly larger circles, ultimately reaching everyone. Thus it was no coincidence that the lowest percentage of automobiles—after Communist-Marxist Soviet Russia—was seen in Germany which, at that time, also had a Marxist government.

2. Due to the fact that, in the long term, the ideology of the masses cannot and will not forever stand in opposition to the ideology of those in government and vice versa, it was only too natural that, originating from this common root of ignorance and irrationality, those in government acted on the Marxist theory of primitiveness, and for their part, also regarded the

automobile as something unnecessary—and thus as something superfluous—and set taxes accordingly. A capital error, I might add, which served to show how badly our own bourgeois economic views were already failing. For the theory of so-called luxury tax articles is absurd wherever and whenever in all human probability the luxury article promises to become an article of general use. Above all, one should not tax those products which are in the process of development, but rather those whose development can clearly be deemed to be finished.

It goes without saying that, on the basis of such false thinking, all those specific steps which could be conducive toward promoting the development of this so incredibly promising and propitious industry were neglected or even completely ignored. Fiscal authorities and police headquarters cooperated to choke off and stamp out the development of German road traffic and with it the transportation industry as thoroughly as possible, and—this is one compliment which must be made to the Marxist-Centrist governments—they succeeded brilliantly in their joint attack. Whereas in America approximately twenty-three million automobiles were on the roads and three to four million were being manufactured annually, the combined efforts of the leadership of Volk and state succeeded in limiting the number of automobiles in Germany to barely 450,000 and in reducing the number produced in the year 1932 to 46,000.

3. The economy itself. It was bad enough that the leadership of Volk and state, under the influence of such ideas, had no comprehension of the development of motorization; it is at least as bad that the German economy, albeit perhaps unconsciously, gave in nonetheless to quite similar thoughts. Thus the economy was likewise incapable of understanding that the automobile must become a tool for the general public, for otherwise the broad potential for development slumbering therein will not be realized. The automobile is either a costly luxury object for very few and thus of no particular consequence in the long term for the economy as a whole, or it should truly give the economy the enormous impetus of which it is intrinsically capable, and then it must evolve from a luxury object for very few to an object of use for all. And this is where the German automobile industry—and I fear this is still a general view—was not yet fully aware of the fact that the development of German automobile production as a whole can only truly be successful if its pricing is commensurate with the incomes of the customer groups it is to reach.

The question as to the number of automobiles Germany can bear is very easy to answer.

a) The desire for automobiles in our Volk is at least as lively as in any other country; I would almost like to say that the yearning for automobiles is so strongly in evidence here because our Volk has been deprived of them. And gentlemen, you can see the best proof of this in the enormous, incomparable numbers of visitors, particularly at these exhibitions. They are the most pointed disproof of the view held by those who believed, only a few years ago, that they could completely dispense with these exhibitions as being merely insignificant and uninteresting. The German Volk has exactly the same

need to use automobiles as, for instance, the American people. It is superficial to regard a quantity of twenty-three or twenty-four million automobiles in America as natural and understandable and 500,000 or 600,000 as such in Germany, although in terms of numbers the German Volk makes up somewhat more than half of the population of the North American Union. No, the people's requirement is given in Germany, too.

b) The prerequisite for the fulfillment of this desire can, however, be no different from the rest of the world. That means that the price of an automobile must correspond to the income of its potential buyer. And that means that there will be people who are in a position to sacrifice 20,000 marks and more for an automobile because their income is proportionate. But the number of these people will not be large. Lowering the cost to 10,000 marks will result in a much greater number of respective able buyers. And lowering the cost of a car to 5,000 marks will mobilize an even greater group with corresponding incomes. All this means:

If I hope to achieve a volume of three or four million automobiles in Germany, then the price and maintenance costs for these automobiles must be graded to correspond to the incomes of the three or four million potential buyers. I advise the German automobile industry to proceed on the basis of these ideas and gather information on the income situation of the four or five million best-situated Germans, and you will then understand why I am so ruthlessly determined to have the preliminary work for producing the German Volkswagen carried on and brought to a conclusion, and, gentlemen, I am talking about a successful conclusion.

I do not doubt that the genius of the constructor⁴⁴ entrusted with the task as well as the subsequent manufacturers, in connection with the highest insights into national economy on the part of all those involved, will succeed in putting the costs of acquisition, operation and maintenance for this car in a ratio acceptable to the income of this broad mass of our Volk, as we can see has successfully been accomplished in the brilliant example of America.

It is a regrettable error for anyone to believe in this context that such a development will move the buyers of better and more expensive cars to drop down to the Volkswagen. No, gentlemen, this car will act to mobilize millions, of whom hundreds of thousands will all the more easily find their way to better and more attractive cars as a result of their continuously rising standard of living. The Ford car did not displace better and more expensive American automobiles—on the contrary: it served initially to loosen up and mobilize the enormous masses of American buyers, from whom particularly the more expensive models later profited.

Hence in finding two or three million buyers for a new German Volkswagen, there will be some who, in the course of their lives, will quite naturally switch to better and thus more expensive cars of their own accord. A great number will never be in a position to purchase an expensive car. Not because these people have no desire to do Mr. Manufacturer Whoever a favor but because they are unable to do so because of their modest income. Yet to simply exclude these millions from the pleasure of this modern means of transport because one is unwilling to run the risk that, of the two or three

hundred thousand better-situated people, perhaps a few could buy the cheaper car, would be not only humanly unprincipled, but also economically unwise. For this would mean nothing but artificially bringing to a halt the most tremendous economical development for our Volk and our country out of both selfish and shortsighted considerations.

I know that I am thus assigning an extremely large task to the German economy, but I also know that Germans are no less capable than anyone else in the world. And matters which have been solved in one corner of the globe can and must be solved in Germany as well.

After this forceful appeal to the industry to advance the production of a "true car for the people" (*Volkswagen*) Hitler announced that, thanks to the "wonders the German chemists and inventors have truly accomplished," it had become possible to create synthetic gas and synthetic rubber. Without doubt this was a great step toward Hitler's goal of self-sufficiency, designed to make Germany independent of imports from foreign countries. However, these successes misled both Hitler and the German people to believe that "wonders" could be worked, given the true spirit of invention, as for example, infinitely increasing the production of war goods during a conflict whenever the need arose. Hitler declared:

1. The crisis of Germany's fuel supply, whose paramount significance we can gauge particularly at the present time⁴⁵ in political terms, can be considered overcome. Our chemists and inventors have truly accomplished wonders, particularly in this sector as a whole. And trust in our determination to put this theoretical solution into practice!

2. In this exhibition, you will find for the first time tires made of German synthetic rubber. And it is my pleasure to inform you and the German Volk at this time that the performance tests which have been conducted by the Wehrmacht for nearly a year now have shown that this synthetic rubber surpasses natural crude rubber in terms of life and durability by ten to thirty percent.

At the end of the Olympic Winter Games on February 16, Hitler sent the following letter to the President of the International Olympic Committee, Count Baillet-Latour:⁴⁶

Dear Mr. President,

The brilliant course and finish of the Fourth Winter Olympics of 1936 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen moves me to express to you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Committee my own and the German Volk's deep-felt gratitude for your extraordinarily outstanding work which has played such an instrumental role in making it possible to host and carry out this international event. May I further ask that you, Mr. President, relay these

thanks along with our highest admiration to all those involved who, as men and women competing at these Olympic Games, kept the world in utmost suspense and filled it with enthusiasm as a result of their magnificent performances. In sincere esteem I remain, Mr. President,

Your Adolf Hitler

In the interview with Bertrand de Jouvenel on February 21, Hitler did his utmost to promote Germany's image in France, Again, he was motivated by the imminent military occupation of the Rhineland. He sought to soften or even take back the harsh language he had employed in *Mein Kampf* in reference to France.⁴⁷

In his speech before the Reichstag on March 7, Hitler complained that this interview had not been published by the French newspaper *Paris Midi* until February 28, the day after the ratification of the Franco-Russian agreement through the French Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁸ Much of what Hitler then used in his speech as a justification for the military occupation of the Rhineland, he had already alluded to in the interview. In his conversation with Bertrand de Jouvenel, Hitler declared:⁴⁹

“I know what you imagine. You think, ‘Hitler is giving us declarations of peace, but is he really sincere?’

“Would it not be better if, instead of attempting to solve psychological puzzles, you applied the famous French logic for once? Would it not be the ruin of both our countries to clash yet again on the battlefield? Is it not logical that I am endeavoring to attain the best advantage for my country? And is that best advantage not freedom?”

In the further course of the interview, Hitler came to speak of the alleged “puzzle” which had made him Führer of the German *Volk*. As one solution to this “puzzle” he cited the fact that he had simplified the ostensibly extremely complicated problems with which the professional politicians had not been able to deal, also mentioning in this context the problem of the “class struggle.”

“I would like to tell you what propelled me into my position. Our problems seemed complicated. The German Volk was unable to deal with them. under those circumstances, one preferred to leave these problems to the professional politicians. But I simplified the problems and reduced them to the lowest common denominator. The masses recognized this and followed me.”

Just as he had proven to the German Volk by appealing to reason that class struggle was an absurdity, he now addressed the same appeal to reason on an international scale. “I want to prove to my Volk that the concept of a traditional enmity between France and Germany is absurd. The German Volk

has understood this. It followed me when I undertook a much more difficult act of reconciliation, when I intervened to reconcile Germany and Poland.”

Following these remarks, Bertrand de Jouvenel broached the topic of Hitler’s repeated declarations of peace, stating:

“We French are happy to read your declarations of peace. At the same time, we are concerned about other, less encouraging matters. In your book *Mein Kampf* for instance, you said quite disagreeable things about France. This book is now regarded as a political bible of sorts throughout Germany. It is sold in successive editions without any corrections whatsoever being made in respect to the passages on France.”

Hitler replied:

“I wrote that book when I was in prison. It was at the time when French troops occupied the Ruhr. It was at the height of tension between our two countries ... Yes, we were enemies; and I stood up for my country against your country, as is right and proper, just as I stood up for my country against yours when I was in the trenches for four-and-a-half years! I would despise myself had I not first and foremost been a German in the hour of conflict! You want me to correct my book like an author who publishes a revised edition of his works.

“I am not an author.⁵⁰ I am a politician. I make my corrections in my foreign policy, which is geared to reaching an understanding with France! If I succeed in bringing about the rapprochement of Germany and France, that will constitute a correction of true value. I enter my corrections in the great book of history!”

Afterwards, Bertrand de Jouvenel inquired about Germany’s stand on the Franco-Russian Mutual Assistance Pact which doubtless constituted an obstacle to a reconciliation between France and Germany. Hitler answered:

“My own personal endeavors toward such an understanding will never cease. In objective terms, however, this more than regrettable pact would create a new situation. Are you aware of what you are doing in France? You allow yourselves to be drawn into the diplomatic game of a power with no other aim but to bring confusion upon the great European peoples from which this power alone would profit. One must not lose sight of the fact that Soviet Russia is a political factor which has at its disposal an explosive, revolutionary idea and a gigantic store of arms. It is my duty as a German to account to myself for such a situation. Bolshevism has no chance to penetrate in Germany, but there are other major peoples who are less immune than we against the Bolshevik bacillus.”

Returning to the topic of German-French relations, Hitler closed that he was speaking on behalf of the entire German Volk when declaring to France that, “if France truly had the will, it could put an

end to any supposed German threat for all time, because the German Volk put its utmost faith in its Führer, and the Führer desired amicable relations with France.”

On February 24, Hitler spoke at the traditional gathering at the Hofbräuhaus in Munich celebrating the foundation of the Party.⁵¹ He reveled in memories of the “fighting times” and once again described the first historic assembly in 1920:⁵²

It was the first major rally our Movement had ever held in which we can say that the Volk participated. For the first time the internal organization was tested in a large hall, and it worked. For the first time people came to us who wanted to listen. We certainly had not lacked the courage to summon the masses, but for a long time the masses lacked the courage to hear our call. It so happened that the man from whom I had rented the hall only gave it after I had made advance payment, although to be fair I would like to add that the situation later changed.

At that first rally we announced our twenty-five points—which our opponents ridiculed—for the first time, to implement them item for item in the years thereafter. And finally, I myself spoke to a large crowd of people for the first time in this hall, although someone⁵³ had told me I had any number of talents, but speaking was not one of them. I had to assert myself at that large rally, which was not as well-mannered as it is today. Things were rather primitive, and most of the men were not wearing collars out of solidarity, so as not to attract attention.

Later my opponents conceived of the idea of calling me “the drummer” for years afterwards. In any case, that first rally was significant in that it was the first mass rally of our Party, it announced our program and produced a new speaker.

Three days later, Hitler gave two speeches, one at the reception of the new Chinese Ambassador Tien Fong-cheng,⁵⁴ and the other welcoming the Mexican Envoy, Dr. Almazan.⁵⁵ That same February 27, he again visited the Automobile Exhibition and stayed in the exhibition halls from 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. During a conference with automobile manufacturers, he proclaimed:⁵⁶ “Now the German automobile industry is back in shape!”

On February 28, Hitler received Gustav Gründgens, the Director of the Berlin Schauspielhaus at the Chancellery. That day Hitler also conferred with the Afghan Foreign Minister, Sidar Faiz Muhammad Khan.⁵⁷

A day earlier, the French Chamber of Deputies had finally ratified the Franco-Russian Pact of May 2, 1935. The Mutual Assistance Pact, which was defensive in nature, doubtlessly was directed against the

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Germans and was intended to quell any expansionist designs Hitler might entertain.

However, Hitler's thesis that the agreement went against both the letter and the spirit of the Locarno Pact could not be maintained on the grounds of international law.

Hitler was aware of this and thus refused to put the matter before the International Court of Justice in The Hague.⁵⁸ For him the entire affair was only of interest if he could take advantage of it for propaganda purposes. He needed an excuse to execute the occupation of the Rhineland as planned, and so the ratification of the Pact in February came at a most opportune moment.

After all, Hitler had made his intentions in this matter perfectly clear as early as in his "Peace Speech" of May 21, 1935.

2

On March 2, Hitler received François-Poncet, whom the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Flandin had asked to discuss with Hitler various approaches to reaching a Franco-German understanding. Hitler had alluded to the possibility of such an agreement in his interview with Bertrand de Jouvenel.⁵⁹ At first the German Chancellor was most ungracious because of the belated publication of the interview. Then however, he promised to present François-Poncet with concrete suggestions for an agreement soon. He asked the Ambassador to treat the content of their conversation confidentially; not surprisingly so, since he intended to confront the Frenchman with accomplished facts at the latter's next call.

That same day, Hitler set the date for the occupation of the Rhineland for March 7. As in the previous year, he chose the day before the Heroes' Memorial Day for his military intervention. For one, he did so because it was a Saturday. That was Hitler's favorite day of the week to launch a venture, since this surprised the English on their weekend and hence gained him an additional forty-eight hours' time. He counted on the French consulting the British prior to any action on their part. Hitler presumed that world public opinion would have calmed sufficiently by then, insofar as to render a military retaliation to the occupation extremely unlikely.

In order to keep his enterprise secret for as long as possible, and to gain an advantage by the element of surprise, Hitler had devised a unique plan. It was an intrigue, which truly would have been to the credit of any writer of mystery novels.

On March 6, Hitler had Goebbels round up all foreign newspaper correspondents at a Berlin hotel. There they were quarantined until the next day, supposedly attending a news conference. On the afternoon, an official announcement was issued calling for the assembly of the

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Reichstag “for tomorrow, Saturday at 12 o’clock.” Only topic on the agenda: “The hearing of a declaration by the Reich Government.”⁶⁰ This announcement already led one to suspect that the Reichstag would be confronted with some fait accompli. Hitler shortly informed the members of the Reich Cabinet of his activities on March 6. His address to the Reichstag on March 7 began with the following words:⁶¹

Men of the German Reichstag!

The President of the German Reichstag, Party Comrade Göring, convened today’s session at my request in order to give you an opportunity to hear a declaration from the Reich Government pertaining to questions which instinctively are regarded not only by yourselves but by the entire German Volk as important, if not to say decisive.

When in the gray November days of 1918 the curtain was lowered on the bloody tragedy of the Great War ... [etc., etc.]

For the next half hour, a “party narrative” followed, or better a “Germany narrative,” the monotony of which was only relieved by Hitler’s sudden remark that the Volk felt it to be “very distressful that the access of a people of thirty-three million [Poland] to the sea leads through territory formerly belonging to the Reich.” The utterance of such a statement on the part of Hitler ought to have been taken more seriously—as a warning to the Polish people. Every time Hitler termed something “distressful,” this was a certain indication that he had something in mind, aiming at speedily removing the cause of his distress. In this case, however, he would restrain himself for quite some time. After Hitler had closed his introduction, he turned to the “German question” in a manner he thought appropriate at this point in time:

However, I have a right to lay these views of mine open before you gentlemen, Deputies of the Reichstag, for they constitute both the explanation for our own political experience, for our internal work among the Volk and for our external standpoint.

Since the rest of the world often talks about a “German question,” it will be wise to reach for ourselves an objective clarification on the essence of this question. Some regard the “question” as being the German regime itself, as being the completely misunderstood difference between the German regime and the other regime, as being the so-called “rearmament” perceived as threatening, and as being all those things one imagines one sees as a mirage ensuing from this rearmament. For many, this question is rooted in the German Volk’s alleged lust for war, in its slumbering plans for offensive or in its diabolical skill in outwitting its opponents. No, my dear politicians! The German question is something entirely different.

Here we have sixty-seven million people⁶² living on a very limited and only partially fertile area. That means approximately 136 persons per square

kilometer. These people are no less industrious than other European peoples; they are no less demanding; they are no less intelligent and they have no less will to live. They have just as little desire to allow themselves to be heroically shot dead for some fantasy as, for instance, a Frenchman or an Englishman does.

Neither are these sixty-seven million Germans more cowardly; and by no means do they have less honor than members of the other European nations. Once they were torn into a war in which they believed no more than other Europeans and for which they bore just as little responsibility. Today's young German of twenty-five had just celebrated his first birthday during the pre-war years and at the beginning of the war; thus, he can hardly be held responsible for this catastrophe of the nations. Yes, even the youngest German who could have been responsible was twenty-five years old when the German voting age was fixed. Hence he is today at least fifty years old. That means that the overwhelming majority of men in the German Volk were simply forced to take part in the war, just as was the bulk of the survivors from the French or English peoples. If they were decent, they did their duty then—if they were already of age—just as well as every decent Frenchman and Englishman. If they were not decent, they failed to do this and perhaps earned money instead or worked for the revolution. These people are no longer in our ranks today, but live for the most part as emigrants with some host or another. This German Volk has just as many merits as other peoples, and naturally just as many disadvantages and weaknesses, too.

The German question lay in the fact that this Volk—even as late as, for example, 1935, and on the basis of a guilt it had never committed—was to be made to suffer lesser rights which constitute an intolerable burden to an honor-loving Volk, a torment to an industrious Volk, and an outrage to an intelligent Volk. The German question also means that one is attempting, by way of a system of unreasonable actions, measures and hate-filled incitements, to make even more difficult the already hard battle to assert the right to live, and to make it more difficult not only artificially, but perversely and absurdly.

For the rest of the world does not profit in the slightest from making it more difficult for Germany to maintain its life. There is eighteen times less land per capita of the population in respect to the German being than, for instance, in respect to a Russian. It is understandable how hard the mere fight for one's daily bread must be and is. Without the efficiency and industriousness of the German peasant and the organizational ability of the German Volk, it would hardly be possible for these sixty-seven million to lead their lives. Yet what are we to think of the mental naivety of those who perhaps recognize these difficulties yet nonetheless celebrate our misery in childish glee in articles, publications and lectures, who moreover actually hunt down every indication of this, our inner plight, to tell it to the rest of the world? Apparently they would be pleased were our distress even worse, were we not able to succeed over and over again in making it bearable by industriousness and intelligence.

They have no idea how the German question would present a completely different picture were the abilities and industriousness of these millions to falter, whereby not only misery but also political unreason would come into

evidence. This, too, is one of the German questions, and the world cannot but be interested in seeing that this matter of securing a German means of living year after year is successfully solved, just as it is my desire that the German Volk will also comprehend and respect a happy solution to these vital questions for other peoples, just as in its very own best interest.

However, mastering this German question is initially a matter involving the German Volk itself and need not concern the rest of the world. It touches upon the interests of other peoples only to the extent that the German Volk is forced, when solving this problem, to establish contact in an economic sense with other peoples as buyers and sellers.

And this is where, again, it will be solely in the interests of the rest of the world to understand this question, i.e. to comprehend the fact that the cry for bread in a Volk consisting of forty, fifty, or sixty million is not some sly feat of malice on the part of the regime or certain governments but rather a natural expression of the urge to assert one's right to live; and that well-fed peoples are more reasonable than those who are hungry; and that not only the respective government should have an interest in securing sufficient nourishment for its citizens, but the surrounding states and peoples should as well; and that it therefore lies in the interest of all to make it possible to assert one's right to live in the highest sense of the word. It was the privilege of the pre-war age to take up the opposite view and proclaim it a state of war, namely the opinion that one part of the European family of peoples would fare all the better, the worse another part fared. The German Volk needs no special assistance to assert its own life. It wants, however, to have opportunities no worse than those given to other peoples. This is one of the German questions.

And the second German question is the following: because, as a result of the extremely unfortunate general circumstances and conditions, the economic life-struggle of the German Volk is very strenuous—whereas the intelligence, industriousness, and hence the natural standard of living are in contrast very high—an extraordinary exertion of all our energies is required in order to master this first German question. Yet this can only be accomplished if this Volk enjoys a feeling of political security in an external sense.

In this world, it is impossible to maintain—or much less lead—a Volk of honor and bravery as Helots for any length of time.

There is no better confirmation of the German Volk's innate love of peace than the fact that, in spite of its ability and in spite of its bravery—which cannot be denied, even by our opponents—and in spite of this Volk's large numbers, it has secured for itself only such a modest share of the Lebensraum and goods of this world. Yet it is above all this trait of concentrating increasingly on the inland, so characteristic of German nature, which cannot bear being abused or shamefully deprived of its rights.

In that the unfortunate Peace Treaty of Versailles was intended to fix the—historically unique—perpetuation of the outcome of the war in moral terms, it created that very German question which constitutes a critical burden to Europe if unsolved and, if solved, will be Europe's liberation. And following the signing of the Peace Treaty in the year 1919, I set myself the task of one

day solving this problem—not because I have any desire to do harm to France or any other state, but because the German Volk cannot, will not, and shall not bear the wrong done to it on the long term!

In the year 1932, Germany stood at the brink of a Bolshevik collapse. What this chaos in such a large country would have meant for Europe is something perhaps certain European statesmen will have an opportunity to observe elsewhere in future. For my part, I was only able to overcome this crisis of the German Volk, which was most visibly manifest in the economic sector, by mobilizing the ethical and moral values common to the German nation. The man who wanted to rescue Germany from Bolshevism would have to bring about a decision on—and thus a solution for—the question of German equality of rights. Not in order to do harm to other peoples, but on the contrary: to perhaps even spare them great harm by preventing a catastrophe from engulfing Germany, the ultimate consequences of which would be unimaginable for Europe.

For the re-establishment of German equality of rights has had no harmful effect on the French people. Only the Red revolt and the collapse of the German Reich would have dealt the European order and the European economy a blow having consequences which, unfortunately, are virtually beyond the grasp of most European statesmen. This battle for German equality of rights which I waged for three years does not pose a European question, but answers one.

It is a truly tragic misfortune that of all things, the Peace Treaty of Versailles created a situation the French people thought they should be particularly interested in maintaining. As incapable as this situation was of holding any real advantages for the individual Frenchman, all the greater was the unreal connection which appeared to exist between the discrimination of the German Volk by Versailles and the interests of the French. Perhaps the character weakness of the German postwar years; of our Governments; and, in particular, of our parties, was also to blame for the fact that the French people and the serious French statesmen could not be made sufficiently aware of the inaccuracy of this view. For, the worse the individual governments before our time were, the more reason they themselves had to fear the national awakening of the German Volk. Therefore, they were all the more frightened of any type of national self-awareness, and thus all the more supportive in their attitude toward the widespread international defamation of the German people. Yes, they simply needed this disgraceful bondage to prop up their own sorry regimes. Where this regime finally led Germany was vividly illustrated in the imminent collapse.

Now, of course it was difficult, in view of the fact that our neighbors had become so firmly accustomed to non-equality of rights, to prove that a re-establishment of German equality of rights would not only do no harm to them, but on the contrary: in the final analysis, it would be useful internationally. You, my Deputies and men of the Reichstag, know the difficult path I have had to take since that thirtieth of January 1933 in order to redeem the German Volk from its unworthy situation, to then secure for it, step by step, equality of rights, without removing it from the political and economic community of

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the European nations and, particularly, without creating a new enmity in the process of settling an old one.

One day I will be able to demand from history confirmation of the fact that at no time in the course of my struggle on behalf of the German Volk did I forget the duties I myself and all of us are obligated to assume toward maintaining European culture and civilization.

However, it is a prerequisite for the existence of this continent, which ultimately owes its uniqueness to the diversity of its cultures, that it is unthinkable without the presence of free and independent national states.

Each European people may be convinced that it has made the greatest contribution to our Western culture. On the whole, however, we would not wish to do without any of what the separate peoples have given, and thus we do not wish to argue over the value of their respective contributions. Rather, we must recognize that the greatest achievements in the most diverse areas of human culture doubtless stem from the rivalry between individual European accomplishments.

Therefore, although we are willing to cooperate in this European world of culture as a free and equal member, we are just as stubbornly determined to remain what we are.

In these three years, I have again and again attempted—unfortunately all too often in vain—to build a bridge of understanding to the people of France. The further we get from the bitterness of the World War and the years that followed it, the more the evil fades in human memory, and the more the better things of life, knowledge, and experience advance to the fore.

Those who once faced one another as bitter foes today honor each other as brave fighters in a great struggle of the past, and once again recognize one another as responsible for maintaining and upholding a great shared cultural inheritance.

Why should it not be possible to terminate the futile, centuries-old strife which has not brought either of the peoples a final settlement—and which never will—and replace it by the consideration of a higher reason?

The German Volk has no interest in seeing the French suffer, and vice versa: how would France profit if Germany were to come to ruin? What use is it to the French peasant if the German peasant fares badly—or vice versa? Or what advantage does the French worker have from the distress of the German worker? And what blessing could it hold for Germany, for the German worker, the German *Mittelstand*, for the German Volk as a whole, if France were to fall prey to misfortune?

I have attempted to solve the problems of a hate-filled theory of class conflict within Germany's borders by means of a higher reason, and I have been successful. Why should it not be possible to remove the problem of the general European differences between peoples and states from the sphere of irrationality and passion and to place it in the calm light of a higher insight? In any case, I once swore to myself that I would fight with persistence and bravery for German equality of rights and make it a reality one way or another,⁶³ but also that I would strengthen the feeling of responsibility for the necessity of mutual consideration and cooperation in Europe.

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Hitler took advantage of the occasion to paint in the most vivid colors, both for the benefit of his audience and for the international public at large the picture of the utter chaos Bolshevism necessarily entailed. He himself “trembled” at the mere thought of it. At the same time, he assured his listeners that nothing could ever sway him as a statesman to enter into a closer relationship with the Bolsheviks. He forgot to mention, however, that earlier he had welcomed concerted action by National Socialists and Communists, as in the case of the Berlin transportation workers’ strike in November 1932. In August of 1939 no solemn declarations of the past would keep him from concluding a Russo-German NonAggression Pact with a secret additional protocol aimed at partitioning the Polish State. On March 7, 1936, however, in the guise of a man of great integrity, Hitler proclaimed:

When today my international opponents confront me with the fact that I refuse to practice this cooperation with Russia, I must counter this assertion with the following: I rejected and continue to reject this cooperation not with Russia, but with the Bolshevism which lays claim to world rulership.

I am a German, I love my Volk and am attached to it. I know that it can only be happy if allowed to live in accordance with its nature and its way. The German Volk has been able not only to cry, but also to laugh heartily all its life, and I do not want the horror of the Communist international dictatorship of hatred to descend upon it. I tremble for Europe at the thought of what would lie in store for our old, heavily populated continent were the chaos of the Bolshevik revolution rendered successful by the infiltrating force of this destructive Asiatic concept of the world, which subverts all our established ideals. I am perhaps for many European statesmen a fantastic, or at any rate uncomfortable, harbinger of warnings. That I am regarded in the eyes of the international Bolshevik oppressors of the world as one of their greatest enemies is for me a great honor and a justification for my actions in the eyes of posterity.

I cannot prevent other states from taking the paths they believe they must or at least believe they can take, but I shall prevent Germany from taking this road to ruin. And I believe that this ruin would come at that point at which the leadership of state decides to stoop to become an ally at the service of such a destructive doctrine.

I would see no possibility of conveying in clear terms to the German worker the threatening misfortune of Bolshevik chaos which so deeply troubles me were I myself, as Führer of the nation, to enter into close dealings with this very menace. As a statesman and the Führer of the Volk, I wish to also do myself all those things I expect and demand from each of my Volksgenossen. I do not believe that statesmen can profit from closer contact with a Weltanschauung which is the ruin of any people.

In the past twenty years of German history, we have had ample opportunity to gain experience in this sector. Our initial contact with

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Bolshevism in the year 1917 brought us the revolution one year later. The second encounter with it sufficed to put Germany near the brink of a Communist collapse within but a few years' time. I broke off these relations and thus jerked Germany back from the verge of destruction.

Nothing can persuade me to go any other way than that dictated by experience, insight and foresight.

And I know that this conviction has grown to become the most profound body of thought and ideas for the entire National Socialist Movement. With persistent tenacity we shall solve the social problems and tensions in our Volk by means of carrying on the evolutionary process, thereby ensuring for ourselves the blessing of a peaceful development from which all of our Volksgenossen will profit. And each of the many new tasks we will encounter in this process will fill us with the joy of those who are incapable of living without work and hence without a task to perform.

When I apply this basic attitude to European politics at large, I find that Europe is divided into two halves: one comprised of self-sufficient and independent national states, of peoples with whom we are linked a thousandfold by history and culture and with whom we wish to continue to be linked for all time in the same manner as with the free and self-sufficient nations of the non-European continents; and the other governed by the very same intolerant Bolshevik doctrine claiming general international supremacy, which even preaches the destruction of the immortal values—sacred to us—of this world and the next, in order to build a different world whose culture, exterior and content seem abhorrent to us. Except for the given political and economic international relations, we do not wish to have any closer contact with that.

It is infinitely tragic that, in conclusion of our long years of sincerely endeavoring to obtain the trust, sympathy and affection of the French people, a military alliance was sealed, the beginning of which we know today, but—if Providence is not once again more merciful than mankind deserves—the end of which will perhaps have unforeseeable consequences. In the past three years I have endeavored to slowly but surely establish the prerequisites for a German-French understanding. In doing so, I have never left a single doubt that an absolute equality of rights and thus the same legal status of the German Volk and State form part of the prerequisites for such an understanding. I have consciously regarded this understanding not only as a problem to be solved by means of pacts, but as a problem which must first be brought home psychologically to the two peoples, for it has to be prepared not only in mental, but also in emotional terms. Thus I was often confronted with the reproach that my offers of friendship contained no specific proposals. That is not correct.

I bravely and explicitly proposed everything that could in any way possibly be proposed to lessen the tension of German-French relations.

I did not hesitate on one occasion to join a concrete arms proposal for a limit of 200,000 men. When this proposal was abandoned by those responsible for drawing it up, I approached the French people and the European Governments with a new, quite specific proposal. This proposal for 300,000

men was also rejected. I have made a whole series of further concrete proposals aimed at eliminating the poison from public opinion in the individual states and at cleaning up methods of warfare, and thus ultimately at a slow yet, therefore, sure reduction in arms. Only one of these German proposals was given any real consideration. A British Government's sense of realism accepted my proposal for establishing a permanent ratio between the German and English fleets, which both corresponds to the needs of German security and, conversely, takes into account the enormous overseas interests of a great world empire. I may also point out here that, to date, this agreement has remained practically the only truly considerate and thus successful attempt to limit arms. The Reich Government is willing to supplement this treaty by a further qualitative agreement with England.

I have expressed the very concrete principle that the collective programs of an international *Paktomanie* have as little chance of becoming reality as the general proposals for world disarmament which have been shown from the very onset to be impracticable under such circumstances. In contrast, I have stressed that these questions can only be approached step by step more specifically in that direction from which there is presumably the least resistance. Based upon this conviction, I have also developed the concrete proposal for an air pact grounded on a parity of strength between France, England and Germany. The consequence was that this proposal was initially ignored, and then a new Eastern-European-Asiatic factor was introduced on the stage of European equilibrium, the military ramifications of which are incalculable. Thus, for long years I took the trouble to make concrete proposals, yet I do not hesitate to state that the psychological preparation for the understanding has seemed just as important to me as the so-called concrete proposals, and I have done more in this area than any honest foreign statesman could ever have even hoped. I removed the question of the everlasting revision of European borders from the atmosphere of public discussion in Germany.⁶⁴ Yet, unfortunately, it is often held, and this applies particularly to foreign statesmen, that this attitude and its actions are not of any particular significance. I may point out that it would have been equally possible for me as a German, in a moral sense, to place the restoration of the 1914 borders on my program and to support this item in publications and oratory, just as the French ministers and popular leaders did after 1871, for instance. My esteemed critics would do better not to deny me any ability whatsoever in this sector.

It is much more difficult for a National Socialist to persuade a Volk to come to an understanding than to do the opposite. And for me it would probably have been easier to whip up the instinct for revenge than to awaken and constantly amplify a feeling for the necessity of a European understanding. And that is what I have done. I have rid German public opinion of attacks of this sort against our neighboring peoples.

I have removed from the German press all animosity against the French people. I have endeavored to awaken in our youth a sense for the ideal of such an understanding, and was certainly not unsuccessful. When the French guests entered the Olympic Stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen several

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weeks ago, they perhaps had an opportunity to observe whether and to what extent I have been successful in bringing about this inner conversion of the German Volk.

This inner willingness to seek and find such an understanding is, however, more important than clever attempts by statesmen to ensnare the world in a net of pacts obscure as to both legal and factual content.

These efforts on my part have, however, been twice as difficult because at the same time I was forced to disentangle Germany from the web of a treaty which had robbed it of its equality of rights and which the French people—whether rightly or wrongly is secondary—believed it to be in their best interest to uphold. Being a German nationalist, I above all was forced to make yet another particularly difficult sacrifice for the German Volk in that context.

At least in modern times, the attempt had not yet been made following a war to simply deny the loser its sovereign rights over large and long-standing parts of its empire. It was only in the interest of this understanding that I bore this, the most difficult sacrifice we could be made to bear politically and morally, and had intended to continue bearing it for the sole reason that I believed it was necessary to abide by a treaty⁶⁵ which could perhaps contribute to eliminating the poison from the political atmosphere between France and Germany and England and Germany and to spreading a feeling of security on all sides.

Yes, beyond that I have often—in this forum, too—upheld the standpoint that we are not only willing to make this most difficult contribution to safeguarding peace in Europe as long as the other partners fulfill their obligations; furthermore, we view this treaty—because concrete—as the only possible attempt to safeguard Europe.

You, my Deputies, are acquainted with the letter and spirit of this treaty. It was to prevent the use of force for all time between Belgium and France on the one hand and Germany on the other. But unfortunately the treaties of alliance which France had concluded at an earlier date presented the first obstacle, although this obstacle did not contradict the essence of that Pact, namely, the Rhine Pact of Locarno. Germany's contribution to this Pact presented the greatest sacrifice, for while France fortified its border with steel, cement and arms, and equipped it with numerous garrisons, we were made to bear the burden of permanently maintaining total defenselessness in the West. We nonetheless complied with this, too, in the hope of serving—by making that contribution, one so difficult for a major power—the cause of European peace and promoting an understanding between nations.

Now, this Pact is in contradiction to the agreement France entered into last year with Russia which has already been signed and just recently received the Chamber's approval. For, by virtue of this new Franco-Soviet agreement, the threatening military power of a huge empire has been given access to Central Europe via the detour of Czechoslovakia, which has signed a similar treaty with Russia. The incredible thing in this context is that these two states have undertaken an obligation in their treaty, regardless of any presently existing or anticipated rulings of the Council of the League of Nations, to clarify the question of guilt in the event of an Eastern-European complication

at their own discretion and to thus consider the obligation to render mutual assistance as given or not, as the case may be.

The claim that the former obligation was canceled in this Pact by virtue of a supplemental restriction is incomprehensible. I cannot in one context define a certain procedure as a clear breach of obligations otherwise valid and hence thereby assume that such procedure is binding, and in another context declare that no action is to be taken which violates these other obligations. In such a case, the first binding obligation would be unreasonable and thus make no sense.

But this is first and foremost a political problem and is to be rated as such with all its weighty significance.

Hitler then denounced France as a future Bolshevik stronghold in Europe. The consequences of the Franco-Russian Pact were such, that he as preserver of Germany had to fear the worst.

France did not conclude this treaty with any arbitrary European power. Even prior to the Rhine Pact, France had treaties of mutual assistance both with Czechoslovakia and with Poland. Germany took no offense at this, not only because such pacts—in contrast to the Franco-Soviet Pact—recognized the authority of rulings passed by the League of Nations, but also because the Czechoslovakia of that time, and particularly Poland as well, will always basically uphold a policy of representing these states' own national interests. Germany has no desire to attack these states and does not believe it will lie in the interest of these states to prepare an offensive against Germany. But above all: Poland will remain Poland, and France will remain France.

Soviet Russia, in contrast, is the exponent of a revolutionary Weltanschauung organized as a state. Its concept of the state is the creed of world revolution. It is not possible to rule out that tomorrow or the day after, this Weltanschauung will have conquered France as well. However, should this be the case—and as a German statesman I must be prepared—then it is a certainty that this new Bolshevik state would become a section in the Bolshevik International, which means that the decision as to aggression or non-aggression will not be made by two separate states according to their own objective judgment, but instead by directives issuing from a single source. And in the event of such a development, this source would no longer be Paris, but Moscow.

If only for mere territorial reasons, Germany is not in a likely position to attack Russia,⁶⁶ yet Russia is all the more in a position to bring about a conflict with Germany at any time via the detour of its advanced positions. Ascertaining the aggressor would then be a foregone conclusion, for the decision would be independent of the findings of the Council of the League of Nations.

Allegations or objections that France and Russia would do nothing which might expose them to sanctions—on the part of England or Italy—are immaterial, because one cannot begin to gauge which type of sanctions might possibly be effective against such an overwhelming construction so unified in both *weltanschaulich* and military terms.

For many years we anxiously warned of such a development, not only because we have more to fear from it than others, but because it may one day bring with it dire consequences for the whole of Europe, if one attempts to dismiss these, our most serious apprehensions, by citing the unfinished state of the Russian instrument of war, or even its unwieldiness and unfitness for deployment in a European war. We have always combated this view, not because we are somehow of the conviction that the German is inherently inferior, but because we all know that numbers, too, have their own weight. We are all the more grateful that M. Herriot⁶⁷ has just enlightened the French Chamber as to Russia's aggressive-military significance. We know that M. Herriot's information was given to him by the Soviet Government itself, and we are certain that this party cannot have supplied the spiritual inspirer of the new alliance in France with false propaganda; we similarly do not doubt that M. Herriot has given a true account of this information. Yet according to this information, it is a fact that the Russian army has a peacetime strength of 1,350,000 men; that secondly, it has a total of 17,500,000 men ready for war and in the reserves; that thirdly, it is equipped with the largest tank weaponry; and fourthly, that it supports the largest air force in the world.

Introducing this enormous military factor—which was described as being excellent in terms of its mobility and leadership as well as ready for action at any time—onto the Central European stage will destroy any genuine European equilibrium. This will furthermore present an obstacle to any possibility of estimating what means of defense on land and in the air are necessary for the European states involved, and particularly for the sole country targeted as an opponent: Germany.

This gigantic mobilization of the East against Central Europe contradicts not only the letter, but above all the spirit of the Locarno Pact. We are not alone in feeling this because we are directly involved; rather, this view thrives among innumerable intelligent men of all nations and has been openly upheld everywhere, as has been documented in publications and politics.

On February 21, a French journalist⁶⁸ approached me with the request that I grant him an interview. Because I had been told that the person in question was one of those very Frenchmen who, like ourselves, is endeavoring to find ways of arriving at an understanding between our two peoples, I was all the less inclined to refuse, particularly since such an action would have instantly been interpreted as an indication of my lack of respect toward French journalism. I provided the desired information, just as I have openly given it in Germany hundreds and thousands of times, and I once more attempted to address the French people with a plea for the understanding to which we are dedicated with all our hearts and which we would so dearly like to see become reality. At the same time, however, I did express my deep regret as regards the threatening developments in France brought about by the conclusion of a pact for which, in our opinion, there was no conceivable necessity, yet which, were it to come into being, by necessity, would create a new state of affairs. As you all know, this interview was held back for reasons unknown to us and was not published until the day after ratification in the French Chamber.

As much as I will continue in the future to be ready and sincerely willing, as I stated in that interview, to promote this German-French understanding—for I see in it a necessary factor in safeguarding Europe from immeasurable dangers and because I do not expect and indeed am incapable of even perceiving any advantages whatsoever for the two peoples from any other course of behavior; while I do, however, perceive the gravest general and international dangers—I was all the more compelled by the knowledge of the final signing of this Pact to enter into a review of the new situation thus created and to draw the necessary conclusions.

These conclusions are of an extremely grave nature, and they fill us and myself personally with a bitter regret. However, I am obligated not only to make sacrifices for the sake of European understanding, but also to bow to the interests of my own Volk.

As long as a sacrifice meets with appreciation and understanding on the part of the opposition, I will gladly pursue that sacrifice and recommend to the German Volk that it do the same. Yet as soon as it becomes evident that a partner no longer values or appreciates this sacrifice, this must result in a one-sided burden for Germany and hence in a discrimination we cannot tolerate. In this historic hour and within these walls, however, I would like to repeat what I stated in my first major speech before the Reichstag in May 1933:

The German Volk would rather undergo any amount of suffering and distress than abandon the precept of honor and the will to freedom and equality of rights.

If the German Volk is to be of any value to European cooperation, it can be of value only as an honor-loving and hence equal partner. As soon as it ceases to be valuable in terms of this integrity, it becomes worthless in objective terms as well. I would not like to deceive ourselves or the rest of the world with a Volk which would then be completely without value, for it would lack the essentially natural feeling of honor.

I also believe, however, that even in the hour of such a bitter realization and grave decision, in spite of everything, one must not refrain from supporting European cooperation all the more and from seeking new ways to make it possible to solve these problems in a manner beneficial to all.

Hitler then announced the verbatim content of the memorandum,⁶⁹ which on the same day he had the Reich Foreign Minister von Neurath present to the ambassadors of France, Belgium and Italy, the nations party to the Locarno Pact. The document contained the official note of abrogation of the agreement concluded in Locarno. Further, it furnished the diplomats with various suggestions for a peaceful resolution of all European problems.

Thus I have continued my endeavors to express in specific proposals the feelings of the German Volk which is concerned for its security and willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of its freedom, but is likewise willing at all times to take part in a truly sincere and equally-valued European cooperation.

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After a difficult inner struggle, I have hence decided on behalf of the German Reich Government to have the following Memorandum submitted to the French Government and the other signatories of the Locarno Pact:

Memorandum

Immediately after the Pact between France and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which was signed on May 2, 1935 became public, the German Government drew the attention of the Governments of the other signatory powers of the Rhine Pact of Locarno to the fact that the obligations which France assumed in the new Pact are not compatible with its obligations according to the Rhine Pact. At that time, the German Government submitted full legal and political justification for its standpoint: in legal terms in the German Memorandum dated May 25, 1935, and in political terms in the numerous diplomatic talks which followed in the wake of this Memorandum. The Governments concerned are also aware that neither their written responses to the German Memorandum nor the arguments they brought forth via diplomatic channels or in public statements were able to discount the standpoint of the German Government.

In fact, the entire diplomatic and public discussion which has ensued since May 1935 on these questions has served merely to confirm every aspect of the position the German Government has taken from the very beginning.

1. It is an uncontested fact that the Franco-Soviet Agreement is directed exclusively against Germany.

2. It is an uncontested fact that, under the terms of this Agreement, France will undertake obligations in the event of a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union which far exceed its duty pursuant to the Covenant of the League of Nations and which force it to take military action against Germany even if it can cite as grounds for such action neither a recommendation nor even an existing decision of the Council of the League of Nations.

3. It is an uncontested fact that, in such event, France will also be claiming for itself the right to decide at its own discretion who is the aggressor.

4. Thus it is established that France has entered into obligations vis-à-vis the Soviet Union which, in practice, are tantamount to its acting as though neither the Covenant of the League of Nations nor the Rhine Pact, which rests on such Covenant, were in effect.

This consequence of the Franco-Soviet Pact is not canceled out by the fact that France has therein made the reservation not to be under obligation to take military action against Germany if, by doing so, it were to expose itself to sanctions on the part of the Guarantor Powers Italy and Great Britain. Despite this reservation, however, what remains decisive is the fact that the Rhine Pact is based not only upon guarantees on the part of Great Britain and Italy, but primarily on the obligations governing the relations between France and Germany. Thus the sole question is whether France has remained within those limits imposed upon it by the Rhine Pact in regard to its relations with Germany when assuming these treaty obligations.

And the German Government must answer this question in the negative. The Rhine Pact was intended to accomplish the goal of securing peace in

Western Europe, in that Germany on the one hand and France and Belgium on the other were to renounce for all time the use of military force in their relations with one another. If specific exceptions to this renunciation of war extending beyond the right of self-defense were allowed at the conclusion of this Pact, the sole political reason lay, as was generally known, in the fact that France had earlier undertaken certain alliance obligations toward Poland and Czechoslovakia which it was not willing to sacrifice for the idea of unconditionally securing peace in the West. With a clear conscience, Germany decided to accept these limitations on the renunciation of war. It made no objection to the agreements with Poland and Czechoslovakia which France's representative presented at Locarno, acting as it did under the obvious condition that these agreements were in line with the layout of the Rhine Pact and contained no provisions whatsoever on the implementation of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations such as those contained in the new Franco-Soviet agreements.

This also corresponded to the contents of such special agreements as disclosed to the German Government at that time. The exceptions allowed for in the Rhine Pact are not, however, explicitly worded so as to apply only to Poland and Czechoslovakia, but are rather formulated in the abstract. Yet it was the aim of all respective negotiations to merely bring about a balance between the German-French renunciation of war and France's desire to maintain the alliance obligations it had already undertaken.

If France now attempts to draw an advantage from the abstract wording of the possibilities of war allowed pursuant to the Rhine Pact in order to conclude a new alliance against Germany with a state heavily armed with military weapons; if it chooses to continue, in such a decisive fashion, to impose limits on the renunciation of war stipulated between itself and Germany; and if, in the process, it does not even confine itself to the established formal legal limitations, as stated above, it has ultimately created a completely new situation and destroyed—in both spirit and fact—the political system of the Rhine Pact.

The most recent debates and resolutions of the French Parliament have shown that France is determined—notwithstanding Germany's standpoint—to definitely put the Pact with the Soviet Union into effect; talks on the diplomatic level have even revealed that France already regards itself as bound to the Pact by virtue of having signed it on May 2, 1935. However, faced with such a development in European politics, the German Reich Government cannot stand idle unless it wishes to abandon or betray the interests of the German Volk duly entrusted to it.

In negotiations in recent years, the German Government has consistently stressed that it intended to abide by and fulfill all of the obligations arising from the Rhine Pact as long as the other contracting parties were willing, on their part, to stand by this Pact. This obvious condition can no longer be deemed to exist as regards France. France responded to Germany's repeated friendly advances and assurances of peace by violating the Rhine Pact by virtue of a military alliance with the Soviet Union directed exclusively against Germany.

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Hence the Rhine Pact of Locarno has lost its inherent meaning and ceased, in a practical sense, to exist. As a consequence, Germany no longer views itself as bound for its part to this lapsed Pact. The German Government is now compelled to react to the new situation created by this alliance, a situation aggravated by the fact that the Franco-Soviet Agreement has been supplemented by a treaty of alliance between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union with arrangements which are exactly parallel. In the interest of the primal right of a people to safeguard its borders and maintain its possibilities of defense, the German Reich Government has today re-established the full and unlimited sovereignty of the Reich in the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland.

Hitler then expanded upon his “seven points,” which related his idea of how to “establish a system for securing peace in Europe.” His love of peace was so overwhelming that he practically reeked of it. Obviously, his main purpose was to divert the attention of the Western Powers from his occupation of the Rhineland. He came up with a suggestion for the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with France and Belgium for the next twenty-five years. He even considered making the Netherlands party to such an alliance, which might include aviation concerns as well. He was not opposed to the idea of incorporating Germany’s neighbors to the East, similar to the manner in which Germany and Poland were linked. He even considered including Lithuania in a like security structure. Indeed, Hitler even offered to withdraw his forces from the Rhineland, if France established a corresponding demilitarized zone on the Western bank of the river. As a final treat, he alluded to a possible return of Germany to the League of Nations. It was easy for Hitler to propose such suggestions. He knew he needed not fear any of them being carried through. Should indeed per chance one of these agreements materialize, he intended to consider it binding only as long as it was convenient for him.

The verbatim content of Hitler’s suggestions is reproduced below:

However, in order to prevent any misinterpretation of its intentions and to erase any doubt as to the purely defensive character of these measures, as well as to lend emphasis to its eternally given yearning for a true pacification of Europe between states enjoying equal rights and equal respect, the German Reich Government declares its willingness to assent to the following proposals for new agreements towards establishing a system for securing peace in Europe:

1. The German Reich Government declares its willingness to immediately enter into negotiations with France and Belgium concerning the formation of a mutually demilitarized zone and to give its consent to such a proposal from the very beginning, regardless of extent and effects, under the condition, however, of complete parity.

2. The German Reich Government proposes that for the purpose of ensuring the intactness and inviolability of the borders in the West, a nonaggression pact be concluded between Germany, France and Belgium, whereby it is willing to fix the term of same at twenty-five years.

3. The German Reich Government desires to invite England and Italy to sign this treaty as Guarantor Powers.

4. The German Reich Government agrees, in the event that the Royal Dutch Government so desires, and the other contracting parties hold it to be fitting, that the Netherlands be included in this treaty system.

5. The German Reich Government is willing to conclude an air pact as a further reinforcement of these security arrangements between the Western Powers which shall suffice to effectively and automatically ban the risk of unexpected air attacks.

6. The German Reich Government repeats its offer to conclude non-aggression pacts with the states bordering Germany to the East such as that with Poland. Due to the fact that the Lithuanian Government has made a certain correction in its position regarding the Memel territory within the past months, the German Reich Government withdraws the exception it was once compelled to make as regards Lithuania and declares its willingness, under the condition of an effective development of the guaranteed autonomy for the Memel territory, to sign such a non-aggression pact with Lithuania as well.

7. Now that final equality of rights has been achieved for Germany and its complete sovereignty over the entire German Reich territory has been restored, the German Reich Government regards the main reason for its earlier withdrawal from the League of Nations as having been remedied. Thus it is willing to once more join the League of Nations. In this context, it may state that it anticipates that, within the course of an appropriate period, both the question of colonial equality of rights and the question of separating the Covenant of the League of Nations from its Versailles foundation will be settled by way of amicable negotiations.

As Hitler's lengthy speech drew to a close, he pronounced two "sacred, inner vows." For one, he would "rather perish honorably from the gravest distress than ever capitulate before it." Secondly, he promised to work "now more than ever" to achieve "an understanding between the peoples of Europe." He had "no territorial claims to make in Europe."⁷⁰ He had been able to endure "countless sleepless nights and days filled with work" only because he always had felt himself to be the true leader and representative of the Volk, and he had never seen himself as a dictator. To give the people a chance to judge for themselves, he had decided to dissolve the Reichstag.

Men, Deputies of the German Reichstag!

In this historic hour when German troops are presently occupying their future garrisons of peace in the Reich's western provinces, may we all join together to stand by two sacred, inner vows:

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First, to the oath that we shall never yield to any power or any force in restoring the honor of our Volk and would rather perish honorably from the gravest distress than ever capitulate before it.

Secondly, to the vow that now more than ever shall we dedicate ourselves to achieving an understanding between the peoples of Europe and particularly an understanding with our Western peoples and neighbors. After three years, I believe that today the struggle for German equality of rights can be deemed concluded.

I believe that the initial reason for our earlier withdrawal from a collective European cooperation has now ceased to exist. If we are now, therefore, once more willing to return to this cooperation, we are doing so with the sincere desire that these events and a retrospective on those years will aid us in cultivating a deeper understanding of this cooperation among other European peoples as well. We have no territorial claims to make in Europe. Above all, we are aware that all the tensions resulting either from erroneous territorial provisions or from the disproportion between the size of a population and its Lebensraum can never be solved by wars in Europe. However, we do hope that human insight will help to alleviate the painfulness of this state of affairs and relieve tensions by means of a gradual evolutionary development marked by peaceful cooperation.

Specifically, I sense today above all the necessity to honor those obligations imposed upon us by the national honor and freedom we have regained, obligations not only to our own Volk, but to the other European states as well. Hence at this time I would like to recall to the minds of European statesmen the thoughts I expressed in the thirteen points of my last speech here with the assurance that we Germans are gladly willing to do everything possible and necessary toward putting these very realistic ideals into practice.

My Party Comrades! For three years now I have headed the Government of the German Reich and thus the German Volk. Great are the achievements which Providence has allowed me to accomplish for our Vaterland these three years. In every area of our national, political, and economic life, our position has improved. Yet today I may also confess that, for me, this time was accompanied by numerous cares, countless sleepless nights and days filled with work. I was only able to do all this because I have never regarded myself as a dictator of my Volk, but always as its Führer alone and thus as its agent. In the past, I fought for the inner approval of the German Volk for my ideals for fourteen years, and then by virtue of its trust, I was appointed by the venerable Field Marshal. But since then I have drawn all my energy solely from the happy consciousness of being inseparably bound up with my Volk as a man and as Führer. I cannot close this historic period, in which the honor and freedom of my Volk have been restored, without now asking the German Volk to grant to me—and hence to all my co-workers and co-fighters—in retrospect their approval for everything I have had to do during those years in the way of making decisions that often appeared stubborn, in carrying out harsh measures, and in demanding difficult sacrifices.

Therefore I have come to the decision to dissolve the German Reichstag today so that the German Volk may pass its judgment on my leadership and

that of my co-workers. In these three years, Germany has regained once more its honor, found once more a faith, overcome its greatest economic crisis, and ushered in a new cultural ascent. I believe I can say this as my conscience and God are my witnesses. I now ask the German Volk to strengthen me in my belief and to continue giving me, through the power of its will, power of my own to take a courageous stand at all times for its honor and freedom and to ensure its economic well-being; above all, to support me in my struggle for real peace.

Once the applause for Hitler had died down in the Reichstag, Göring read “a message from the Führer” to the deputies, which was nothing other than the order of dissolution for the Reichstag.⁷¹ It was the very first time that Hitler himself, in his capacity as Head of State, effected the dissolution. Certain of himself, Hitler did not even find it necessary to refer to Article 25 of the Weimar Constitution in his ordinance, the statute which granted such power to the Head of State. The message read as follows:

I dissolve the Reichstag as of March 28, 1936, with the intent to afford the German Volk the opportunity to formally acclaim the policy resolved upon today, which restitutes national honor and sovereignty to the Reich and is tied to a sincere striving for a true understanding and reconciliation among the peoples of the world on the basis of equal rights and obligations. The new elections to the Reichstag will take place on Sunday, March 29, 1936.

Berlin, March 7, 1936 The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

On March 8, Hitler attended the *Heldengedenktag* ceremony in Berlin, that was completely marked by the military intervention in the Rhineland the day before. At 7:00 p.m. in the Berlin Herrenhaus, Hitler gave an address to the leading men within the Party, in which he distributed the guidelines for the upcoming election campaign.⁷²

At the end of the day, a torchlight procession of party formations, led by the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, moved down Wilhelmstrasse. It passed by beneath the Führer, demonstrating the men’s gratitude for Hitler’s restoration of military sovereignty and of “national honor” to Germany. Shortly after 10:15 p.m., Hitler stepped onto the new balcony at the Chancellery, that had been installed in order to render such displays of popular enthusiasm more effective. The crowd burst out singing: “*Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall . . .*”⁷³

The first reaction abroad to the remilitarization of the Rhineland came in a French radio broadcast on the topic of the earlier Franco-German talks. This broadcast and the German response to it were published by the German News Bureau in the following report:⁷⁴

Saturday night, all French radio stations disseminated the following information:

The day subsequent to the last interview of the Chancellor, Flandin had not even hesitated one day to send the French Ambassador to the Führer. The Ambassador inquired as to the nature of the documents, which the Führer proposed be discussed at Franco-German consultations. In reply, the Chancellor stated that such documents had to be drawn up yet. He implored the French Ambassador to treat this diplomatic advance on his part confidentially. M. Flandin complied with the Führer's request and did not publish an official note on the subject. All the greater was the astonishment of the French Government today, as it finds itself faced with a unilateral German declaration and with the abrogation of treaties, which Germany had signed of its own free will. The following is to be said with regard to this matter:

1. In truth, the Führer's interview lay on the desk of the French Embassy that same day, and assuredly, it was at the disposal of the French Government no later than the next day. Regrettably, the French Government did not wait only one day, but rather several days, before allowing for the publication of the interview. In the interim, the Chamber of Deputies had already ratified the agreement with the Soviet Union. The French Government did not commission its Ambassador to request further particulars on the topic until the following day, that is one week later.

2. The inquiry presented by the French Ambassador was to the effect of asking the Führer and Reich Chancellor to be so kind as to provide more precise information on the topic of the offer of Franco-German negotiations, as proposed in the interview. The French Ambassador was informed to the extent that repeated, detailed German offers had consistently failed to elicit a response on the part of France. It was never suggested to the French Ambassador that his visit be kept secret by the French Government. Rather, the issue had merely been the refusal to issue a joint communiqué. There had been no conceivable reason why the French Government for its part should have refrained from making public the fact of the French Ambassador's visit.

It is easily understood why the German Government had little desire to publish a joint communiqué to account for the oddly belated publication of the interview and thereby to retroactively sanction the consequences it entailed.

For two hours on March 9, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price. Here once again, Hitler detailed his various "peace plans" and gave a rather lame explanation of his forced entry into the Rhineland.⁷⁵ Ward Price presented Hitler with five concrete inquiries.

First question: Does the Führer's offer of a non-aggression pact to every Eastern neighbor of Germany also apply to Austria? Does he consider Czechoslovakia as a state neighboring Germany in the East, too?

Answer: My proposal for the conclusion of non-aggression pacts both to the East and West of Germany was of a general nature, i.e. there were no exclusions. Hence, this applies to both Czechoslovakia and Austria.

Second question: Does the Führer intend to return Germany to the League of Nations so that his proposals might be placed before that body for consideration, with Germany a full member of the League's Council? Or would he prefer to call for an international conference to deal with the matter?

Answer: In the stead of Germany, I declared it willing to immediately join the League of Nations. I do so in the expectation that, in due time, both the question of colonial claims and the question of a divorce of the Covenant of the League of Nations from the so-called peace treaty would be resolved.

I believe it would be most practical if the Governments in question would directly take responsibility for the conclusion of the non-aggression pacts proposed by the German Government. This means that in the case of pacts securing the borders between Germany, France, and Belgium (and perhaps, given the circumstances, even Holland) the powers invited to participate would consist of the Governments involved and England and Italy—the signatory powers and guarantors of the agreement. It might be a good idea if those countries which will be secured by these pacts approach their future guarantors. The non-aggression pacts with the other states could then be negotiated in the manner in which the German-Polish pact was concluded, in other words, directly between the Governments involved.

In addition to that, Germany would certainly be content if another power—for instance England—assumed the role of an impartial mediator in the practical resolution of these questions.

Third question: It is highly unlikely that, given the upcoming elections in France in April, any French Government will be in a position to discuss your suggestions, even if it wanted to. Is Germany willing to keep its offer in force until after that date? Will Germany be undertaking any steps in the meantime that again might alter the present situation?

Answer: There need not be any change of the current situation, at least not on the part of the German Government. We have restored its sovereign rights to the German Reich and have brought ancient Reich territory back under the protection of the entire nation. Hence, for us, there is no need to set deadlines. I would like to make one thing clear, however. Should these proposals fail, or simply be ignored, like so many before them have been, then the German Government will not impose upon Europe with any further suggestions.

Fourth question: Now that the Führer has reclaimed total sovereignty over the entire German territory, is he willing to restrict the forces deployed in the Rhineland to a number that would preclude any offensive actions directed against France on the part of Germany?

Answer: It was not our intention to commit an act of aggression against France as we occupied the so-called “demilitarized” zone. Rather, we consider that such an enormous sacrifice by a nation is only conceivable and hence supportable if it is met with objectivity and political understanding on the part of the other party to the contract. Not Germany is in breach of contract! Ever since the signing of the armistice agreement based on President Wilson's Fourteen Points, the following customs have been observed in Europe.

Whenever victor and vanquished draw up a contract between each other, the vanquished becomes obliged to observe its conventions while the victor may proceed as he sees fit and as suits his purposes. You cannot deny the fact that the provisions of Wilson's Fourteen Points and the three additional contracts supplementing it were not upheld.

Further, you cannot deny the fact that their general disarmament provisions were not upheld on the part of the victorious powers. And the letters of the Locarno Pact as well are of significance since they additionally carry political weight.

Had the Franco-Russian agreement of May 2, 1935 been on the books already upon the signature of the Locarno Pact, then naturally there would have been no signing of the Rhine Pact. It is unacceptable that, retroactively, a contract should take on a different meaning or should be interpreted in a manner not intended. In the case before us not only the spirit but also the letter of the Locarno Pact was violated. The conclusion of a military alliance between the Soviet Union and France brings Germany into a position in which it is forced to draw certain conclusions. It is nothing but these conclusions that I have drawn!

After all, it is clearly impossible that, with France concluding such a military alliance, such a densely populated and economically vital border region of the German Reich should be left defenseless and without protection. This is the most natural and instinctive reaction to such a move.

Perhaps in England, I fear, there may be many persons who do not realize that the so-called "demilitarized" zone has about as many inhabitants as does, for instance, the Czechoslovakian State or Yugoslavia. The area is merely being furnished with garrisons to protect its freedom precisely as in the other parts of the Reich—no more and no less! There cannot be any talk of massing troops along the border for offensive purposes because:

a) Germany no longer has anything to demand of France and it will not demand anything anymore;

b) Germany itself has called for the establishment of non-aggression pacts, expressing the desire that England and Italy might become signatory powers and guarantors of these agreements;

c) massing troops along the border would be unnecessary from a military point of view and, as a matter of fact, it would be senseless!

Moreover, we want to create a future in which these two countries no longer feel threatened by one another. When M. Sarraut⁷⁶ declares that he cannot support the sight of German cannons threatening the Strasbourg fortress, it ought to be quite obvious that we too cannot support the sight of French fortress cannons threatening our open cities Frankfurt, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, etc. Such a sense of threat could be prevented by finding a mutual solution to the question of the "demilitarized" zone.

Fifth question: Will the Führer tell the world, why he has chosen this particular path to attain his goal? Why did he not first present his suggestions to the public and then demand the remilitanzation of the Rhineland in return? I am certain that the entire world would have agreed enthusiastically.

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Does he have any particular motive necessitating such a speedy action on his part?

Answer: I have already dealt with this topic at great length in my speech before the Reichstag. However, let me touch upon your remark that any solutions proposed by me, divorced from a military occupation of the Rhineland, would have assuredly been greeted with great enthusiasm. That is well possible. Yet this regrettably is not the crucial point. It was I, for instance, who proposed the 300,000-man army. I still think that was a most reasonable proposal. It certainly was a concrete proposal and it would greatly have contributed to a lessening of tensions in Europe. No doubt, many people welcomed it. Indeed, the French and British Governments have even adopted this proposal.

Nonetheless, it was rejected. Thus, for better or for worse I had to proceed as sole bearer of responsibility. After all, I sought to secure equal rights for Germany in questions of armament, thereby resolving one of the most burning issues in Europe today. No one can deny Germany's moral claim to these rights. And this time as well, the outcome would have been no different. It is well possible that if I had first made my proposal public, demanding the restitution of full sovereignty to the Reich in the demilitarized zone as well, it would have been welcomed and understood by the world public. However, based on my experiences in the past, I did not believe that we ever would have come together at the conference table. Yet if one party to an agreement moves against the spirit and letter of the contract, then it is only natural that the other party withdraw from its obligations as well. And that is precisely what I did! Moreover, if ever a French or British statesman encountered his people in similar distress as I found my own Volk, then I have no doubts that he would have proceeded in precisely the same manner, given the same circumstances. He will do so in the future as well, I am certain.

Rarely does the present realize the full import of an event of historic proportion. No doubt, posterity will see that it was morally more decent and appropriate to eliminate the cause of these insupportable tensions in order to finally arrive at a reasonable approach in that opening of doors we all desired. It was far better to proceed in this manner than to try to maintain such a position, a position which ran contrary to any considerations of common sense and reason.

Once the proposals of the German Reich Government have been accepted, it is my firm conviction that posterity will deem these proposals to have rendered a great service to Europe and to the cause of peace.

At the same time the interview was published, Hitler expressed his gratitude to those men who had taken the oath of loyalty:⁷⁷

Berlin, March 11, 1936

On the occasion of the speech before the Reichstag and of the return of German troops to their peacetime garrisons in the Rhineland on March 7, the Führer and Reich Chancellor received a great number of pledges of loyalty, wired avowals of gratitude and other avowals by German Volksgenossen

both here and abroad, in particularly great number from the cities and communities of the formerly demilitarized zone. To his regret, the Führer cannot possibly send individual replies to all the congratulations by the various party formations, clubs and associations, factories, schools and families. He wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude to all those who pledged themselves to him loyally in the course of these days and who thus expressed their support for him as well as their best wishes for his undertakings.

The military occupation of the Rhineland went smoothly, without provoking any foreign intervention. While the German generals had been skeptical at the beginning of the venture, Hitler had maintained a supreme confidence. Later, even in the course of the Second World War, Hitler repeatedly claimed:⁷⁸

The forty-eight hours subsequent to the occupation of the Rhineland have been the most exciting in all my life. Had the French back then marched into the Rhineland, we would have been forced to withdraw, greatly losing face, since our armed forces back then did not possess sufficient strength to mount even the most modest resistance.

Such additional statements by Hitler must not be taken at face value. Retrospectively, he often termed something the “most difficult decision” or the “most daring venture” of his life, in order to add color to his rhetoric, or simply as a spontaneous expression of his bombastic exuberance. Nonetheless, it is possible that he was indeed worried on the seventh and eighth of March. These worries, however, could not have been so grave as the fears of military intervention he had entertained in 1933 immediately after Germany withdrew from the League of Nations.

By 1936, Hitler had become convinced that he had witnessed sufficient signs of weakness in France and senility in England that he felt there was little risk in remilitarizing the Rhineland. He intended to eliminate even the remotest possibility of an intervention by the Western Powers through frequent Machiavellian phraseology and assurances of his peaceful intentions and with his Reichstag speech. Indeed, to Hitler the failure of the Western Powers to react energetically to the Rhineland occupation was a direct result of his own rhetorical efforts. However, in this assumption he made a fundamental error.

Although the occupation of the Rhineland was a glaring breach of both the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Pact, it was not sufficient cause for a *casus belli*. After all, the international legal principles of self-determination of a people and the guarantee of equal treatment under the law precluded any refutation or forceful response by the Western

Powers. The clauses in the Treaty of Versailles concerning the status of the Rhineland were highly questionable on the grounds of international law. The Western Powers were well aware of this fact. The early withdrawal of Western occupation forces and the creation of a demilitarized zone had demonstrated a reluctance to insist that no German troops be stationed in the Rhineland.⁷⁹

Already in the twenties, Marshal Foch had argued that “the guarantee [of demilitarization] is an illusion.” He claimed that withdrawing troops from the Rhineland amounted to abandoning the goal of demilitarization.⁸⁰ The most important things are the bridges across the Rhine; whoever controls these will prevail. Once we withdraw from the Rhineland, the bridges will be 150 kilometers away from us. Prussia stands only 50 kilometers from the crossings and thus will be the first there. Undoubtedly they will be the first to take the bridges, and that is precisely why I had demanded the military occupation of the Rhineland in the first place.” Time would prove the validity of Foch’s assessment.

Even though the Western Powers did not respond militarily to Hitler’s actions along the Rhine, they did not refrain because of weakness. Fundamentally, they were willing to agree to Hitler’s demands if these appeared to have any legal foundation; rather they had long given up the territory in their minds. The Führer’s rhetorical efforts, contrary to his fervent conviction, played no part in their calculations. They did not judge Hitler on the basis of his rhetoric but in accordance with his deeds. And in fact, without giving prior notice, he had committed a unilateral breach of an international treaty.

The extent to which Hitler’s argumentation failed to influence the Western Powers was evident in the London discussion of the remilitarization of the Rhineland in the session of the Council of the League of Nations.

Astonishingly, Hitler accepted the invitation to attend the meeting, and assigned Ribbentrop as his Ambassador Extraordinary to present the German case to the Council.⁸¹ Ribbentrop acted as Hitler’s mouthpiece, reciting the Führer’s instructions nearly verbatim. He merely reiterated the arguments Hitler had employed in his speech before the Reichstag.

The Council members patiently waited for hours for Ribbentrop to come to a close with his—or better Hitler’s—argumentation, without responding in any manner. Only the Soviet delegate Litvinov seemed tempted at times to retort to some of the allegations, but was silenced

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by the remaining members of the Council. Then, without any debate, the Council unanimously condemned Germany's action and passed the following resolution which had been submitted in the name of Belgium and France:

The Council of the League of Nations declares that the German Government committed breach of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles on March 7, 1936, when it sent troops into the demilitarized zone, which is defined in Article 42 and the following of the above stated treaty and in the Locarno Pact.

All oratory efforts had been in vain. Germany's breach of contract was inscribed in the book of history by the unanimous judgment of an international forum. However, the breach did not provoke any military reaction. Hitler had not invaded foreign territory nor had a single shot been fired on foreign people—that was the crucial point. Nonetheless, Hitler's first use of force greatly damaged his image abroad.

3

On March 12, Hitler began his campaign for the upcoming Reichstag election. In the course of the campaign he gave speeches in a total of eleven German cities. In comparison to his intensive campaigning during 1932 and 1933, this was a modest effort. As mentioned before, Hitler had lost his taste for real mass rallies, since he sensed that popular enthusiasm for him had cooled markedly in the aftermath of the Röhm Purge, and in particular after the reintroduction of compulsory military service in 1935.

However, in the March 1936 campaign, he did not have to fear a lack of enthusiasm among his listeners. The remilitarization of the Rhineland had shocked the German public much less than the reintroduction of general conscription the previous year. The majority of the people were not even aware of the fact that certain regions in the Reich were not occupied by the German military. Most Germans had not been affected personally by Hitler's operation. The Rhineland's inhabitants, who had not seen any German troops since 1918, were partly overwhelmed by genuinely patriotic feelings; others were motivated by economic and personal considerations.

It would be superfluous to reproduce all of Hitler's March 1936 campaign speeches here.⁸² Mostly the speeches consisted of lengthy and tiring "party narratives," and endless repetitions of arguments which had already appeared in the Reichstag speech. Thus, only excerpts which contain new information are cited below. In one speech at the *Hochschulkampfbahn* (University Stadium) in Karlsruhe on March 12, Hitler explained his worldwide mission as a bearer of peace in the following terms:

I know no regime of the bourgeoisie, no regime of the workers, no regime of the city dwellers, no regime of trade or commerce. Nor do I know a regime of industry; I know only a regime of the German Volk! [—]

I have endeavored to bring to the German Volk internal peace. Today, after three years, I can say: the German Volk is internally the most content people in the world. It is my desire to resolve the great differences in the life of peoples as I have those within this country—from the vantage points of law, of justness, and hence of reason.

One might say, “that is not possible, that is fantastic, those are ideologies.” Well, I believe in these ideologies, and wonderful things have already been accomplished in this sector! I am not approaching the German Volk as an idle gabbler. I can say: these thoughts have guided me for three years, and they have guided me well.

When I took over the government three years ago, the German Volk was surrounded only by animosity in Europe. And the worst thing about it was that this mentality appeared to be based on so little reflection on every side; neither here nor elsewhere had the problems been thought over with sufficient sobriety. People were allowing themselves to be driven into hatred, envy, fear, and jealousy.

I have endeavored to introduce reason into Germany’s relations with its environment. I have endeavored to promote these relations on the basis of principles which have proven to be eternally just, principles of a shared sense of belonging to the human race and of working on behalf of the human community.

I have attempted to make clear to the world and the German Volk that Europe is a limited term; that no far-reaching shifts have taken place in this small Europe for centuries; that here in Europe we have one family of peoples; that the individual members of this family are each, however, tremendously consolidated. That they represent nations rich in traditions, looking back on a great past and a culture they call their own, and proudly place their hopes in the future. I have endeavored to make comprehensible to our Volk and, in addition, to the others as well, that every hate-filled conflict will reap only very short-lived, minor successes.

The European borders of the states may change, but their peoples remain stable! One can change the borders between states, but the borders between peoples have become virtually unalterable!

There are no empty spaces in Europe into which the masses in Europe could flood. There are no unconsolidated peoples in Europe which could easily be deprived of their essential character. But neither is there any necessity for this, and, therefore, it is senseless to attempt to divest a people of its individuality and force it to take on an alien one. I have endeavored, proceeding from this quite sober consideration, to improve Germany’s relations with its surroundings, and my efforts have not been without success.

Three years ago, when Germany stood in profound opposition to Poland, I succeeded in gradually lessening those tensions, and thanks to the profound understanding of another great leader and statesman,⁸³ the attempt of two peoples to slowly approach one another was successful.

From this rapprochement there gradually grew an understanding, and from this understanding the conviction of the necessity for living side by side in friendship, and from that in turn grew mutual consideration. I am of the

conviction that, after a certain time has passed, it will have become incomprehensible that two peoples could possibly have lived within the framework of an evolving, so-called “traditional archenemy relationship.” I have endeavored to bring about a normalization of this relationship between the two peoples, as far as concerns Germany. This has been successful for the benefit of both peoples. I have attempted to transfer this same idea from the East to the West. Here as well I endeavored as a German National Socialist—as the first, I believe—to show that further maintaining this so-called “doctrine of the hereditary enemy” (*Erbfeindschaftslehre*) must be and is unreasonable—because pointless—for both peoples. Granted—here, too, many will perhaps say that is but an ideal. Yet I believe in this ideal and believe that one day reason shall triumph here as well! In any case, I believe it will be necessary to do everything to help this reason be victorious.

My own policy of rapprochement is based on this, namely, on the idea that there can be either two partners with equal rights or none at all. Only this equality of rights can bring forth mutual respect, and only from this mutual respect can esteem for one another ensue, and only from this esteem for one another can mutual consideration finally grow.

Both peoples have drenched the battlefields countless times with the blood of their best men. The borders moved fifty, 100 kilometers back and forth from one side to the other. A final decision would never come about in this way; yet the two peoples would again and again lose their best blood while their economy suffered from the trouble and distrust, the fear and the hatred. I believe that calm deliberation must one day show these two peoples the path to an understanding. And that is what I am offering toward such an understanding, as spokesman for more than sixty-seven million people! Then again, there are many who say reason is not what matters; there are other imponderabilities to be taken into consideration. I believe that nothing of value exists which cannot ultimately be grasped by reason as well.

I object that, in statesmanship, certain views are found to be correct which cannot be anchored in reason. Sometimes I am told: but that has never been the case before, and statesmanship has proven that it is not possible on the long term. No, statesmanship teaches us the opposite, that past policies have not led to long-range success, and thus I reject this type of statesmanship.

Hitler then declared that his ambition was not to attain any military triumphs. Rather he wished to be remembered by the Volk as a man of peace. Nearly every sentence began with the tell-tale word “I”.

I am told that, if you are a German nationalist, you must want military triumphs. I can only say that my ambition is directed toward completely different triumphs. I am a German nationalist and will represent my Volk with all the zealotry of a soldier in that great army of the past. It is my ambition to establish a memorial to myself within the German Volk. But I am also aware that it would be better to erect this memorial in peacetime rather than in times of war. My ambition is aimed at creating the best possible institutions for training our Volk. I want that we in Germany have the greatest stadiums; that

our road network is expanded; that our culture becomes elevated and refined; I want our cities to become beautiful; I want to put Germany at the top in every field of human cultural life and cultural aspiration. That is my ambition!

I want the working capacity of my Volk not to lie fallow, but to be utilized to give us new values. I want to convert this working capacity into beauty for our Volk, into life and joy for our Volk. I want to dedicate my efforts toward ensuring that this Volk can lead its life as free of cares as possible. I shall dedicate my efforts toward ensuring that its life-goods are distributed as rationally as possible. However, I do not want anyone else to interfere here and think he can take anything away from us!

I live only for my Volk, and the National Socialist Movement thinks only of this Volk.

I live only for the thought of the future of this Volk seeing before me these countless millions of people who work so hard and have so little to live on, who often have to struggle with so many cares, and who are so seldom favored by fortune. The National Socialist Movement wants only to help these people; it wants to try to make their life easier, to organize it more pleasantly. Toward this purpose, it will place all the capacities of its work, its genius, and its organizational talent at the service of maintaining this life.

Thus I ask of you, go to the polls this coming election day. Do your duty and do not forget: Germany is not borne by a single man, but by the entire German Volk. And one man can only be the spokesman for this Volk as long as this Volk stands behind this man—man for man and woman for woman. It is not for myself that I ask you to do your duty on this March 29, but for our Volk and its future.

Whereas we shall perish, Germany will survive! We may die, but Germany must live, now and for all time to come!

At the exhibition halls in Munich on March 14, Hitler delivered another campaign speech, in which he stated:

Neither threats nor warnings will prevent me from going my way. I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker. My destination is the peace rooted in the equal rights of the nations. We are one of Europe's major powers and wish to be respected as a major power.

No warning, even if intended to be beneficial, did any good with Hitler, in particular if it concerned any of his preconceived notions in matters of foreign policy, that he had cherished ever since 1919. Indeed he proceeded with "the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker" as he himself phrased it. His secure steps were numbered, however, and it was merely a question of time that he would finally lose his balance and fall.

Hitler's Munich speech drew to a close and he appealed to the audience:

The German Volk shall now judge. Three years ago I was called upon, borne up by the trust of the German Volk,⁸⁴ and summoned by the old Field Marshal.

Now I have worked for three years, together with my men, my companions and comrades in arms. And now the German Volk shall judge whether or not I have been industrious these three years, whether I have worked these three years, or not worked.

It shall judge whether Germany has become weaker in these three years or stronger; it shall judge whether Germany has become poorer or richer; it shall judge whether the German nation has declined in these three years or whether it has undergone a resurrection—this is what the German Volk shall now judge!

It shall further judge whether I have represented its interests to the world, whether I have represented them courageously and bravely or whether I have betrayed them. It shall ultimately judge whether it possesses the same sense of honor regarding its life and its existence as I do.

I am expecting this judgment. And I know it will become the greatest historic authorization I have. And then I will be able to stride forth before the world and say, "It is not I who am speaking thus, but the German Volk that has spoken!"

On March 16, Hitler consecrated the so-called *Truppenfahnen*,⁸⁵ flags with new insignias for the various divisions, and addressed the ordinance reproduced below to the Wehrmacht:⁸⁶

Today, on the first anniversary of the rebirth of the German Wehrmacht, I hereby present to the Wehrmacht its *Truppenfahnen*.

The glorious career of the old Wehrmacht was put to an end by the events of 1918. Yet while tenacious soldierly spirit tested throughout the centuries can perhaps be suppressed in times of national misfortune, it can never be defeated. May the new banners serve as a symbol of this. Further details will be handled by the Reich Minister of War.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

That evening Hitler spoke at another campaign rally in Frankfurt am Main (Festhalle). Here again, he came to speak of the introduction of the swastika as the national flag of Germany and maintained:

I have abolished these sixteen or seventeen flags of the Länder and placed a single flag in their stead with the aim of giving Germany what all nations of the world call their own.

Actually the matter had nothing to do with the removal of Länder flags! Rather, the issue centered on the black-white-red flag of the German Empire that had been banned because it reflected reactionary sentiments. Hitler continued to argue:

All of the rules of law are subject to the natural right to live and the freedom of that right to live God-given to man. The peoples are more eternal than bad treaties can be. The peoples live longer than unreasonable regulations or extortionate measures can possibly survive.

Once and for all a line must be drawn between that past, the present and the future. [—]

I would be prepared at any time to reach a settlement with the French Government. We call upon the two peoples. I will submit to the German Volk the question:

“German Volk, do you want the hatchet to finally be buried between ourselves and France, and peace and understanding to be brought about? If this is what you want, say yes.”⁸⁷ And then one should address this same question to the French people on the other side. And there is no doubt in my mind that it equally desires understanding, and it equally desires reconciliation. I will then further ask the German Volk, “Do you want us to oppress the French people or accord it lesser rights?” And it will reply, “No, that is not what we want!”

Then they should pose the same question to the population over there, whether it wants the German Volk to have fewer rights in its own four walls than any other people. And it is my conviction that the French people will say, “No, that is not what we want!”

I am expecting your decision, and I know it will confirm that I am right! I will accept your decision as the voice of the Volk, which is the voice of God. Enter into this 29th of March with the deep-felt, sacred conviction that you are to submit an historic ballot for which each and every one of us will one day be examined and judged. I have now done my duty for three-and-a-half years. German Volk, now is the time for you to do yours!

Similar ideas would also be present in Hitler’s March 18 campaign speech in Königsberg.

The following day, the aforementioned judgment on Germany by the Council of the League of Nations, was made public. One can only imagine Hitler’s anger at this defeat. London had listened to his tirades, ignored them, and turned its attention back to the issues of the day. Nobody had bothered to respond to Hitler’s sophistic arguments. Hitler was particularly infuriated by Eden—British Foreign Secretary since December 1935—and his advice to Ribbentrop that Germany would do well to make at least a symbolic gesture, as, for example, to refrain from fortifying the military installations in the Rhineland.

However, such a fortification was part of Hitler’s grand design. Reinforced by a speedily assembled line of fortifications, he believed that his western flank could not be penetrated, thus allowing him to proceed with his conquest of the East. Not surprisingly, Hitler’s speeches from March 20 through March 28 included a series of

defamations of British statesmen. Through an international committee, the British had dared to condemn Germany for breach of contract before the entire world. Now they had the impudence to demand token gestures and symbolic actions of Hitler. Contracts, articles, gestures, and symbolic actions—what were these in comparison to the “generous offers of peace” and the “plans of a new order for Europe” that the Führer envisioned?

On March 20, Hitler declared in Hamburg (Hanseatenhalle):

It is a pity that the statesmen—and population—of the rest of the world cannot catch a glimpse of modern Germany. They would, I believe, then be cured of their misconception that this Volk is languishing under a dictatorship that oppresses it, and of their misconception that one can do with this Volk what one wishes! [—]

The German Volk will cast its vote on March 29 not for my regime—I need no votes for that [!]. However, I do need the German Volk in a battle I am waging for its own sake only, in a battle for equal German rights, in a battle against the presumptuousness of others who are once again treating the German Volk as inferior. I need the German nation in order to proclaim with it to the whole world the vow that, come what may, we will not retreat an inch from our claims to equality of rights. Not because we desire a disruption of European order, but because it is our conviction that a long-term order in Europe is only conceivable given peoples with equal rights. The view that it is possible to base European order on the defamation of a population of sixty-seven million for any length of time is ahistoric, insane and a folly. [—]

My only aim is that this German Volk grows to become an equal member of the European community. I feel sorry for the statesmen who believe that such participation is best prefaced by a new defamation of the German nation. Were they to look beyond the immediate moment, beyond the supposed success of days, weeks or months, they would be frightened by the realization of the inevitable consequences of such ahistoric action. [—]

I, on the other hand, must profess: never was the Party as attached to me and never was this unity between Führer and Movement stronger than when the opponents believed they had already conquered us or were capable of wrestling us down! We have always achieved the greatest determination in the gravest crisis.

I know that the German Volk will stand as one, united as never before, come what may. Führer and Volk have but one desire: to live in peace and friendship with the other peoples; yet they also have but one resolve: by no means to abandon the claim to equality of rights.

Even if the rest of the world has not yet lost the spirit of Versailles, the German Volk has dismissed it, once and for all!

The problem with which we are faced is not the revision of the letter of the Treaty, but the revision of an outlook evidenced in the fact that now, seventeen years after the end of the War, the belief persists that it is possible to deny the German Volk its equality of rights.

This problem must be solved, and there is only one way to do it: either it is solved decently, as is our goal, and we are thus enabled to cooperate with the rest of Europe, or Germany will go its own way alone—but under no circumstances will it ever again betray its rights or its honor!

This resolve is a threat to no one. On the contrary! It takes an impossible burden off the world! It was on the basis of this resolve that our generous offer was made, an offer from which we hope—still hope—that it can contribute to giving Europe a long-awaited peace. We stand by this offer. The world asks, “Yes, but will they adhere to it?” The world has no business whatsoever talking about complying with treaties. We could draw up a balance showing how treaties have been complied with since 1918. The German Volk will allow no one to deny it its honor. We, for our part, do not take the liberty of censoring other peoples.

I have scheduled this election for all to see that I am not the only one with these concepts of honor; they are cherished by the entire nation! Let it be seen that I am not making this offer of peace on my own, but on behalf of these sixty-seven million; and further that I am not the only one who rejects insulting demands,⁸⁸ but that the entire German Volk will not stand for such treatment! I also want this vote to show the world that the bayonet does not tyrannize the Volk in Germany, but that here the government is supported by the trust of the entire population.

I myself come from out of the Volk. In fifteen years I have worked my way up out of this Volk with my Movement. I was not appointed by anyone to stand above this Volk.

It is from the Volk I have evolved, it is within the Volk I have remained, and it is to the Volk I shall return!⁸⁹ I will stake my ambition on the fact that there is no statesman I know in this world who has more right than I to say he is a representative of his Volk!

And if someone says, “But we know that anyway! Why all the excitement and the trouble, the rallies, and then voting all over again?”—My dear friend! Do you think that all this does not mean work and trouble for me? In my opinion, if I have been working for two or three years, you can go to the polls once, too! That is why you are here today, together with hundreds of thousands of fellow inhabitants of this Hanseatic city. That is why thousands of my leaders in the Movement have been visiting the German Gaus in recent weeks.

The aim is to document the indissoluble bond joining the Movement of the regime, the Party, and the German Volk to its leadership!

Hence today, my German Volk, I call upon you: stand behind me with your faith! Be the source of my power and my faith. Do not forget: he who does not abandon his principles in this world will not be abandoned by the Almighty either! The Almighty will always help those who help themselves; He will always show them the way to their rights, their freedom and thus to their future. And this is the reason why you, German Volk, are going to the polls on March 29.

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

Two days later, Hitler proclaimed in Breslau (Jahrhunderthalle):

We—and all other peoples—have the feeling we are at the turning point of an age. New concepts, new ideas and new realities are in the air. Not only we, the vanquished of yore, but the victors, too, are of the inner conviction that something was awry, that reason in particular seemed to have deserted mankind, that in place of reason had come the insanity of hatred, jealousy, and envy, and this in turn had evoked feelings of fear and apprehension.

The peoples are sensing it everywhere: a new order must come, above all on this continent, on which the peoples are pressed so closely together. The peoples must find a new way to deal with each other. A new construction must be built which allows all of them to live, which is based upon the conviction that the diverse peoples are realities in a historical sense; while one can perhaps wish they did not exist, they cannot be done away with. The new order to be established must, however, be headed by the words, “Reason and Logic, Understanding, and Mutual Consideration”!

Those who believe that the word “Versailles” might stand at the entrance to this new order are mistaken. That would not be the cornerstone of a new order, but its gravestone. Germany is striving for this new order. Not for an order which takes anything away from the other peoples, but for one which establishes equal rights as the basis for gladly assuming equal obligations. Today the German Volk lives these views, it lives them to such an extent that it is impossible to remove them from the world of its ideas. [—]

The claim that this restoration of the Reich’s sovereignty over its own Reich territory is intolerable for others is intolerable for us! What kind of an order is that, what kind of understanding between nations, if it is possible to threaten another people only because it claims sovereignty over its own territory? We will not capitulate before such views! Let the world take note of that!

It is of no consequence to us what other peoples do within their borders; in fact, we hold just that to be a prerequisite for the formation of a true order of the peoples, a true community of nations. We believe that one of the most basic principles for a true understanding between the peoples is that the people of each nation allow the people of another nation their space to live as they wish to live.

Germany makes no demands upon other peoples. But it is also not willing to recognize claims and demands of other statesmen pertaining to the inner organization of the Reich and its sovereign rights! And these men are mistaken

If they believe that is only the opinion of a man named Adolf Hitler! No! That is the opinion of a population of sixty-seven million!

We do not want gestures, we want twenty-five years of peace for Europe! And the peoples? They, too, do not want statesmen to demand gestures and make only gestures to one another; they want them to make peace and keep the peace!

Other statesmen can ask their people for once, too, whether they share this view. Whether they want Europe to be entangled in a score of military alliances. Whether they want one people or another to be deprived of part

of their sovereign rights—or fully denied them—on their own territory. Whether they want fresh bitterness and fresh hate to ensue, or whether they do not wish that this insane and foolish war of all against all might finally be put to an end!

In any case, I have asked this question. And directed it to the one body which is decisive for me and which alone has the power to pass judgment for or against me. This body is the German Volk! I have turned to the nation and presented to it this question: do you share my view?

I have surrendered myself to the judgment of the German Volk, and not only in respect to this question. It shall testify whether it believes that my co-fighters and I have done our duty. Whether it believes that we—to the extent to which weak, mortal man [!] is capable—have turned what we once promised into reality.

In his March 24 campaign speech in Berlin (Deutschlandhalle), Hitler once again expressed his displeasure with the British members of parliament and British statesmen in general:

I am not leading the life of a parliamentarian working in the dark; I am standing openly before the entire Volk; it can follow my path and my every action and come to its own conclusions.

He had felt compelled to eliminate the forty-seven political parties⁹⁰ which he claimed had destroyed Germany, because:

At that time [1933] action was called for! There could only be *one* leadership, *one* will, and *one* resolve. Not forty-seven deeds, but *one* deed. And he who justly assesses these three years will not be able to deny that events of import in terms of world history have been accomplished within this short time:

Germany has not only become united, but has also become stronger in every area of its life. Today it is a different Volk from four or five, or even ten years ago.

Today this Volk has a different spirit. It is guided by a different will and borne up by a different faith!

The world should know that this ostensible Germany of old no longer exists today! They should not be surprised that it no longer exists. In reality, it never existed! The rest of the world was only led to believe that it did!

The German Volk has remained honest and pure all those years, even though its former representatives dragged it through the mud! [—]

Let the rest of the world cling to the letter, I cling to an eternal moral! Let them cite sections to me, I pledge myself to the eternal right of a Volk to live! To equal rights and to equal obligations as well.

Let the others try to spell confessions of guilt from those letters and sections; I am forced, as representative of the German Volk, to stand up for the nation's right to live, for its honor, for its freedom, and for its vital interests.

He who would believe he might refuse to grant us honor and equality of rights should not talk about peace! He does not believe in peace and does

not want peace. He wants to sow discord among the peoples, perhaps in order to make political deals where this discord thrives. [—]

For three years now I have been fighting for these principles of German equality of rights. We do not want to deprive others of anything, but neither will we allow Germany to be deprived of anything! We do not want to offend anyone else's honor, but neither will we allow German honor to be treated lightly, as is being done in the spirit of Versailles. [—]

We do not want to rob other peoples of their peace and their freedom. But we also want to have our own freedom and our peace! [—]

When they say, "Why does that have to be now, in these three years—of course those are very pretty ideals, without a doubt, but why does it have to be now of all times?" my answer is: because I am living *now*, that's why it has to be *now*.

Each generation has a duty to make up for what has been done wrong through its actions and in its time. Our generation has fallen, and our generation must rise up once again! [—]

The peoples are yearning for peace, indeed—but for a peace that allows them to live side by side with equal rights. I do not believe that today any Volk seriously wants a neighboring people to be oppressed. I do not believe that *any* Volk wants a neighboring people to be humiliated, to be subjected to unreasonable demands⁹¹ which would make any decent man grow crimson with shame. I do not believe that!

I would like to thank Providence and the Almighty for choosing me of all people to be allowed to wage this battle for Germany. It is the most wonderful battle and the most splendid task which can be assigned to mortal man: to stand up for a Volk which lies prone, which is being insulted, whose honor people think they can trample upon. [—]

When today other statesmen place unreasonable demands upon us which they would probably reject with great indignation when applied to their own people, they should not be surprised if the same rejection echoes back to them from Germany today.

My actions are those the entire Volk wants! Not *one person* is standing up in Germany; a *Volk* is rising!

We have hence submitted a clear program to the world, and next Tuesday" I will repeat this program in even clearer and more urgent terms. I wish to show the world what is possible, what we are prepared to do—just as I have told it today what is impossible and what we will never do.

I am not the Führer of the German Volk in order to make gestures. I have been appointed by the German Volk to simply represent its interests. That is my intention.

If there is talk of a "symbolic act" we are to perform—I have already performed it. I have announced to the world a program for international peace for a quarter of a century. I have pledged my word and the word of the nation to it.

I now call upon Germany to show the rest of the world symbolically on March 29 that this gesture reflects its will. And I would like—I may repeat—to invite other statesmen to perform this same symbolic act!

Similar talks were given by Hitler on his next two speaking engagements in Ludwigshafen and Leipzig. On March 25, Hitler issued an ordinance for the constitution of the fighter group Horst Wessel.⁹³

Two days later, Hitler opened his campaign speech in Essen (Krupp locomotive construction plant) with a lengthy and detailed description of his three years in government and remarked:

There has been nothing but talk for fifteen years, so someone has to come and finally take action! And I have taken action!

He then proclaimed himself to be the only true representative of the Volk and declared that now the Volk had become his “instrument.”

For fourteen years I worked on this instrument. When I came to power, I was as strong as my instrument was. And since then I have only been as strong as my Volk is. For that is the source of all my strength.

I do not delude myself that a single person can work miracles on this earth. The miracle lies in the power of a Volk itself, given in the plans of God and Nature. I wish to create this power! I want to mobilize the best efforts and the highest values of this Volk so that this Volk will stand firm on its own and thus make me strong again. The power of this Volk is my power, and its strength is my strength! I do not serve any employer or employee or class; I belong exclusively to the German Volk.

Whatever I have undertaken I have always done with the conviction: it must be done for our Volk! [—] Whenever I stand up for the German peasant, it is for the sake of the Volk. I have neither ancestral estate nor manor. Yet I stand up for my German peasant because I know with him lies the foundation of German power! Without him Germany would go to ruin.

I do not stand up for arming the German Volk because I am a shareholder. I believe I am the only statesman in the world who does not have a bank account. I hold no stock, I have no shares in any companies. I do not draw any dividends.

What I want is for my Volk to be strong and thus be able to survive in this world. That is my will!

Such rhetoric did not fail to impress the Krupp workers. Hitler then turned to the remilitarization of the Rhineland, emphasizing that German troops had not invaded any foreign territory.

I have not set foot on foreign territory!

I have not robbed any nation of anything! I have not broken into a house not my own! I have not stolen anything from anyone! No one has the right to play the self-appointed judge in a matter which concerns only my German Volk. In a German matter, my Volk alone is my judge, not an international council!

Because we wish to believe in the sacredness of treaties, we would like to lay the necessary foundation.

Subsequently, Hitler challenged all statesmen to consult their own people on the issue and declared:

It is my conviction that they will find but one answer everywhere: Do not talk of gestures, nor of symbolic acts, but make and keep the peace! That is the desire of the peoples.

Hitler concluded:

German Volk! Look at the greatness and the scope of the last three years! Be just! Is there any reason for you—assuming you are a decent German—to be ashamed of these past three years before the German Volk, before history, or before posterity? Or could it be that, in the final assessment, you have a reason to be proud once more?

Is it not possible for you to say once more, Good Lord, no matter what might have happened here or there,⁹⁴ on the whole we have once again become a marvelous Volk! We have once again become such a decent Volk!

We have once again become such a hard-working and energetic Volk. We are once again capable of accomplishing anything in Germany! What great tasks we have once more! In these three years we have proven that we are a Volk with nothing to be ashamed of before the other peoples.

I do not subordinate myself to the world, for it cannot pass judgment on me! Only to you, German Volk, do I subordinate myself! Pass judgment on me! Pronounce whether you hold my work to be right, whether you believe that I have worked hard, that I have taken your side throughout these years, that I have decently devoted my time to the service of this Volk.

On March 28, Hitler arrived in Cologne and had himself celebrated as the “liberator of the Rhineland”⁹⁴ at an official reception in the Giirzenich banquet hall. He graciously received the laudation of various “liberated” districts and declared:⁹⁵

That Providence has chosen me to perform this act [restoring German military sovereignty in the Rhineland] is something I feel is the greatest blessing of my life.

At a following mass rally in the exhibition halls, Hitler gave his final speech of the campaign.⁹⁶ It was a mixture of sentimental reflections, holy oaths, and religious-mystical incantations. Of course, there were also sarcastic remarks at the expense of the British statesmen who had incensed him by demanding gestures and symbolic deeds. The “party narrative” began with a sentimental description of November 1918:

It seemed as though the Lord had withdrawn his grace from our Volk. Millions no longer saw any way out. I, too, belonged to those who were in despair back then: a half-blinded soldier in a sick-bay—tormented too by that anxious concern for the German future, shaken by the magnitude of this

misfortune which had come upon us, despairing at our own weaknesses, our own mistakes, and our own failures that had allowed us to sink so low ... [etc., etc.]

Turning his attention to more current matters, Hitler appealed to his audience:

When I ask you in this hour to raise your gaze to the grave problems, I do not want to begin enumerating to you all the things we have created and accomplished these past three years. I would like to approach all that has happened from a higher vantage point. I would like to equate what has happened with all the great and similar events in our Volk in history. For in these three years we have done what was often done before us within the German Volk—perhaps not in such a tremendous massing of powers, of numbers; not as concentrated in terms of time.

That disintegration threatened to destroy us. I know I was forced to hurt innumerable national men in Germany. I can assure you that it had to be in order to prevent our Volk from perishing in a fratricidal war.

Someone had to come to place a great unity above this disintegration. I dared to do it;⁹⁷ in my life I have come to know so many classes of the German Volk, in my own hard youth in the time I took part in the Great War as a soldier, and later, too; I came to know the German being, and I came to have that unshakeable faith in this German being. It was then I began to have faith in my Volk.

Now Hitler went on a rampage against those who did not agree with the “methods” he employed and proclaimed:

But there is one method, my dear critics, which you cannot tell us is not right: we have once more gained a Volk which is the most tremendous thing we have accomplished in these years!

For three weeks I have been standing in German parts as in the years of struggle. Hundreds of thousands of people flow by me. And, believe me, God has forsaken whoever does not feel his heart tug at the sight: what a great Volk we have once more become! Back then the last regiments marched over these [Rhine] bridges; today a Volk has returned!

The German being has arisen from the ranks of workers, peasants and the bourgeoisie; from young and old, from every class, every religion, and from all over the country. A new community has come to stay in our Volk. The things it can only begin in the space of three years, it will complete in decades and centuries. Having found this unity in our Volk that allows us all to be so happy and proud, we must desire a similar order of reason penetrating far beyond our own Volk, for other peoples among themselves, in their relations with one another. We must desire that there, too, this senseless fight of all against all will come to an end, that the old age of senile concepts⁹⁸ will finally be overcome by a new youth which, with faithful heart, has a will to solve these problems using reason not only within their own nations, but beyond them as well.

A renewed attack on Eden followed. It was directed at the Anglo-Saxon powers who had the audacity to demand “gestures” of him.

We are envisioning a legal order of national European states with equal rights. When I say “legal order,” I am addressing myself specifically to those countries who always talk about law and legal precepts but renounce equality before the law and refuse to take it seriously. The German Volk has come a long, long way. During these past years, it has truly undergone an inner reformation. Much of the external ado (*Tantam*), much of the external prattle has been removed from our Volk. It barely knows these phrases of which politics were made in former times. It has become more sober, because it has become more ideal. There are grave problems today. Perhaps that is why others do not understand us—but often we cannot understand them here anymore, either.

What can we say when we hear over and over again today in the world of politicians that gestures have to be made, symbolic acts need to be performed? That has become so alien to our Volk, to think that today a German could still say: We want to reach an understanding with the French people—but only if the French people bows down before us three times and then makes such and such a gesture and such and such a symbolic act. That is something we no longer understand, that is inconceivable to us.

We offer other peoples our hand. It is the hand in which a people of sixty-seven million is united. Nowhere in the world today is there a greater guarantee for the security of such a treaty than if it is signed by this hand. Here one Volk is united, forming a single will, brought together in a single community. This environment responds only with phrases or gestures or remarks and demands. What a discrepancy between what is offered, between the magnitude of what is given and the smallness of the recipient.

But if this other world refuses to understand our giving, it will have to understand our persistence, i.e. as regards these obligations we have all assumed to set free Germany’s honor and Germany’s equal rights under all circumstances!

The fact that we want peace is something I need not confirm over and over again. I do not believe that any other man in this world has talked about and struggled and fought for peace more than I have. And it is understandable that, when I talk about peace this way and am so devoted to it, I do so, my dear German Volk, because I came to know war in a different place than so many of my international political antagonists. I do not mean to talk at all of those for whom the war was a useful event. I am only talking about those who saw it roll by beneath them from some higher position, i.e. from a higher perspective. I was not seeing it from that angle. I was a musketeer and experienced war with its horror and its terror. And I believe more people have learned to see war with my eyes than with the eyes of these political antagonists. That is the key to understanding my attitude. I stand up for the rights and the freedom of my Volk. I want peace. I offer it personally to the others, and I demand of you, my Volk, that you become united with me to form an inseparable community.

March 28, 1936

For three years I have worked for this honor of my Volk, I have labored and fretted for its freedom and its equal rights. For three years I have trembled for its peace. Today I must produce to the world the proof that this concern and this anxiety and this hope—and this resolve as well—are not those of a single man, but are the virtue and vow of an entire Volk.

My German Volksgenossen, we have a great deal to rectify before our own history and before our eternal Lord. Providence had withdrawn its protection from us. Our Volk had fallen, plunging to a depth to which a Volk has rarely fallen before. In this difficult plight we have once again learned how to pray; we have learned to respect our Lord; we have regained our faith in the virtues of a Volk, and have endeavored to be better again. Hence a new community evolved.

Today's Volk can no longer be compared with the Volk which lies behind us. It has become more decent, better. And we feel that the Lord is now slowly beginning to show us His mercy once again.

And in this hour, let us fall down upon our knees and beg the Almighty to grant us the strength to prevail in the struggle for freedom and the future and the honor and the peace of our Volk, so help us God!

On March 29, the Reichstag election which Hitler had decreed was conducted. Even before the election, the Reichstag was a purely National Socialist body. It had been begun its sessions on November 12, 1933, and according to the Weimar Constitution could have remained in office until 1937. Nonetheless, Hitler dissolved it and he did so for two reasons.

First, had the Reichstag's term run its full course to its expiry in 1937, it would surely have signaled the end of the near dictatorial powers Hitler had obtained through the Enabling Act. By 1937, the Volk would have had time to reassess and judge Hitler as he himself had challenged—after having accorded him “four years' time.” Nevertheless, in all likelihood the Volk again would have voted for Hitler in 1937, but, as stated earlier, Hitler was extremely distrustful and preferred to avoid any unnecessary risks where questions of power were concerned. Therefore Hitler decided to hold the new election to the Reichstag at an earlier date.

The second reason was that the Saar had not participated in the previous election. Though ingenious, Hitler's method of assigning the Saarland seats in the Reichstag did not appeal to many Germans. He divided the total of votes cast for Germany in the plebiscite of January 13, 1935, by 60,000.⁹⁹ According to Hitler's method, this resulted in the allotment of eight new seats to National Socialist deputies in the Reichstag. Incidentally, the unpopularity of this procedure apparently taught Hitler a lesson: following the annexation of the Sudeten Ger-

man territories in 1938, he immediately conducted a normal Reichstag election there. On the other hand, the procedure he had employed in the Saarland could not be applied to the Sudetenland simply because no plebiscite was held there.

Both in his Reichstag speech of March 7 and in the eleven campaign speeches, Hitler declared that he would submit himself to the judgment of his Volk on March 29. This declaration should not be construed to mean that Hitler intended to allow each citizen to freely judge his policies with either “yes” or “no.” Rather, he intended a simple result, for everyone to vote “yes,” an intention which was clearly expressed in his March 7 ordinance to dissolve the Reichstag.¹⁰⁰ Here he quite openly stated that the occasion was to afford all Germans the chance to “formally acclaim his policy.”

The last official election had been the plebiscite on the issue of Hitler’s assumption of office as Reich President on August 19, 1934. In the election, Hitler secured “only” 90 percent of the vote, comparatively “far less” than the 95 percent he had received in the plebiscite and the Reichstag elections of November 12, 1933. Ever since the August 1934 election, Hitler had often expressed dissatisfaction with the mere 90 percent in favor and the excessive 10 percent against. He considered the results a personal affront and a great injustice done to him by the Volk.

Hitler had no intention of going through such an immense disappointment again. His propaganda chief Goebbels correctly assessed the Führer’s thoughts and acted accordingly. He instructed all electoral committees to not only take down the usual “yeas” as positive results, but to include all empty or crossed-out slips in the count for Hitler as well. Unless “no” was clearly written on the election slip, the vote would be interpreted as “yes.” Even if “no” was marked, it was highly questionable whether the head of the electoral committee actually counted it as such.

The manipulation of the votes cast led to grotesque results in some cases, particularly in smaller towns. Even though entire families might have stood against Hitler, the electoral committee claimed a 100 percent victory for the Führer.

When the results from all over the Reich had come in, the official returns were as follows: of the 45.4 million eligible voters, 44.9 million had cast their vote, whereof 44.4 million had voted “yes,” which corresponded to 99 percent of the electorate. Another half a million votes were cited as invalid.

March 30, 1936

Finally, Hitler was content, particularly with the results in the Saarpfalz,¹⁰¹ where the polls claimed that he had achieved the most stunning result of 99.9 (!) percent for the Führer—which must have sounded preposterous even then. On March 30, Hitler sent the following telegram to Josef Bürckel:¹⁰²

On your birthday, I send heartfelt congratulations. I am deeply impressed by the Saarpfalz' first place results in the election, my dear merited Gauleiter.
Adolf Hitler

A day later, Hitler addressed the Reich Cabinet, detailing the political situation and referring to the election results as “an overwhelming show of support by the Volk for the political leadership of party and state.”¹⁰³

4

On April 1, Hitler delegated Ambassador Extraordinary Ribbentrop to fly to London once again to consult with Foreign Secretary Eden and to present him with the new German *Friedensplan* which Hitler had earlier promised. Hitler had spent so much time preparing this “generous” proposal that he worked until the last minute, forcing Schmidt to translate the document during the flight to London.¹⁰⁴

Hitler’s new proposal was about three times as long as the memorandum of March 7. It began with a refutation of the March 19 declaration of the Locarno Pact signatory powers and launched into an endless flood of details, minutely listing all the steps Hitler was willing to undertake solely to “preserve the peace in Europe.” He proclaimed that he would refrain from reinforcing the troops in the Rhineland within the next four months and that he would participate in various committee meetings addressing military matters. In addition, he was willing to discuss plans for a twenty-five-year peace; to emphasize peace in the curricula for the youth; to conduct plebiscites in Germany; to call for conferences; and finally, to submit legal concerns to the jurisdiction of an international court of law. Moreover, he was willing to ban the use of gas, poison and incendiary bombs and would consider outlawing the bombing of unfortified towns that lay outside of the reach of medium-sized heavy artillery in combat zones. Furthermore, he was ready to ban the construction of heavy tanks and artillery, etc.

However, Hitler made no mention of the request he had received to submit to the International Court of Justice in The Hague the issue of whether the Franco-Russian agreement violated the Locarno Pact. Of course, Hitler had no intention of performing the token gestures the British had demanded of him. He was not going to refrain from fortifying the Rhineland. Instead of responding to the question, he

April 1, 1936

substituted for it a series of vague suggestions on matters that were not even up for discussion. This strategy had served him well in his domestic maneuvers with the reactionary 'senile' men of the German National People's Party, the Stahlhelm, and the aristocracy.

The British Foreign Secretary accepted Hitler's voluminous March 31 note on April 1 and promised to read it through thoroughly. That was where the matter ended for the time.

On April 10, the German Ambassador in London, Leopold von Hoesch, died at the age of fifty-four. Hitler sent his condolences in a telegram to the sister of the deceased.¹⁰⁵ On April 20, Hitler celebrated his birthday in Berlin with military pomp.¹⁰⁶ At 8:00 a.m., the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* and its commander Sepp Dietrich sang him a birthday song. At 8:45 a.m., an SS battalion paraded past the Chancellery. At 10:00 a.m., the highest-ranking generals came there to congratulate the Führer. Hitler made the best use of the occasion by giving a short speech in which he appointed Blomberg Field Marshal,¹⁰⁷ Göring and Fritsch Colonel Generals and Raeder Admiral General.¹⁰⁸ Turning to von Blomberg, Hitler stated:

Herr Generaloberst!

Today I look back with pride and joy upon the year now lying behind me. I look forward with unshakeable trust in the strength and hence the future of our Volk.

Its miraculous resurrection fills me with the deepest gratitude to all those whose loyal assistance has enabled me to successfully lead the nation. My hope in the German future lies rooted in a knowledge of the immortal values of our Volk.

I am thereby building upon that organizational structuring of these values which, in my opinion, constitute the sole guarantors for the consummation of this hope: upon the National Socialist Party as the shaper and supporter of the new political will, and upon the Wehrmacht as shaper and supporter of military strength.

At this moment when you, dear sir and the heads of the three divisions of the Wehrmacht, are conveying the congratulations of the German Army to me, I feel driven to express to you and hence to the entire German Wehrmacht sincere thanks for the tremendous achievement of re-erecting the German Army and the German Navy and reestablishing the German Luftwaffe.

My sense of gratitude is all the stronger for my belief that this newly-formed strength of the nation will be best able to put us in a position to preserve for our Volk—and perhaps beyond it to others as well—that very peace upon which so much happiness and welfare depend.

By today promoting you, General von Blomberg, to the rank of Field Marshal; you, General Göring and General von Fritsch, to Colonel Generals; and you, Admiral Raeder, to Admiral General, I am bestowing an honor upon

the entire German Wehrmacht, upon every single officer and every single soldier.

I may once more express my thanks to you, gentlemen, for your loyal assistance in re-erecting the new German Reich by rebuilding the German Wehrmacht.

At 11:00 a.m., Hitler inspected a parade of the army troops in the Lustgarten. The commanding general of the Third Army Corps, Lieutenant General von Witzleben,¹⁰⁹ reported to Hitler the presence of: 489 officers, 13,932 enlisted men, 977 horses, and 1,573 military vehicles. At noon, Hitler reviewed the troops in the Berlin Tiergarten.

On his birthday, Hitler received and answered numerous telegrams. The order in which these exchanges with foreign dignitaries was published revealed the relative importance Hitler placed on them: King Edward VIII of Great Britain, Mussolini, and King Boris III of Bulgaria appeared at the top of the list.¹¹⁰

At 12:15 p.m. on April 24, Hitler spoke at the formal dedication of the *Ordensburg* Crössinsee in Pomerania.¹¹¹ It was consecrated to provide—along with the two other *Ordensburgen* (Sonthofen in the Allgäu and Vogelsang in the Eifel mountains)—an education for the next generation of German leaders.

That afternoon, Hitler spoke for ninety minutes to all the six hundred Kreisleiters of Germany on the topic of “the mission of the Kreisleiter in the National Socialist Party.” Afterwards, Hitler sent a telegram to Admiral Raeder on his sixtieth birthday.

Two days later he addressed another birthday telegram to Rudolf Hess, who had turned forty-two years of age. On April 28, a telegram left the Chancellery for Egypt’s King Farouk, bearing the condolences of Hitler on the demise of the King’s father, Fuad I.¹¹²

At 8:30 in the morning of May 1, “the National Holiday of the German Volk,” Hitler delivered an address to the German youth in the Post Stadium in Berlin.¹¹³ Once again he assured his young listeners of the glorious future that awaited them thanks to his untiring efforts and referred again to the 99 percent of the ballot he had received at the last election. Hitler began his speech in a characteristic manner:

My German Youth!

Never before in German history has such a wonderful fate been bestowed upon a young generation. You, our youth, are living in a young Reich, in a young Reich filled with joyful life, with strong hope, with inextinguishable confidence. You are living in a Reich with young, fresh ideas, filled with young, fresh power.

May 1, 1936

Today's German generation has made infinite progress toward overcoming German fragmentation and disunity. Beyond differences of class, beyond artificial frontiers between countries, beyond parties, the unification of the German nation has been triumphantly achieved in a new Movement: its unification under one view, in one idea, and for a joint life-struggle. Hence also the unification for embarking upon a path in this struggle for unity and consolidation in every action.

You, my youth, are witnessing it: that for the first time in our history, ninety-nine percent of the Volk have professed their support for the spirit of this oneness. You are lucky to be the youth, the offspring of this Volk. You can build your life in this Volk thus that you become the future foundation for the life of this Volk.

As in the previous years, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Hitler attended the ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the newly refurbished German Opera House in Charlottenburg. Both the director Carl Froehlich (for his film titled *Traumulus*) and the SA Obersturmbannführer Gerhard Schumann were especially honored by telegrams from Hitler, congratulating them on their awards for best film and best book, respectively.¹¹⁴

At 12:30 p.m., at the state ceremony in the Lustgarten, Hitler gave his main speech, an "Appeal to the Entire German Volk."¹¹⁵ After the usual lengthy "party narrative," Hitler spoke of the difficulties he had encountered with other statesmen and proclaimed:

We ourselves have been able to deal with our internal difficulties without detriment to any other people. Solve your own problems, and do not attempt to involve others in what are your own quarrels. In Germany we do not need—and I can say this today to you above all, my Volksgenossen: I do not need to perform some glorious deed which will bring death to millions in order to obtain esteem and respect from my Volk. I have that anyway! I am not standing on shaky ground; I do not need to lead millions of our people to the sacrificial altar so that millions of others might perhaps believe in me!

In these three years we have done nothing that could possibly have caused suffering to another people; we have taken not a single step that might harm anyone. We have not reached out our hands to grasp anything that did not belong to us. We have remained within our borders, we have offered our hand to the others in friendship dozens of times.—What more could one expect?

During these three-and-a-quarter years, the German Volk has become strong and determined internally. Yet it has never abused its determination to perhaps threaten anyone else. Quite the opposite: in these three-and-a-quarter years, we have attempted to introduce this determination to European life as a factor toward its stability. How can we help it if others do not agree? We have witnessed it during these past few weeks. Only recently we made the world a generous offer,¹¹⁶ not schemed up by a handful of legal experts

and lawyers but issuing from healthy common sense, simple and clear-cut. If there is a will, that is the way Europe can be given inner peace and a feeling of security. But what happens to us?

At the same time we declare that we are prepared, regardless of past or present, to offer our hand in friendship to all peoples, to conclude treaties with them, we see yet another smear campaign breaking out. Once again lies are being spread about that Germany will invade Austria tomorrow or the day after. I ask myself: who are these elements who have no desire for tranquility, for peace, for understanding; who have a need to constantly agitate and sow the seeds of mistrust, who are these people? (*Cries of "The Jews!"*) I know (*Applause lasting several minutes*),¹¹⁷ I know it is not the millions who would have to take up arms were these agitators to succeed in their plans. They are not the ones! Not in any nation! It is a small faction of interests (*Interessenklüngel*), an international clique that lives off stirring up other peoples by agitation. We know these fellows from our own country, and we see their tracks between the peoples. Thus it is all the more necessary for us to cling more than ever—and for this reason most of all—to our own unity and consolidation.

How splendid it is in Germany to have a Volk that leads itself, orders itself and guides itself instead of being governed by the rubber truncheon! How splendid it is today to have people here who are not attempting to mutually make their lives difficult and bitter, but who are beginning to show more and more consideration for one another! We are so fortunate to be able to live amongst these people, and I am proud to be your Führer. So proud that I cannot imagine anything in this world capable of convincing me to trade it for something else. I would sooner, a thousand times sooner, be the last Volksgenosse among you than a king anywhere else.¹¹⁸

And this pride fills me today above all. When I was driving through these long streets earlier and saw to the left and right these hundreds of thousands and millions of Volksgenossen who had come from their plants and workshops, from our factories and counting houses, my heart was about to burst, I truly felt it: that is our Germany! That is our Volk, our marvelous German Volk and our dear German Reich!

In this hour I believe we can have but one desire: let the other peoples cast a single glance in here, let them only see this Volk of peace and labor and I believe they would take those rabble-rousers and throw them out! Then they would understand and comprehend why this most sacred national community is and will always be both the most sacred guarantor of a genuinely European order and thus of a truly human culture and civilization. Therefore, I ask you in this hour to take heart and allow your spirit to gaze back upon the past and share in feeling the good fortune we have come to enjoy by virtue of having found our way back to one community, to one Volk. And let us pledge our dedication to this Volk on this first of May of work and of the Volksgemeinschaft with our old vow: to our German Volk and our German Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

At 5:00 p.m., as the final event of the holiday celebration, Hitler received delegations of workers at the House of the Reich President and gave a short speech.¹¹⁹

May 5, 1936

On May 5, a delegation of members of the German Civil Service presented Hitler with a splendid special edition of *Mein Kampf* bound in parchment paper. He was exceedingly pleased and declared that the book needed to be preserved as “property of the German Volk for all time.” The short address Hitler had delivered on this occasion was reproduced by the *Völkischer Beobachter*.¹²⁰

The literary work presented by the civil servants should be placed for safe keeping in the most beautiful and worthy place in the Capital of the Movement [Munich], namely, in the Führerbau. The book must be placed in the pulsating life of the Movement which finds its most visible expression in a capital. Here it will remain true to its purpose of service and use to the Volk. In the Movement’s Führerhaus, it is in the secure possession of the Party and thereby belongs for all time to the Volk.

On May 14, Hitler received the British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps for a consultation at the Chancellery. A week earlier, on May 7, the Ambassador had presented the German Foreign Minister von Neurath with the British Government’s response to Hitler’s various and lengthy proposals of March 31 and April 1. The response began with the words:

His Majesty’s Government regrets that the German Government has not been capable of producing a serious contribution to the effort being made to re-establish mutual trust, which Great Britain believes to be a crucial prerequisite to any further talks.

The statement was followed by a series of questions, the first of which read: “Does the German Reich now consider itself to be in a position to conclude ‘real contracts?’” As was well known, direct questions of this nature were not to Hitler’s liking, and therefore it was not surprising that the Hitler’s conference of May 14 with the British statesman ended without any real progress being made.

The Envoy Schmidt aptly commented on the incident:¹²¹ “Hitler’s efforts to detract from his rash method of dealing with the actual issues at stake, by making lengthy and voluminous suggestions not pertaining to the subject at hand, had completely failed him.” In the subsequent weeks and months, to Hitler’s great distress, he would more often have to face the painful realization that he could not provoke and bluff the English as he had the German Nationalists. Nevertheless, this did not move him to reconsider his approach. He persisted in his confrontational approach to the English, while simultaneously declaring that he was ardently pursuing peace. It was not until September 3, 1939, that he finally had to face the harsh reality he himself had created, when the British presented him with their declaration of war.

May 17, 1936

On May 17, Hitler mailed the following telegram to Reich Minister Frank on the occasion of the German lawyers' convention in Leipzig:¹²²

The cooperation of the German Legal Protectors in the building up of National Socialist Germany is a crucial prerequisite for the success of our great enterprise. I thus gladly accept your pledges for loyal cooperation in this great enterprise and heartily return your greetings.

Adolf Hitler

Two days later, Hitler attended the funeral of his long-time driver Julius Schreck¹²³ in Gräfelfing near Munich and had a wreath put down bearing the following words: "To my old fighting companion and dear comrade."

That same day Hitler awarded the brevet rank of Major General to the Reich leader of the Labor Service, former Colonel Konstantin Hierl, and to the NSKK Corps Leader, former Major Adolf Hühnlein.¹²⁴ This had been the rank Hitler had denied Chief of Staff Röhm.

On May 21, Hitler took the Walhalla memorial hall in Regensburg under his auspices and ordered a bust of Anton Bruckner placed there.¹²⁵ The following day, Hitler sent a welcoming note in a telegram to the German Society of World Economics, which was holding a conference in Düsseldorf, presided over by the retired governor Heinrich Schnee. On May 27, Hitler addressed a delegation of Amtswalters of the Winterhilfswerk at the Chancellery.¹²⁶ There on the next day, he received the Hungarian Minister of Culture Homann, who was visiting the capital of the Reich.¹²⁷

On May 29, Hitler observed the naval maneuvers in Kiel and watched a parade from the light battleship *Grille*. After the parade, he inspected the German shipyards. The following day, a ceremony commemorated the dead of the World War on the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of Skagerrak (May 31, 1916). Hitler attended the dedication of a navy memorial and laid a wreath honoring the navy's dead.¹²⁸

On June 1, Hitler ordered a state funeral for General Karl Litzmann, who had died on May 28 at the age of eighty-six. For many years Litzmann had supported Hitler and helped him through difficult times. The ceremony took place on June 3 in Neu-Globsow (district of Mark Brandenburg), where the deceased had resided. All high-ranking generals were present.

The new Field Marshal von Blomberg delivered the commemorative address and Hitler placed a huge wreath on Litzmann's grave, reading:¹²⁹ To Party Comrade Litzmann, the old soldier and loyal fighter for Germany's greatness and resurrection."

June 9, 1936

On June 9, Hitler received calls by three statesmen in sequence: first the Japanese Ambassador Mushakoji, then the Egyptian Envoy Nahat Pasha, and finally the Afghan Minister of War Shah Mahmoud. The latter had recently undergone surgery in Berlin.¹³⁰ In the Chancellery on that day as well, Hitler gave a short speech before delegates of the Sixth International Municipal Congress, which was convening at the time in Berlin.¹³¹ On June 10, he issued a note regarding the upcoming Red Cross Day.¹³²

On June 11, Hitler left early for Wilhelmshaven to inspect its naval units and to attend a parade in his honor. Thereafter he went on a tour of the navy's shipyards in Wilhelmshaven.¹³³ In the afternoon, he visited a seaside hotel in Horumersiel, a small fishing village where he had spent several nights during his 1932 Oldenburg election campaign.

Hitler addressed a telegram containing a note of a general nature to Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg in Munich on June 16, where the latter presided over a meeting of the NS Culture Community.¹³⁴ On June 17, at a reception honoring Moniz de Aragao, previously Brazilian Envoy, who had recently been named the first ambassador of his country in Berlin, Hitler expressed his desire to expand the relations between Brazil and Germany. Immediately thereafter, Hitler received the calls of the Dominican Envoy Olivies and the retiring Estonian Envoy Akel.¹³⁵

That same day Hitler issued an ordinance establishing a position for a Chief of Police in the Reich Ministry of the interior:¹³⁶

I. The position of a Chief of the German Police shall be established in the Reich Ministry of the interior to provide for standardized law enforcement within the Reich. At the time of establishment, conduct and handling of all police affairs, at present within the realm of the Reich Ministry and the Prussian Ministry, shall be transferred to this Chief of Police.

II. The present Deputy Chief of the Secret Prussian State Police, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, is appointed Chief of the German Police to the Reich Ministry of the Interior. His person shall be directly responsible to the Reich Minister and Prussian Minister of the Interior, to whom he shall be subordinate. He shall substitute for the Reich Minister and Prussian Minister of the Interior in the event of the latter's absence. He shall bear the following official title: Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police with the Reich Ministry of the Interior.

III. The Chief of the German Police with the Reich Ministry of the Interior shall attend sessions of the Reich Cabinet in so far as the agenda pertains to the affairs of his department.

IV. I commission the Reich Minister and Prussian Minister of the Interior to see to the implementation of this decree.

June 17, 1936

Another important milestone on the way to equating party and state had been reached: the Reich leader of the SS was at the same time chief of the entire German police force. The process that had begun in 1933 with the nomination of Himmler as Chief of Police in Munich, and that had steadily accelerated in the three years since, now had reached its logical conclusion. However, Himmler was not the sole, unchecked commander of the police force. Naturally, he still had to obey the Führer, and continued to be subordinate to Göring as well. This is particularly evident in the following telegram Himmler sent to Göring on June 17:¹³⁷

I duly report that the Führer today has appointed me Chief of the German Police. I greet you as my revered commander of the past, of the present, and of the future.

In true comradeship,

H. Himmler, Reichsführer SS

On the same day, Hitler also promoted the SS Obergruppenführer Daluege to the rank of general of the police. Daluege had proven himself to be very reliable in the course of the Röhm Purge and had executed the Führer's orders without questions. Hitler addressed the following note to him:¹³⁸

Dear Party Comrade General Daluege!

Ever since the National Socialists' assumption of power, to the attainment of which you greatly contributed in Berlin, you have dedicated yourself to transforming the German police into a powerful instrument of the German state.

This is particularly true of the Land Police which, thanks to your efforts, have become a valuable part of the German Wehrmacht. I feel compelled to express to you my great appreciation and gratitude for your services to the German police. I promote you to General of the Police.

Adolf Hitler

Later on June 17, Himmler accompanied Hitler on an inspection of the new police uniforms which were to be introduced in the entire Reich.¹³⁹ Hitler also visited the Olympic village at the Berlin Reich Sports Field. The athletes were to reside there during the competition.

In *Mein Kampf*¹⁴⁰ Hitler had referred to boxing as the most valuable sport overall, and he felt himself to be the particular patron of this discipline. On June 21, Hitler sent a telegram congratulating the German boxing champion and former world heavyweight champion Max Schmeling on his surprising 12-round knockout of the unbeaten "brown bomber," Joe Louis, in New York City:¹⁴¹

June 21, 1936

Please accept my heartfelt congratulations on your magnificent victory.
Adolf Hitler

Hitler also sent Schmeling's wife, the movie actress Anny Ondra, a congratulatory telegram:

I must congratulate you with all my heart on the wonderful victory of your husband, our greatest German boxer.

Adolf Hitler

At the same time, Hitler also had a bouquet of flowers delivered to her address. In order to please Hitler, Goebbels mailed an even more enthusiastic telegram to Schmeling in New York. When Schmeling returned from the United States on June 27, he, along with his wife and his mother, was immediately ushered to a reception at the Chancellery. On June 22, Hitler addressed a telegram to the British King Edward VIII congratulating him on his birthday.¹⁴²

Hitler spoke to a delegation of German craftsmen on June 26,¹⁴³ which had come to Berlin under the auspices of Reich Master Craftsman Georg Wilhelm Schmidt. Hitler declared that "unity and continuity in matters of statesmanship" was essential for the advance of German craftsmanship. In other terms, what was of supreme importance to the German craftsmen was that the future fate of the nation was securely placed in Hitler's hands! In addition, Hitler received the Italian Air Force General Valle that day.¹⁴⁴ On June 28, Hitler sent the following telegram to the President of the University of Heidelberg on the 550th anniversary of its foundation:¹⁴⁵

I extend to the University of Heidelberg my and the Reich Government's congratulations on the 550th anniversary of its foundation. Today, the oldest university of the German Reich celebrates in the circle of its German and foreign friends and representatives of numerous nations its day of honor.

At the same time I thank you, Herr Rektor, the senate, and the student body for your loyal greetings extended to me on this occasion. I return these with all my heart and with the wish that this ancient and dignified university, in keeping with its traditions, shall remain the germinator of the most noble of German intellectual life and the time-tested conveyor of real German cultural goods for a long time to come.

Adolf Hitler

In Berlin-Lichterfelde on July 2, Hitler attended the funeral services for four members of his SS Leibstandarte who had died in an accident.

The next day, Hitler journeyed to Weimar, where the several days of festivities commemorating the first Reich Party Congress of the

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NSDAP, which had been held there ten years ago, were taking place. At the official reception in the castle, at 5:00 p.m. on July 3, first Gauleiter Sauckel and then the Minister-President of Thuringia Marschler¹⁴⁶ addressed the guests. Finally it was Hitler's turn to speak and he began:¹⁴⁷

My dear Gauleiter Sauckel, dear Minister-President Marschler!

I thank you for your welcome. You know best how deeply I am moved by being able to dwell these few days within the walls of the old city. It is a wonderful reunion for all of us, a reunion with our comrades in arms, with the majority of those who marched into Weimar back then. Some have passed away; others have grown gray in the meantime, and many are already white. Yet one thing has remained the same, the memory and the zealous resolve to preserve for all time to come the precepts and principles that guided us then! This resolve to dedicate ourselves to the old principles today, too, at a time when, through a miracle of fate, we have power in Germany, in order to assign them to those who will come after us. Ten years of history can be subject to different interpretations. The ten years we have left behind us are, I believe, truly world-shattering years. Only posterity will be in a position to fully gauge the extent of the foundations laid in the course of these years.

Back then, in the year 1926, we launched an offensive against this city, an offensive against this Land and thus an offensive against Germany. Today, barely ten years later, we have already scored the consummate victory. The faith which filled several hundreds of thousands at that time has today become the faith of the entire German Volk!

We were not simply given this success; these ten years have been years of countless battles and countless sacrifices. What do they know, the ones who did not become aware of our Movement until after the victory; what do they know about the sacrifices and battles the preceding years cost us? How many troubles we were forced to bear; how much faith was required in order to ultimately turn this small Movement into the ruling power in Germany? What do they know about how much obedience had to be demanded—how much strict obedience, although this subservience all too frequently seemed to contradict every stirring of emotion, indeed even reason itself? How often was it necessary for us in these ten years to admonish our young fighters never to lose their nerve, never to act unwisely, but always—trusting in the future—to allow time to ripen on its own! May today's youth learn a lesson from this sacrifice and this obedience for themselves and for the German future.

All of this was attainable only by virtue of the boundless loyalty and devotion of my fellow fighters. For this I would like to express to you my special thanks here and now: to you, my dear Gauleiter, who—I am certain—is one of my most loyal followers; to you, my Party comrades in the government; to all of you who have gathered here from elsewhere in Germany as leaders of the individual organizations; and not least to all of those countless lesser Party comrades, the known and the nameless, who remained steadfast in the years in which the seductive power of the other side was so

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great and the probability of victory so small. I would like to express my thanks to you for having stood by the Movement so loyally and decently throughout those years, that you did not turn your back on it as sometimes seemed the case, as though our mission might not be accomplished after all—but instead more zealously than ever vowed to support me and zealously stood up in my defense. Where would we have ended up had this devotion been demonstrated only in times of success? What has enabled our Movement to become so great has not been loyalty and devotion after victories and successes, but loyalty above all in the wake of our defeats. When we were faring badly, when good fortune seemed to have deserted us entirely, it was then more than ever that these hundreds of thousands of little people came to stand behind the Movement and, I may say, in front of me. Only thus were we able to wage this battle, so unique in German history, through to the end and prevail as victors.

And just as we have achieved our great goal of winning power in Germany and have been able to use this power to accomplish successful work for Germany for the past three-and-a-half years thanks to these virtues, in placing our allegiance in these same principles in the future as well, we will always find our way onwards.

May the German nation never forget that the firmness of a Volk is put to the test not when its leadership can demonstrate visible proof of progress, but in its hours of ostensible failure. As long as a leadership is blessed by good fortune, any weakling can declare his allegiance to it. Only in those hours in which good fortune seems to have vanished do the people who are truly valuable come through. Only then does loyalty count! May the German Volk maintain these virtues in future! With these old precepts, the principles of our Movement, it will march into a great future! Today, in addition to my thanks, I have but one request to the Almighty: that He may bless our Volk in our Movement. It is my most sacred conviction that, as long as the National Socialist Movement stands firm and strong in Germany, Germany will be strong and firm! If this Movement were ever to falter, Germany would falter along with it.

Ten years of struggle lie behind us. Providence has enabled us to score achievements for our Volk in the area of labor and above all to preserve the peace for it. I believe that today we can send no other wish to that same Providence than that this peace be granted our Volk in future as well. But let us always write the word “honor” before peace, and let us always understand this peace to mean liberty! Let us hold that, without this honor and without this liberty, there can be no peace. That is something our Volk knows, and something the world should know, too. I believe that this explicitness is best able to help eliminate false ideas, false hopes, and false opinions and thus promote the cause of genuine peace.

Therefore I may once again thank you, my dear Gauleiter and my dear Minister-President, for your welcome. It is my wish that these days may become for all the Party comrades who are taking part in them for the second time—and even for the first—days of contemplation, of contemplating the magnitude of the Fate we serve!

At a commemoration in the National Theater in Weimar on July 4,¹⁴⁸ Hitler emphasized that the 1926 Reich Party Congress had been the first “prototype of a National Socialist Party Congress.” He also referred to the “so-called National Assembly”¹⁴⁹ that had gathered in Weimar in 1919 as “a great blemish on the face of the city, disgracing this revered home of the German spirit, the German sciences and German art,” and claimed: “We, however, restored Weimar to its proper significance for Germany.”

Before an assembly of 50,000 party members on July 5 in the gardens of the Tiefurt Castle, Hitler gave a speech honoring the dead of the Movement.¹⁵⁰ He lauded the “sacrifices made by the preachers and the recruiters for the National Socialist cause.” That afternoon, Hitler spoke again in Weimar at a mass rally in the *Landeskampfbahn* (Land Stadium).¹⁵¹ After a lengthy “party narrative,” Hitler claimed that the great tasks faced alone sufficed to render the National Socialist rule immortal for all time to come. Future generations would look back upon the National Socialist Revolution and realize its justification:

It is to this 1933 Revolution that the German Volk owes its booming economy. The Volk owes the protection accorded by a strong army to this Revolution. It owes a new form of German culture to this Revolution. It owes a new form of German art to this Revolution. However, above all, it owes the development of a new German being to this Revolution.

On July 11, an agreement between Austria and Germany was made public. The agreement was due to a strengthening of ties between Rome and Berlin, which had come about as a direct result of the Italian aggression in Abyssinia. Mussolini had obviously miscalculated when he counted on a lenient response of the League of Nations and of Great Britain. Thereby forced into the open arms of Hitler, Mussolini had to accept a German offer of economic aid to his enterprise. In return, he was expected to display marked disinterest in Austrian affairs. Suddenly abandoned by his most important patron, the Austrian Chancellor von Schuschnigg had to make compromises. One of the first signs of Schuschnigg’s surrender had been the May 13 dismissal of the Austrian Vice Chancellor Fürst von Starhemberg, a declared opponent of the National Socialists.

The pull the powerful German Reich exerted on Austria, which had been strong even before the First World War, was constantly being reinforced. As Mussolini had finally come to realize:¹⁵² “Austria is German state No. 2. it will never be able to do anything without Germany, far less against Germany.” Therefore, he approved the

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German-Austrian Agreement of July 11, even though this effectively amounted to a cease-fire declaration at the expense of Austria. After decisive action based on the use of force had failed miserably on July 25, 1934, Hitler had come to terms with the situation and decided to penetrate the country from the inside. Goebbels publicized a communiqué on the July 11 agreement in a radio broadcast:¹⁵³

In the conviction of rendering a most valuable service to the cause of peace in Europe, and in the belief that the mutual affairs of both German States might thereby best be served, the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Federal State of Austria have concurred to once more restore friendly and nonnal relations.

On this occasion, the following declaration is made:

1. In accordance with the statements of the Führer and Reich Chancellor on May 21, 1935, the German Reich Government acknowledges the full sovereignty of the Federal State of Austria.

2. Each of the two Governments regards the internal political structure of the other country, including the issue of Austrian National Socialism, as a matter upon which it shall not attempt to exert influence, either directly or indirectly.

3. The policy pursued by the Austrian Federal Government shall, in general, and particularly with regard to the German Reich, always count for the fact that Austria avows itself to be a German State. This shall not infringe the Rome Protocols of 1934¹⁵⁴ and their supplementary articles of 1936, nor upon Austria's relations to Italy and Hungary as parties of the Protocols.

In the expectation that the détente sought by both sides can only be realized, if certain basic conditions are established by both Governments concerned, the German Reich Government and the Austrian Federal Government shall create the necessary prerequisites in a series of individual measures.

No details were announced at first with regard to the "individual measures" alluded to in the communiqué. Later it became evident that one of the measures referred to was the removal of the 1,000-Reichsmark limit imposed upon German travellers to Austria since 1933.¹⁵⁵ Precisely which "prerequisites" Austria would have to fulfill in order to relieve tensions with Germany became clear already the day of the announcement, when Edmund Glaise-Horstenau joined Schuschnigg's Cabinet as "national," in other words, National Socialist member. At first named Minister without Portfolio as early as November 3, 1936, he took over the Ministry of the Interior (!).

On July 11, 1936, a process began which would logically lead to the legalization of the National Socialists in Austria and finally to Hitler's assumption of power. The position of weakness in which

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Schuschnigg found himself when facing Hitler is reflected in an exchange of telegrams between the two statesmen on that day.¹⁵⁶ Schuschnigg's telegram read:

Now that an understanding designed to reinstate friendly relations between our two neighboring nations has been reached, allow me to take this most welcome opportunity to greet Your Excellency as the Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich. At the same time, I would like to express my conviction that both our people will profit from the ramifications of this agreement, and that it will be a blessing for the entire German people.

Your Excellency, I believe we both share the opinion that besides its beneficial nature with regard to both our countries, the understanding between Austria and Germany renders a most valuable service to the attainment of peace among all nations.

von Schuschnigg

Hitler replied:

I sincerely return the greetings which Your Excellency has extended to me on the occasion of the German-Austrian agreement concluded today. I connect with this the desire that this agreement shall reconstitute the traditionally good relations which have evolved due to our racial community and the centuries of shared history in order that these may promote further work benefiting our two states and strengthening peace in Europe.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

That very same day, Italy informed the Belgian Minister-President that it was not interested in a meeting of the signatories of the Locarno Pact. Evidently Hitler had made progress in his effort to win Italy as an ally, an idea he had entertained ever since 1919. Telegrams to King Edward VIII did little to change the lamentable course of events in Anglo-German relations. On July 16, Hitler sent a telegram from Berchtesgaden to the King, who had just narrowly escaped an assassination attempt while reviewing a parade at the Hyde Park.¹⁵⁷

Just now I have received news of the contemptible attempt upon Your Majesty and extend to you my heartfelt congratulations on your escape from this danger.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

On July 19, Hitler came to Bayreuth to attend the opening of the Wagner Festival. After a performance of *Lohengrin*, Hitler himself delivered a short address to the artists backstage.¹⁵⁸

That same day open rebellion broke out in Spanish Morocco. The leader of the rebels, General Francisco Franco, established contact to the German Chancellor in Bayreuth by employing a German go-

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between. He clamored for support of his revolutionary undertaking. For Hitler the events in Northern Africa could not have come at a more opportune moment. Eagerly he took advantage of the situation in Spain, which he believed gave him the opportunity of realizing a part of his vision of a "New Order for Europe." The greater the number of states in Western Europe headed by Fascists, he reasoned, the more they might be willing to submit to one will. And this one will of course would be none other than Hitler's own. All heads of state would then be securely positioned as *Unterrührers* in Europe, corresponding to the *Gauleiters* in Germany: Mussolini in Italy, Franco in Spain, and so on.

The first crucial assistance Hitler rendered Franco was the immediate ordering of numerous Junker transportation airplanes to North Africa. Franco desperately needed these in order to transport his soldiers and his important Moroccan elite troop across the Mediterranean to the Spanish mother country, where they established a strong bridgehead for the invasion. Without Hitler's intervention on Franco's behalf, the General's rebellion might soon have dissipated. Nevertheless, it took Franco quite some time—close to three years—to emerge as victor from the bloody civil strife. The length of the conflict was most advantageous for Hitler since it gave him ample opportunity to test combat strategies for the German Air Force and the new tank divisions. The experiences gained in Spain were to serve as guidelines for the planned conquest of the East. While the troops Hitler sent—collectively termed the "Condor Legion"—were not numerous, his fellow Italian dictator commissioned entire army battalions to participate in the battle despite the fact that Mussolini had not yet recovered from the aftermath of his July 10, 1936 entanglement in Ethiopia.

On July 24, Germany ordered a naval formation to the Spanish coastal waters to protect its nationals in the region,¹⁵⁹ as the Great Powers had also done. Hitler's frequent later references to the incident show that it did much to boost his self-confidence.¹⁶⁰

In the meantime, the preparations for the Olympic Games in Germany had reached their final stage. A large attendance of athletes, spectators and political observers was expected. On July 21, Hitler sent a telegram to the Greek Olympic Committee, reading:¹⁶¹

I thank you for your message informing me of the launch of the Olympic torch. May it safely arrive in Berlin and soon ignite the Olympic Flame there, which shall shine upon a successful course of events at the Eleventh Olympic Games.

Adolf Hitler

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Hitler arrived to attend the opening of the Games in Berlin on the 30th of July. The next day, he dedicated a German Olympic Commemorative Medal.¹⁶² On August 1, Hitler received the members of the International Olympic Committee at the Reich Chancellery. After a few words on the part of its president, Count Baillet-Latour, Hitler himself took the floor and addressed the committee members with the following words:¹⁶³

Esteemed Mr. President, Gentlemen of the International Olympic Committee and the Organization Committee!

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you personally and on behalf of the German Volk on this, the day marking the opening of the Olympic Games and to have an opportunity to thank you, esteemed Mr. President, for the kind remarks you have addressed to me.

My thanks also include the International Olympic Committee for having chosen the capital of the German Reich as the site of the Eleventh Olympics of the modern cycle, thus affording Germany the opportunity to make its contribution to the immortal memory of the Olympic Games. It was with enthusiasm and joy that Germany applied itself to the task of preparing this years' competitions in a framework which attempts to do justice to the grand idea and traditions of the Olympic Games, and it hopes to have thus contributed toward promoting the ideal of strengthening the bonds between the peoples, the ideal upon which these competitive Games are based.

You, gentlemen of the German Organization Committee, I may thank for the devoted and careful work you have put into the preparation of these Games. I am confident in my hope that success will reward you for your efforts.

The basic principles which are once more evidenced to the world in the Olympic Games are ones of very ancient origin. They have been passed down from that old place of worship where the Games were celebrated for more than a thousand years as an expression of religious sentiment and a demonstration of the competitive spirit of the Greek people. German scholars unearthed this honorable site in the years 1875-81 in accordance with agreements concluded at that time with the Greek government: hence the world was given a more detailed impression of the arena of this national shrine of the Hellenes and of the type and structure of the games. The excavation was not fully completed at that time.

I have now decided, as a lasting memory of the Eleventh Olympics in Berlin, to resume and complete the excavation work begun in 1875 at the site of the Olympic festivities and sports events.¹⁶⁶ I may extend my thanks to the Royal Greek Government for granting its enthusiastic consent to this task. Thus a consecrated site from ancient culture is returned to today's civilization. It is my hope that this will help to keep the memory of the Olympic Games of 1936 alive for all time to come.

That they may be a wonderful success is my one sincere desire and the one we all share.

The actual opening of the Games at 4:00 p.m. in the newly built Olympic Stadium on the Berlin Sports Field, took place amidst over-awing, ceremonious and magnificent celebrations. Even though Spain and the Soviet Union did not participate, the teams of fifty-two nations marched into the arena and paraded by the Führer's special rostrum, on which Hitler sat with the International Committee. With the much-noted exception of the British and the Japanese, all teams voluntarily greeted Hitler with an outstretched and raised right arm—just as the gladiators, “doomed to die,” had once paid their tribute to the Emperor in the Roman stadiums (*Morituri te salutant!*) before starting their life-and-death struggle. Now the Fascist or “German salute,” derived from the ancient gladiators' salute, had become the greeting of the 1936 Olympic Games.

After the speeches by the presidents of the various committees, Hitler approached the microphone and proclaimed:¹⁶⁵

I hereby declare the Berlin Games in celebration of the Eleventh Olympic Games of the new age open to the public.

After the last bearer of the torch had ignited the Olympic flame in the basin, the former champion marathon runner Spyridon Louis from Greece presented Hitler with an olive branch as a “symbol for love and peace.” On the same day, Hitler sent a telegram thanking the Mayor of Pyrgos in Greece for the latter's congratulations upon the arrival of the Olympic flame.¹⁶⁶ In addition, another telegram was addressed to the Honorary President of the International Olympic Committee, Pierre de Coubertin.¹⁶⁷

In the course of the subsequent days, Hitler watched several of the competitions and also greeted the official guests, such as the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin. On August 4 in the Olympic Stadium, the Swede addressed a speech to the “youth of the world.” On August 9, Hitler observed the Olympic sailing competition in Kiel from aboard the cutter *Nixe*.

On August 11, Hitler named Ribbentrop the new German Ambassador in London. During those days it was becoming increasingly clear that Hitler intended to turn the subservient Ribbentrop into his sole executer of foreign policy.

The next day, numerous receptions were held at the Chancellery. Lord Kemsley and Lord Camrose of the *Daily Telegraph*, twenty deputies of the Japanese parliament, and finally the Polish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Count Jan Szembek, consulted Hitler on that day.¹⁶⁸

The conference with the count was not a pleasant experience for Hitler. Count Szembek brought to Hitler's attention the hostile attitude of the National Socialist Government in Danzig and to other actions directed against the Polish people.¹⁶⁹ Besides these complaints, it is possible that the Polish felt offended by Hitler's March 7 speech before the Reichstag, which was much less favorable to Poland than his earlier talks. Hitler could not allow such discord to persist in the "Olympic Year," thus, he assured the Polish statesman of his sympathies for the entire Polish people.

That evening, Hitler held a large reception in the Chancellery¹⁷⁰ for his foreign guests and their female escorts and once again played the role of the charming host. Among the renowned guests were men like Sir Robert Vansittard, permanent adviser to the British government on foreign policy matters and German expert; Ward Price, Count Szembek, and Count Baillet-Latour; several British Lords, a few Hungarian and Yugoslavian Ministers, and numerous Italian luminaries. Somewhat at odds with this illustrious international gathering was another guest, the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, as a citizen of Czechoslovakia, he too was a foreigner.

After the Olympic Games had come to a close on August 16, Hitler addressed the following note to Count Baillet-Latour:¹⁷²

Esteemed Mr. President!

Now that the competitions at the Eleventh Olympic Games in Berlin have come to a close, I feel myself compelled to express to you and the International Olympic Committee my and the German Volk's gratitude for your excellent work and dedication and the great pains you have taken, which doubtlessly contributed to the most successful conduct of the Games. We are particularly indebted to those fighters from all over the world, whose fabulous performances command our respect.

Their names will live on forever in the history of sports. I hope that the Olympics in Berlin have contributed to the strengthening of the Olympic idea and that hence they helped to build bridges between the peoples of the world.

With this in mind I extend my sincere greetings to you, Mr. President,

Yours respectfully,

Adolf Hitler

The note addressed to former State Secretary Lewald, the President of the German Organization Committee, read as follows:¹⁷³

Esteemed Mr. President!

Under your presidency, the German Organization Committee has conscientiously prepared for the Berlin Olympics and has done so in an exemplary fashion. Next to the work of the International Olympic Committee

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it was the Organization Committee's achievement that the Games ran such a propitious and harmonious course. Therefore, I extend to you, to the members of the Organization Committee and to all its assistants, my own and the German Volk's gratitude and appreciation for your great achievement. You may look back upon the athletic competitions at the Eleventh Olympic Games in Berlin with a feeling of having rendered a great service not only to the physical fitness of humankind, but also to the understanding among the peoples of the world.

In particular, the entire German Volk is grateful to our fighters who so honorably represented German sport. Their excellent performance filled all of us with a feeling of pride. Please relay to all of them my heartfelt thanks and my great appreciation.

With best wishes,

Adolf Hitler

The Olympic Games marked one of the greatest political successes to date concerning the dictator's image within Germany and abroad. As the world's host, he presented a clean and prospering National Socialist country, a magnificent setting for what is portrayed in a highly stylized manner in Leni Riefenstahl's documentary *Olympiade*.¹⁷⁴

On August 23, Hitler met privately with the Hungarian Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy at his residence on the Obersalzberg.¹⁷⁵ Hitler's house there had been refurbished to accommodate the exigencies of its new function as a semi-official residence of the Chancellor. A private suite had been added, exclusively reserved for Hitler and Eva Braun. There were also additional rooms in which he could receive his official guests, in particular one large conference room on the first floor. The outside wall of the room was adorned with an oversized window, which took up nearly the entire wall, providing a magnificent view of the mountains surrounding the Berghof.

Hitler had taken on the habit of issuing ordinances and decrees in Berchtesgaden, as if this location were a seat of the Reich Government. An example of this was Hitler's August 24 decree from Berchtesgaden stepping up the military tour of service to two years.

It simply decreed, without any further explanation:¹⁷⁶

In reference to Article 8 of the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 (RGBl., I, p. 609) I decree the following, subsequent to suspension of my decree of May 22, 1935 (RGBl., I, p. 614):

The duration of the tour of service with all three branches of the Wehrmacht is set at two years.

The Reich Minister of War and the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht will issue the necessary regulations for the implementation thereof, and regarding the transition period.

This new move was achieved without much ado, or *Tamtam* to put it in Hitler's own words.¹⁷⁷ In this instance, he refrained from issuing proclamations and holding lengthy speeches, contrary to his approach in the two previous cases of the occupation of the Rhineland and of the reintroduction of compulsory military service. This time, Hitler did not even bother to try to explain his action. He left it up to the newspapers to popularize the measure.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* interpreted the extension of the service period as "another step by our Führer to ensure peace and to protect our nation." The NS Party correspondence enumerated Hitler's incentives, which first of all consisted of the Bolshevik threat, then of the Spanish Civil War, and finally of an "international group, agitating to water down those of pure blood by advocating intermarriage among the races, thus attempting to induce chaos and precipitate a Communist take-over equaling the destruction of the entire world."

The fact that he had burdened the soldiers with additional service requirements, certainly did not weigh heavily on Hitler's conscience. After all, as soldiers, their duty was to obey their Führer. But with an uneasy eye on public opinion, Hitler delayed issuing an explanation for his measure until the Reich Party Congress in September. At the Congress, he would be assured of an audience which would burst into applause in response to any of his utterances, no matter what their true significance and its ramifications might be.

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On August 29, Hitler again went to see a *Lobengrin* performance in Bayreuth. On his August 30 return trip, he inspected the recently completed massive buildings erected on the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg.¹⁷⁸

On September 4, Hitler expected a very special guest on the Obersalzberg, David Lloyd George.¹⁷⁹ As mentioned earlier, Hitler was convinced that the English were actually German, or at least closely related to the Germans through common Germanic ancestors. The rise of the British Empire was, therefore, the natural result of the Germanic blood surging through the veins of the Englishmen. The deplorable situation and the decline of the Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century had been caused by senile British statesmen, who were no longer capable of actively participating in the affairs of the world. The degeneration in process and the imminent collapse of the British Empire could only be halted by a last minute rescue through German Army divisions. In Hitler's opinion, the British feared, but at the same time admired the Germans as the "Coming Race." If he—their charismatic Führer—turned against the Bolshevist threat, thus defending instead of infringing the Crown's Dominion, he would get *carte blanche*. The arrogant Englishmen might believe they could use him, as the German Nationalists, the members of high finance, aristocracy, etc., had meant. In the end, he would again demonstrate who was the master strategist. These were the reasonings on which Hitler based his policy toward Great Britain from 1933 onward.

If the English had planned to confirm Hitler in his theses, they could not possibly have chosen a better man for the task than Lloyd George. He had been British Prime Minister during the First World War, in which he had vanquished William II, and he most certainly was an expert on Germany. Already in his book *Mein Kampf*; Hitler had shown

himself truly fascinated by this particular British statesman. Hitler considered Lloyd George's speeches delivered during the war "masterpieces of psychology in the art of influencing the masses."¹⁸⁰ Obviously, Hitler regarded Lloyd George as the only British statesman who had not yet succumbed to senility.

Seated now next to the great man of the First World War, who was in an amiable mood, Hitler went into a near frenzy. Lloyd George had declared from the outset that he had come less to discuss politics than to gather information on the social reforms within the new Germany. This objection on the former Prime Minister's part did nothing to contain Hitler's exuberance. At great length, Hitler reveled in memories of his service during the First World War; his English guest demonstrated great interest. During the further course of their talk, Lloyd George made honorable mention of Germany's peace efforts. He seemed to be particularly impressed by its achievements in the social area and the institutions of the German Labor Front. No wonder, Hitler was so enthralled with the old gentleman that for a long time after this visit, he would refer to him only as "the great British statesman Lloyd George." For Hitler, the only dampening of his fervor was the Englishman's persistent refusal to come to attend the Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg.

After Lloyd George had experienced Hitler himself for three hours, he returned to Berchtesgaden around 7:00 p.m. that night, accompanied by the interpreter Schmidt. Outside the hotel, his daughter Megan jokingly greeted him with her right arm raised, shouting "*Heil Hitler!*" To this Lloyd George replied: "Yes, *Heil Hitler* indeed, for truly he is a great man!"

Back in England, Lloyd George wrote a series of articles all similarly ironic in content. He stated that if ever he had entertained any reservations with regard to the Germans' claim that they were a kind of *Übermensch*, he had no more doubts now. After his visit with Hitler, he was completely convinced that the Germans had been totally right.

The "Reich Party Congress of Honor" took place on September 8 in Nuremberg. As usual Hitler himself had contributed the title, which he thought would emphasize that through its occupation of the Rhineland Germany had regained its national honor. The term "honor" was stretched beyond endurance in the course of the meeting. Among other grandiose statements, Hitler at one point proclaimed that "the German Volk has come to the close of a most dishonorable chapter in its

history.” Superlatives continuously had to give way to additional exaggerations. Already in the month of September, in his speech at the Nuremberg City Hall, Hitler claimed that year to have been “the most difficult year of my own historic role.”¹⁸¹

The fact that you, Mr. Mayor, have presented to me on behalf of the city of Nuremberg the old plans and sketches of the fortifications, towers, battlements, and trenches so familiar to us all, is a particular pleasure to me. The work will serve me not only as a dear remembrance of our City of the Reich Party Congresses, but also as a token reminder of the most difficult year of my own historic role, by means of which, with God’s help, I succeeded in strengthening the military potential of the Reich and increasing its security.

The next day, a proclamation commenting on the Party Congress was read, as usual, by Gauleiter Adolf Wagner. In the course of his “party narrative,” Hitler maintained that the previous twelve months had been “the pinnacle of Germany’s rise to power.” Here he was referring to the 99 percent of the ballot that he had obtained in the election of March 29:

What would they [the opponents in 1933] have said to my prophecy that before four years had passed, this Volk, then so torn apart, would march to the polls—99 percent of it—for the National Socialist policy of restoration and the honor and freedom of the nation, and that 99 percent would declare their approval?

After Hitler had lauded his own efforts, he was forced to address the increasing scarcity of goods in Germany. The lack of quality foodstuffs and of products requiring the use of natural resources had resulted from the priority assigned to the production of armament. This situation had been aggravated by Germany’s effort to become self-sufficient. Foreign currencies were almost exclusively used to procure metals and other goods crucial to the production of weaponry. Hitler had decided to explain the new scarcity by arguing that it was merely an unpleasant side effect in his drive to prevent a renewed unemployment crisis. Although the scarcity of goods and unemployment were completely unrelated factors, Hitler proclaimed in his speech:

We are not so much concerned with the question of whether there is more or less butter or whether eggs have grown scarce; rather, it is our duty to be primarily concerned that the broad masses of our Volk retain their jobs and their earnings and can thus save themselves from slipping back into the terrible plight of unemployment.

He then announced the implementation of a new Four-Year Plan, which would quickly resolve the goods shortage.

Thus it is the task of the National Socialist leadership of the state and the economy to thoroughly investigate whether requisite raw materials, fuels, etc., can be manufactured within Germany.

The resulting foreign exchange savings should be used in the future toward helping to safeguard the food supply and toward purchasing those materials which cannot be obtained here under any circumstances. And today I am now establishing this as the new Four-Year Program:

In four years, Germany must be completely independent of foreign countries with respect to those materials which we are capable of obtaining ourselves in any way with the aid of German ability, with our chemical and engineering industries, and with our own mining industry!

The rebuilding of this great German raw-materials industry will at the same time provide employment to the masses of people who will be free after rearmament has been concluded [!], employment which is useful in terms of our national economy. We hope that this will enable us to once again increase national production in many sectors, namely, in the internal cycle of our economy, so that receipts from our exports can be reserved foremost for foodstuff supply and for procuring supplies of the raw materials we still lack.

I have just issued the directives requisite for the implementation of this gigantic German economy plan.¹⁸² The execution will be performed with National Socialist energy and drive. Independent of this, however, Germany cannot waive its claim to a solution of its colonial claims.¹⁸³ The German Volk's right to live is just as great as the rights of the other nations!

I know, my National Socialist Volksgenossen, that this new program represents an enormous task; however, in many areas it has already been solved in scientific terms: the production methods are already being tested and, in part, have already been chosen and specified. Hence making this program a reality will be but a question of our own energy and determination. As National Socialists, we have never known the word "impossible," and we, therefore, do not plan to add it to our vocabulary in the future.

In four years we will once more account to the nation for this gigantic task of securing its food supply and thus its life and independence.

In the remainder of his proclamation, Hitler used the example of the Spanish Civil War to illustrate to all Germans and to the entire world the pitiful fate of those who were not wary of a Bolshevik invasion. Listening to his gruesome description of the events in Spain, one could have believed that it was not Franco who had instigated a Fascist Putsch, but rather the Soviets who had raided the country and set free the mechanisms of a blood-thirsty revolution. In Spain, the Soviet Union, like France and other countries, was supporting the legal government and aiding volunteer groups which were fighting to ward off the Fascist assault.

We have gathered our experiences these past eighteen years. We know the lot of those who believe that, without making any effort on their part, they

have a right to expect justice from others or even assistance. All around us we see the signs of growing evil. We preached for years about the greatest world menace of this second millennium of our Christian history now coming to an end, and now it is becoming a horrible reality.

Everywhere the burrowing work of the Bolshevik wire-pullers is beginning to take effect. In an age where bourgeois statesmen talk of non-intervention, an international Jewish center of revolution in Moscow is undertaking to revolutionize this continent via wireless stations and thousands of channels of money and agitation. One thing we do not want to be told is that we are developing an anxiety psychosis by repeatedly drawing attention to these facts and these dangers in Germany.

Even today we have no fear of a Bolshevik invasion of Germany—not because we do not believe in such a thing, but because we are determined to make the nation so strong that, just as National Socialism was able to deal with this worldwide incitement within, it will ward off every attack from without with the most brutal determination.

This is the reason for the measures we have taken in the military sphere. These German measures will rise or fall proportionate to the degree of the dangers surrounding us increasing or decreasing. We do not gladly ban the energies of our Volk to arms plants or barracks. However, we are also men enough to look this necessity in the face and remain cold and unflinching. I would like to say here in this proclamation before the entire German Volk that, convinced as I am of the necessity of maintaining Germany's peace without—just as I have safeguarded its inner peace—I will not shrink from any measure conducive to making the nation not only feel secure, but above all to make us, under all circumstances, feel convinced of the independence of the Reich. The Muscovite Communist rabble-rousers Neumann, Béla Khun¹⁸⁴ and cohorts, who are today devastating Spain on behalf of the Comintern Movement, will play no role in Germany, and the agitation of the Muscovite radio station calling for support to reduce unhappy Spain to rubble, will not be repeated in Germany.

Then Hitler finally spoke on the topic of the two-year compulsory conscription:

Thus after having consulted [!] the Reich Minister of War, I have directed that the two-year period of conscription now be introduced without delay. I know that young Germans will bow to this necessity without blinking an eye. The leadership governing Germany today has a right to demand this from the Germans, for we all not only served two years in peacetime, but four years in the most gigantic war of all time. And we did it for Germany, for our Volk, for our German homeland. And the National Socialist Movement struggled for fifteen years and demanded from its followers the greatest sacrifices to rescue Germany from the inner Bolshevik foe and adversary.

However, Hitler refrained from confessing to the true reason behind the prolongation of the military service. Already in *Mein Kampf*,¹⁸⁵ Hitler had expressed his conviction that “two years barely suffice to

mold an untrained young man into the cast of a professional soldier.” It so happened that it were precisely these “molded” professional military men that Hitler needed for his envisioned conquest of the East. Speaking at the Party Congress, however, he merely stated inconclusively:

Now generation after generation will make this most noble sacrifice a man can be asked to make.¹⁸⁶ The German Volk put an end to the age of its historic dishonor in 1936, in the fourth year of the National Socialist regime.¹⁸⁷

Long live the National Socialist Movement, long live our National Socialist Army, long live our German Reich!

Hitler’s speech at the Culture Convention on September 9 again turned into a two-hour lecture on “culture and philosophy.” In it, Hitler displayed such brilliant insights as:

This is a fundamental principle: no one can maintain an inner relationship to a cultural accomplishment which is not rooted in the essence of his own descent.

Toward the end of his speech, Hitler returned to his favorite “cultural” topic, his plans to carry out the construction of “gigantic construction projects.” He explained their necessity in the following terms:

It is our will to find the way out of the distraction of our individual cultural accomplishments to enter into that great type of community work characterized by mutual complement and improvement.

This purpose is served by the gigantic construction projects we have launched at various locations in the Reich and shall launch shortly [in others].

These plans are bringing forth the new Nuremberg of our Reich Party Congresses.

Here, in the most gigantic dimensions possible, a document designed to improve style must be created which shall, at the same time, also be for millions of Germans a monument of pride, of belonging to this community. And it is this same spirit and these same aims which dictate the remodeling of the Movement’s capital, and shortly the task of rebuilding of Berlin as the capital of the German Reich will be taken on.

The great buildings which shall stand there will not only gladden our Volk in the present, but also fill it with pride in the future. The only truly immortal investment of human labor is art!

The next day, Hitler gave a speech before men of the Labor Service (*Arbeitsmänner*). He had never been at ease with this group, and he did not know what to say, since to him the true purpose of the compulsory labor service was its function as a stepping stone and preparation ground for the military service. As a result his speeches to

the Labor Service often leaned toward the grotesque. One case in point is his declaration on that September 10:

When I see you thus, it is difficult for me to find words. All our hearts are overflowing with enthusiasm for you. You have no idea how very much the German Volk has come to love you! In the space of but a few years, you have become a part of our national life, a part we can no longer imagine living without. Above and beyond our youth, the work of the Party organization, beyond the SA, the SS etc., you are a further component in the great work of educating our Volk, and the bridge to the final stage of this education of young men in the Army. You surely feel it yourselves: that what we have accomplished in Germany is better than what is happening today in the countries of those who still persist in criticizing us.

Here there is building going on! Here there is comradeship! And here above all is the faith in a better humanity and hence in a better future! What a difference from another country in which Marxism is attempting to gain power.¹⁸⁸ There the cities are in flames, there the villages are being reduced to rubble, there a man no longer knows whom he can trust. Class is fighting against class, rank against rank, brothers are destroying brothers. We have chosen the other path: instead of tearing you apart, I have joined you together.

Thus you stand before us today, not only the foundation upon which your own strong faith rests for the future of our Volk, but also one of the foundations upon which our own faith rests.

We have faith in you! In you, we have the faith in our male and female German youth! And we are thus all the more regaining our faith in our Volk, of which you are one of the most splendid components!

On September 11, in an address to the NS Frauenschaft, Hitler thanked all German women for bearing “him” hundreds of thousands of children each year, as their special “gift” to the Führer. At several points in his speech, Hitler indeed sounded as though he were claiming all these children as his own.

When I drive through Germany like this, I see in all the millions of children exactly what allows all this work to make any sense at all. I see in them the children who belong to their mothers just as, at the same time, they do to me.

Hitler closed with the recognition:

I am of the conviction that no one understands the Movement better than the German woman.

This verbose laudation of the German woman meant little in relative terms, for Hitler was constantly honoring one group or another, most generous with regard to the praise he distributed. Frequently, he would maintain that the German peasant, worker, youth, or Old Guard was the sole person or group that truly understood him.

In an appeal to the Political Leaders of Germany on September 11, Hitler declared—albeit prematurely:

The time of internal tensions has now been overcome, just as has the time of the external threat!

Just as we are joined together here, so has the German Volk been joined together today. Just as you, my banner bearers, have marched here in columns, so stands the German Volk arrayed in columns under your banners and behind your banners!

Thereafter, Hitler again took on the guise of the Messiah (“Yet I feel you, and you feel me!”), transforming entire passages from the Bible:¹⁸⁹

How could we help but feel once more in this hour the miracle that brought us together! Once you heard the voice of a man, and that voice knocked at your hearts, it awakened you, and you followed that voice. For years you pursued it, without ever having even seen the owner of that voice; you simply heard a voice and followed it.

When we meet here today, we are all of us filled with the miraculousness of this gathering. Not every one of you can see me, and I cannot see every one of you. Yet I feel you, and you feel me! It is the faith in our Volk that has made us small people great, that has made us poor people rich, that has made us wavering, discouraged, fearful people brave and courageous; that has made us, the wayward, see, and has joined us together!

Thus you come from your little villages, from your small market towns, from your cities, from the mines and the factories, leaving the plow; one day you come into this city. You come from the limited environment of your daily life-struggle and of your struggle for Germany and our Volk, to have for once the feeling: now we are together, we are with him, and he is with us, and we are now Germany!

Hitler concluded his speech to the Political Leaders as follows:

This Reich has only seen but the first few days of its youth. It will continue to grow for more than centuries to come; it will become strong and mighty! These banners shall be borne through ages of ever-new generations of our Volk. Germany has come into its own! Our Volk has been reborn!

Hence I greet you, my old comrades in arms, my leaders, my banner bearers, as the standard bearers of a new history, and hence I greet you here and thank you for all the loyalty and all the faith you have shown me all these long years.

Hence I greet you as the hope of the present and the guarantors of our future. And hence I greet particularly the youth assembled here. Become men like those who stand before you! Fight as they have fought! Be upstanding and determined, fear no man, and in other respects do what is right and your duty! And then the Lord God will never abandon our Volk.

Heil Deutschland!

At a ceremony dedicated to the Hitler Youth on September 12, he once again declared that the children were most fortunate to be alive in such exciting times. Prior to and during the First World War, German youth had already experienced the ramifications of such a “good fortune,” which they had been called on to remember, in particular, by their school teachers. Hitler began his speech with the following words:

My German Youth!

You have the good fortune of witnessing a time of both upheaval and greatness. That is a fate not bestowed upon all generations. When I think back on the youth of my own time and on the time of my own youth, it seems truly empty to me compared to what fills today’s time and in it, today’s youth as well; what tasks today’s time is faced with, and what tasks are facing today’s youth. It is really wonderful to live in such an age and to be allowed to grow and mature in it. And this great good fortune is yours!

You are not experiencing the reconstruction of a state, for you did not know the old Reich. You are experiencing the birth of a great age you can judge in comparison to our surroundings!

In the second part of the speech, Hitler reminded the boys that living in such great times carried with it certain responsibilities, such as the duty to “dedicate oneself to the eternal Reich and the eternal Volk.” In other words, the youth were called upon to “die a hero’s death,” the reasons for which Hitler detailed:

Perhaps that is the greatest miracle of our time: buildings are being erected, factories founded, roads built, train stations constructed—but beyond all this, a new German being is maturing! When I look at you, filled with the happiest sentiments, when I meet your gaze, I know that my life-struggle has not been fought in vain, the effort has not been made for nothing! With this flag and in its young bearers, it will live on, and a worthy generation will one day stand prepared to relieve you.

You will be men, just as was the great generation of the war. You will be brave and courageous, just as were your older brothers and your fathers. You will be as loyal as Germans can be. Yet you will see the Vaterland with completely different eyes than we, unfortunately, had to see it with. You will learn a different kind of dedication to the eternal Reich and the eternal Volk. Now five years have passed since your leader, my old Party Comrade Schirach, himself once a member of the Youth, took over training and forming you. Back then a weak, small beginning—already today a miraculous accomplishment! Let that be a reminder and a comfort to us for the future: if we have been able to achieve this miracle in five years, the coming five, ten, twenty and one hundred years will certainly reinforce this miracle!

Generation after generation will take turns in the tasks and their accomplishment; again and again a new youth will assemble here in this city.

It will be constantly stronger, more powerful and more healthy, and give living generations ever greater hopes for the future. We want to join our wishes for this future, that it may bring our Volk blessings and good fortune, that it may be allowed to live and thwart all those who wish to unsettle this life.

Today we are in the midst of a turbulent age. Yet we do not complain. We are accustomed to fighting, for it was the struggle that brought us forth. We are determined to keep our feet planted firmly on our ground, and we shall parry every attack. And you shall stand beside me if this hour should ever come!

You shall stand in front of me, at my side and behind me, and shall hold our banners high! Then let our old adversary try to march against us and raise his head once more. Though he might carry his Soviet symbol before him—with our symbol we shall triumph once again!¹⁹⁰

His next speaking engagement was at the annual meeting of the German Labor Front, which convened on the same day. Here Hitler once more expounded upon the primitive nature of Bolshevism. He had been greatly annoyed by the sensationalist reporting in the media, acclaiming the completion of the new subway in the city of Moscow. Hitler declared the Soviet state incapable of exploiting the vast reserves of natural resources which Russia possessed, much less than of ever being able to produce sufficient foodstuffs to feed its people. Under a National Socialist regime, this would be an entirely different matter. Already he envisioned Russia as an appendix to the Greater German Reich.

If the Urals with their vast wealth of raw materials, Siberia with its rich forests, and the Ukraine with its vast fields of grain were in Germany, it would be swimming in surplus under National Socialist leadership. We would produce—and every single German would have more than enough to live on.

But in Russia the population is starving in these huge areas because a Jewish-Bolshevist leadership is incapable of organizing production and thus according the worker practical help. [—]

In Moscow they build a subway and then invite the world to tour it, saying, “Look what we’ve accomplished!” We do not even mention such accomplishments. We build our subways just in passing!¹⁹¹ In the same time they need to construct eleven kilometers of subway lines in Moscow, we construct 7,000 kilometers of Reich autobahns—and that not only eighteen or twenty years after our revolution, but in the fourth year, and in another four years the entire network will be finished!¹⁹²

Thus Hitler came to speak of his Four-Year Plan and proclaimed that he would be able to resolve even more demanding problems than the above stated. His rise “from nothing, all the way to the top of the German nation” served as sufficient proof of his abilities.

We will never say that the problems cannot be solved. Problems that arise can also be solved, and they will be solved! Naturally this requires boldness, initiative, determination, and great faith. But a much greater boldness and a much greater faith were required for a single man to take up the battle eighteen years ago against a whole world of ideas and foes!

When I say today that we will have solved this or that problem in four years, it all seems much easier to me than it seemed to me then to strike out as a lone wanderer on the path from nothing, all the way to the top of the German nation. Therefore, may no one stand up against me and say, "That won't work!" No one can and no one will say that to me. I am not one of those men who let themselves be told, "It won't work." It must work, for Germany must live.

Naturally we will only solve the problems if we are *one* front. [—]

When I see you standing before me as the front line of German labor, then please grasp the meaning of the word "front." Front means *one* will, it means *one* resolve; front means *one* goal and *one* deed!

What he was referring to naturally was the will, the resolve, the ambition, and the deeds of one man, Adolf Hitler.

In a speech before the Party's fighting formations on September 13, Hitler addressed the men in the style of Jesus Christ, as passed on to us by John the Evangelist:

That is the miracle of our age—that you have found me [here he was interrupted by lengthy applause], that you have found me among so many millions! And that I have found you, that is Germany's good fortune!

Then Hitler turned the attention of his listeners to the issue of the volunteer troops that had constituted themselves all over the world in an effort to aid Spain against the onslaught of Franco's men. Hitler proclaimed that should he call for such volunteers, these would certainly not resemble the 30,000 undisciplined warriors now rallying, but rather there would be millions.

Rallies are being held everywhere during these weeks and months. We read about how, in other countries, the stirred-up masses are called upon to attend protest rallies against Fascism, against National Socialism; to attend rallies for Bolshevism, rallies for shipments of arms; rallies for donations—yes, and even to attend rallies for the shipments of people.

I have never called out for people to attend a rally, and if I ever do, then all of Germany will be but a single rally, because not only ten or twenty or thirty thousand undisciplined people will demonstrate, but instead millions upon millions will be inflamed against the old adversary and hereditary enemy of humanity!

On "Wehrmacht Day," September 14, Hitler presented a peculiar argument in a speech before an assembly of conscripts to attempt to

win their approval of the extension of the service. Hitler had the audacity to claim that by undergoing two years of military training the recruits would gain ten years more life expectancy than ordinary mortals. The irony of the matter was that in front of him on that day stood the very first recruits drafted, the majority of whom had been born in 1914. They also would be the very first to be engaged in combat once the war broke out and to suffer the greatest amount of casualties in the armed conflict which ensued and later came to be known as the Second World War.

The experience they were going to have to undergo would make most of them lose fifty years in life expectancy in the end. Nonetheless, that day Hitler stated the following:

Soldiers!

For the third time you are assembled here on this square in Nuremberg! For the first time the war flags of the new Reich are flying before you! For the first time you are holding in your fists the new banners of your regiments!

Thus even this external image illustrates the change which Germany, our and your Germany, has undergone.

This change is the result of the great work of educating our Volk and no less great an effort in all the areas of our national life.

The fact that we are able to stand here today and celebrate these days this way is something we owe to the infinite energy, the infinite diligence, the infinite work of our Volk. Yet this work would be in vain were the Reich not able to safeguard its internal and external peace. What today fills us with such great pride are the accomplishments of our work of peace. The supreme task assigned to us all is safeguarding and thus preserving this accomplishment and this work. And if millions of people dedicate their lives to this work year in, year out, in factories and workshops, in plants and offices, then it is understandable and reasonable that all of them are equally prepared to dedicate their lives to preserve what has thus been accomplished.

This is why you, my soldiers, have been called upon by the nation! Not to support some frivolous experiment of hysterical chauvinism—but to stand guard over our work! To stand guard over our Volk! To stand guard over Germany! When I see you thus before me, I feel and I know that this guard will stand firm against any danger and any threat.

Germans have always been good soldiers. The Army from which you have grown forth looks back on the proudest heritage of all time. If Germany collapsed back then, it was the consequence of its inner political collapse.

Today the nation stands as straight as you, my young comrades, stand here before me. Germany has once more become worthy of its soldiers, and I know that you will be worthy soldiers of this Reich! With the Volk, the Party and the Army, we make up an indissoluble, sworn community.

Grave times may lie ahead. They will never find us wavering, never disheartened and never cowardly! For we all know the kingdom of heaven

cannot be gained by half-men! Freedom cannot be preserved by cowards! And the future belongs only to the brave!

What is being asked of you is only a small part of what the past required of us. Back then we did our duty, today you will do yours. The two years I ask of you for Germany I will give you back with ten! For this discipline will make every one of you healthier than he has ever been before. Whatever you give to the Fatherland in your youth, will be returned to you in your old age. You will be a healthy generation, not suffocated in offices and factory halls, but raised in the sun and the outdoors, steeled by physical exercise, and above all strengthened in character. And believe me, Germany has a place in its heart for you, its soldiers! It has transferred the esteem, the admiration and the love it showed for our former great army to you. And you shall be worthy of it! The nation expects no sacrifices from you that you shall not make!

Then Germany will never again approach the sorrowful times we were made to endure! Our Fatherland, your Germany, your homeland and the homeland of our children will be strong and great and happy. It will be able to preserve that very peace that safeguards our life.

In this hour we all join in professing our faith to this, our German Volk, and to the millions of toiling people in the cities and the countryside, in professing our faith in the German Reich.

To our Germany: *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

Hitler's final speech at the Party Congress, delivered on September 14, was for the most part a reiteration of the imminent threat to the world posed by Communism. Taking advantage of Franco's mutiny in Spain, Hitler was determined to create an international Red scare, just as he had done in Germany in the years 1932/1933. The fear he had been able to induce domestically at the time had bordered on mass psychosis. The German Nationalists, the heads of industry, and the top men of the military had easily fallen prey to Hitler's designs. They had aided and abetted his rise to power in the hope that he would spare Germany the plight of a Bolshevik take-over.

Outside of Germany, Hitler's schemes failed him miserably. In the West, Hitler did not succeed in convincing anyone that the Bolsheviks had attempted to topple the Spanish Government. The Western Powers did not accord Hitler the freedom of preventive actions against the East. The only tangible result of Hitler's arguments was the confusion his tirades created in the German public. His harangues convoluted the public's comprehension of world affairs so much that many Germans actually became convinced that the dreaded monstrosity of Bolshevism truly was raising its frightful head in Spain. The "party narrative" of September 14, 1936, reached a hitherto unequalled height when Hitler concluded a little hastily:

Thanks to the National Socialist idea and through the work of the National Socialist leadership, a new Germany has arisen! One can love it or one can hate it, but no one will change it, no one can do away with it!

In addition, Hitler gave an explanation of the motives behind the extension of the service period which came much closer to the truth than the fairytale on the dangers of Bolshevism.

The first and most difficult of our appointed political tasks can be said to be solved today. With the introduction of the two-year period service, the German Reich has once again been liberated, in scarcely four years of National Socialist leadership of state, from the worst consequences of that unscrupulous mutiny that attempted to defame us not only militarily, but first and foremost morally! It may be that the peoples who were not visited by a misfortune comparable to that of Germany have no concept of the emphasis we place on settling this question above all.

Hitler observed at the beginning of his attack on the Bolsheviks that it would have suited him well had the Communists indeed taken care of the so-called "upper ten thousand"¹⁹³ and the "worthless Philistines" in Germany. The latter term mainly referred to the intellectual critics of National Socialism.

We did not defend Germany against Bolshevism back then because we were intending to do anything like conserve a bourgeois world or go so far as to freshen it up. Had Communism really intended nothing more than a certain purification by eliminating isolated rotten elements from among the ranks of our so-called 'upper ten thousand' or our equally worthless Philistines, one could have sat back quietly and looked on for a while.

The aim of Bolshevism is not, however, to liberate peoples from what is sick, but the opposite: to exterminate what is healthy, what is healthiest of all, in fact, and to place in its stead the most degenerated of all.

I cannot ally myself with a Weltanschauung which, as its initial action upon taking power, would invariably choose not to first liberate the working Volk, but to liberate instead the asocial scum of the earth concentrated in the penitentiaries, and then to let them loose like animals upon their frightened and stunned fellow beings. [—]

We also reject this doctrine as a consequence of the more humane approach we have to our fellow men. The remarks of our speakers at this Party Congress and the events in Spain have once again provided to the world and to our German Volksgenossen an insight into atrocities of Bolshevik combat methods and government maxims. The German Volk is too good and too decent for such hideous monstrosities.¹⁹⁴

For hours, he continued along these lines. Occasionally, he would stop to admire his own successes and again swear that nothing could ever lead him away from an opinion he had once formed.

I have only been able to score these successes because, first of all, I endeavored to see things as they are and not as one would like to have them. And secondly, because I have never allowed weaklings to talk me out of or lead me away from an opinion I had once formed; and thirdly, because I have always resolved under all circumstances to respond to a necessity once recognized. Today, now that Fate has bestowed such great success upon me, I will not abandon my principles.

Then he appealed to the neighboring peoples to finally come to realize that they could not possibly have a better friend or a stronger protector in the face of the Bolshevist threat than Adolf Hitler.

May the peoples living around us comprehend that, if they respect German independence, freedom and honor, they will nowhere find a more sincere friend than the National Socialist Third Reich.¹⁹⁵

May, however, that very Bolshevism of which we learned only a few months ago that it intends to arm its forces in order to open the door to revolution among other peoples with force, if necessary; may this Bolshevism know that the new German Army stands guard at the German door.

Following the appeal, Hitler described in minute detail the gruesome deeds of the Bolshevists in Spain, which he rendered more vivid by references to the French Revolution in 1789, to the Kerensky government in 1917¹⁹⁶ and to the 1936 Popular Front government in France, under the leadership of the Socialist Léon Blum.¹⁹⁷

The brutal mass slaughter of nationalist officers, igniting the gasoline-drenched wives of nationalist officers, the slaughter of the children and babies of nationalist parents, for example in Spain, should be a warning to all like-thinking powers in other countries to shrink from any act of resistance in a similar situation.

Should these methods achieve their aim and the modern Girondins be replaced by Jacobins and Kerensky's People's Front by Bolshevists, Europe will perish in a sea of blood and mourning. European culture which—fertilized in prehistoric antiquity—will soon celebrate 2,500 years of history, will yield to the cruelest barbarity of all time.

At the end of the speech, Hitler got increasingly carried away and raged against his intellectual critics. He acted as if he intended to march against Russia within days.

No one will harbor a single doubt that National Socialism will defend itself everywhere and under any circumstances against the attacks of Bolshevism, and will conquer and destroy it. [—]

We are marching in a rapid step toward turbulent times. The tempo requires men of determined toughness, and not weakly Philistines. It will not judge people according to the superficial manners of society, but according to the quality and toughness of their character in times of heavy burdens.

Now more than before, it is the Party's task to ensure that hard views are established in our Volk and that above all a relentless war be declared on every trace of that pitiful cleverness Clausewitz castigated as the worst symptom of cowardice. We are approaching great historic periods; in courses of time such as these, pure cleverness has never triumphed, but invariably brave courage. Above all, the Party must embody the optimism we National Socialists know so well. Every fault can be overcome, and its manifestations are easier to eliminate than pessimism and its consequences.

Let him beware who has no faith [in Adolf Hitler]. He is committing a sin against the meaning of life as a whole. He is of no use for anything, and his existence will be nothing but a burden to his Volk.

In the course of my political struggle—and unfortunately I must stress this again—it was particularly in bourgeois circles that I encountered these sorry pessimists who, in their pitiful state, are incapable of any faith whatsoever and hence could not be used for any redeeming action. And even today I often meet them.

I have but one question I must confront them with:

What would have happened to Germany had an unknown soldier not had the faith in 1919 that he would one day be able to rescue the German nation from its demise by steadfastness and dedication, by bravery and a willingness to sacrifice?

What did Germany rescue after all? Was it the pessimism of these petty carpers, these pitiful doubters, these invariable despondent defeatists? Or was it not the unshakeable confidence that the eternal qualities of our Volk would win out against the inferior and the burdensome? No! It was the miracle of faith that rescued Germany.

Today, after all these historically unique successes, it is more than ever the duty of the Party to recall this National Socialist profession of faith and to carry it once more at its force as the holy symbol of our fight and our certain victory.

This is why the Party too must penetrate again and again to the heart of the Volk at large which is the best and the strongest supporter of the faith we have. This Volk alone has in itself the courage and the bravery and the confidence Nature provides to primitive beings for their own self-preservation. Had commanders¹⁹⁸ always been as courageous as grenadiers must be at all times, many battles would not have been lost. And if politicians are as strong of faith as the broad masses of a Volk are true, then they are invincible as leaders of their peoples.

The Party Congress was barely over when Hitler appeared at another mass rally, this time military in nature. The most extensive maneuvers of the postwar period were held by the Second Army Group (Heeresgruppe II), involving the Fifth Army Corps from Stuttgart and the Ninth Army Corps from Kassel.

At 10:00 a.m. on September 17, Hitler addressed the men of the Fifth Corps in Giebelstadt near Würzburg. He returned to the half-forgotten

“stab-in-the-back” legend and claimed that in 1918 “the great Army, that proudest emblem of our Volk, was forced to lower its arms and the old flags, the victim of a treacherous attack.” Although he could not help mentioning the army of the Weimar years, he avoided to term it the “Reichswehr,” speaking only of the “small force of 100,000 men.” Instead he was completely enraptured by the revival which he had struggled for and achieved for his Volk, namely, the “resurrection” of Germany and its army. He stated in his Giebelstadt address:¹⁹⁹

Soldiers of the Fifth Army Corps!

In a few weeks’ time, exactly eighteen years will have passed since the great Army, that proudest emblem of our Volk, was forced to lower its arms and the old flags, the victim of a treacherous attack. In a Peace Treaty which was thrust upon us as a *Diktat*, the opponent demanded the abolishment of this great and unique Army, doing so in the conviction of not only thereby removing an obstructing organization, but also of delivering a mortal blow to the German Volk. And this blow was made possible and accepted by unscrupulous and irresponsible politicians.

What our Volk has been forced to endure since then is something we and you all know: not a peaceful development, not a time of understanding and reconciliation between peoples has come, but a time of German lamentation, of misery and of despair. Only a few months after the Old Army’s collapse there arose a young movement in Germany with the goal of re-erecting the German Volk and the German Army. For many years, two views stood opposed: the first held that Germany could only be happy if it were completely without defenses.

The second, in contrast, claimed that happiness can only come to him who is able to hold it fast in his strong fists. Since then, eighteen years have passed; the second view has won out. It has re-erected the German Volk and crowned this achievement of construction with the establishment of a new, great *Volksheer*, whose soldiers you comprise today. The great inheritance of the old army that was cultivated by a small force of 100,000 men has now been passed on in turn to a great, tremendous army of the entire German Volk.

You have now become the pillars of this unique and great tradition, the representatives of a new and great German Army, and hence the protectors of the honor, the strength and the magnificence of the German nation.

A new flag was raised over the new Reich. It has nothing to do with cowardice and subjection but signifies instead the spirit of the new German uprising and the German resurrection. Your flags wave in the colors and symbols of the new Reich, of a Reich of the *Volksgemeinschaft* whose sons you are; your parents have sent you here to serve the German nation.

It is on behalf of this new Reich that I present to you these flags and standards. You shall be loyal to them just as the regiments and battalions of the old army were loyal to their banners! As sons of our Volk, as soldiers of the National Socialist Third Reich, as the guard of the new Germany shall you march behind these banners!

You will do your duty just as the generations coming after you. And at the fore of fulfilling your duty you shall place our Germany, our holy Reich!

After the speech, Hitler presented the troop commanders with the new flags and standards. The Giebelstadt rally was not the only one of its kind. In Upper Hesse on the next day, the new flags were handed over to the troops of the Ninth Army Corps at Fritzlar. There, in front of a parade formation of soldiers, Hitler delivered the following short address:²⁰⁰

You shall stand by these banners in good times and bad! Never shall you abandon them, you shall carry them in your fists before a nation grown great once again. It gazes upon you with the greatest of pride and with blind trust. Prove yourselves worthy of this trust and always place your service and your actions before the phrase: 'Germany, our German Volk and our German Reich.'

Next, the maneuvers of the two Army Corps began. Hitler himself spent September 21 with the Second Army Group Command (Gruppenkommando II) at its headquarters outside of Fulda.

In Breslau on September 27, a ceremony marked the completion of the first 1,000 kilometers of Autobahn. Hitler gave a speech addressed to the assembled Autobahn workers. This time, he declared that it was the German worker who understood him best—even though he had just paid the German women this same compliment. At first, Hitler sarcastically described the difficulties of such an enterprise as road construction prior to his accession to power. He contrasted this state of affairs with his predictions that within the next five years²⁰¹ the first 7,000 kilometers of Autobahn would be completed, and within eighteen months Germany would be freed from its dependence upon fuel imports.

On October 3, Hitler attended the launch of the light battleship *D Scharnhorst* in Wilhelmshaven.²⁰² The following day, an *Erntedankfest* celebration took place on the Bückeberg near Hamelin. For once, there was no sunny "Hitler weather," rather, it was raining, and Hitler had a hard time accounting for the fact in his speech.

The currency problem, much debated by economists, could not be avoided in this speech. Following the lead of the Anglo-Saxon Powers, most countries bordering on Germany²⁰³ had agreed to devalue their currencies. If Germany did not follow suit, German exports would be endangered. Hitler was opposed to such measures. In his opinion, the backing of a currency was determined by the productive capacities and the "working power of the Volk." He preferred to accept economic

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difficulties rather than follow the other European countries in matters of financial and currency politics. His 'proof,' however, that a currency not backed with either gold reserves or foreign currency as well as wages and prices could remain stable in spite of gigantic armament expenses, was a short-time illusion built on hidden money-creating measures by the Reichsbank. When war broke out—the money circulation had already been out of all proportion to real productivity reflected in the balances of trade, payments, etc.—not even the NS Government could prevent a considerable inflation. No government ever has been able to do that, not since the first days of the monetary system. On that 4th of October, however, Hitler believed he had decisively resolved the currency problem, and confidently declared on the Bückeberg:²⁰⁴

I believe that reason is to be the sovereign in our state and that the German Volk has sufficient insight and discipline to grasp the necessities this reason entails. And therefore we perceive:

First of all, that we can only prevail if we have social peace, i.e. if not everyone can do what he wants to. The individual must subordinate himself to the whole, to a higher common interest. Hence the worker cannot look after only his own interests, just as the peasant and the urban dweller cannot look after only their own; rather, each is called upon to show mutual consideration to the others!

Secondly, that we must keep our wage policy and thus our pricing policy stable and steady. And if anyone believes he can violate that policy, believe me, as long as I live and remain standing at the head of the Reich, I will successfully defend the reason of general, national self-preservation against these few lunatics!

I am thereby doing something which in fact brings great good fortune to millions upon millions of people in Germany. We could make maneuvers like those the others are making: today I grant a worker a fifteen or twenty-percent wage increase; tomorrow I raise prices by fifteen or twenty percent; then I raise wages and then prices again, and two months later we devalue the German mark and betray the savers, and then we increase wages again, and so on—do you think that would make the German Volk happy? I am directing an appeal to all of you: gauge the good fortune of our inner German economic, social, and political peace!

How splendid it is indeed in Germany today! Take a look into other nations who have lost this power of reason! We must never allow this good fortune and this peace to be taken from us, and I know that this will never come to pass!

Where in the world would it be possible that, on a day such as today—on a day so cold that the wind whips the clouds over the mountains and one expects it to rain again any minute—where else would it be possible that hundreds of thousands and hundreds of thousands—nearly a million people—flock together on such a day to profess their unity?

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Two days later in the Berlin Deutschlandhalle, Hitler delivered a lengthy speech at the opening of the new Winterhilfswerk.²⁰⁵ In essence, the talk only reiterated arguments he had previously presented. Yet Hitler added to the arguments such as the “Volksgemeinschaft” and “Socialism of deeds” acrobatically juggled figures and vehement attacks on his critics.

That was the miracle—that the first seven were joined by a further seven and ultimately twenty and fifty and one hundred and then one thousand and ten thousand and one hundred thousand, and that they did not tire of parading their idealism again and again and of obeying it and not the so-called real purpose of life.

And think of the sacrifices they had to make! Reading it is easy: 400 murdered and 42,000 injured.²⁰⁶ [—]

In the former world, there was nothing I hated more than so-called lip service. There they were, loyal German citizens who gave their thundering three cheers for the commander in chief over war and peace behind closely locked doors with outposts on the street.

But then when the hour arrived when they would have had to take their positions in front of their commander in chief, they were nowhere to be found. [—]

I also hated the other side for its lip service. They talked about socialism but were capable only of leading the broad masses into misery. They preached heaven on earth and succeeded only in creating hell. They talked about how they intended to abolish the classes, and instituted forced labor camps.²⁰⁷ They were the same liars in socialist areas as the others were in their national areas. When I see this type of lazy carper traveling to and fro in Germany, finding things to criticize here and there, at bottom I almost have pity on the man, because I have to say to myself: basically you're quite a pitiful fellow; you don't even know how splendid it is to work, and above all you have no idea as to what work there is to do. You loiter about, your hands clasped behind your back, and complain; you complain about this, you complain about that, but you have no idea as to all the things that are really happening and all the things that are still to happen. [—]

Our faith in Germany is unshakeable, our will unbounded, and where will and faith so fervently join forces, Heaven cannot withhold its approval. Then these little critics, these ridiculous newspaper-scribblers can spray any amount of poison in the other world, and we can truly say: they will nevertheless fail. Hence we begin the new Winterhilfswerk. The entire nation shall stand together once again just as in the years past. The National Socialist Movement and the Party will march at the fore, and I expect every German of decency and character to join in step with this column.

On that same October 6, Hitler addressed a telegram to the Hungarian Regent, expressing his sympathies with regard to the demise of General Gömbös. The Hungarian Minister-President had died of an internal

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illness in the Munich hospital Neuwittelsbach at the age of fifty. The telegram read:²⁰⁸

I express to your Excellency the great sympathy felt by both myself and the German Volk at the death of Herr Gömbös, Minister-President of Hungary. While Hungary suffers the loss of one of its most deserving and best sons in the person of the deceased, Germany loses a good friend.

Adolf Hitler

Gömbös' widow, too, received a similar telegram. Her husband had been the first foreign dignitary to visit Hitler after his assumption of power. Hitler attended the funeral ceremony in the Kaisersaal of the Munich Residenz.²⁰⁹

In Berchtesgaden on October 18, Hitler signed the "Decree for the Execution of the Four-Year Plan," which read:²¹⁰

The implementation of the Four-Year Plan, as announced by me at the Party Congress of Honor requires the central orchestration of the German Volk's strength and demands a stringent reorganization of responsibilities in Party and State. I charge Colonel General and Minister-President Göring with the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.

Minister-President Göring shall take all measures necessary to see to the fulfillment of his mission. He is entitled to issue legal and general administrative regulations. He is further entitled to investigate all matters concerning the administrative apparatus, including the Supreme Reich Authorities and all offices of the Party, with its various subdivisions and formations—to whom he is entitled to issue instructions.

At first glance, this decree seemed to accord Göring enormous power. However, it actually merely removed bureaucratic hurdles that occasionally had resisted the imposition and execution of Hitler's orders. By naming Göring chief of all matters related to economics and administration, as head of all government agencies and party offices, Hitler was able to quite considerably speed up the implementation of his measures. Göring was not only trustworthy and completely loyal, he was also sufficiently adept to immediately grasp the true intentions of Hitler's ordinances.

Speaking before an assembly of the German industrialists on December 17, 1936,²¹¹ Hitler praised him in the following terms: "He is my best man. May all of you back him a full 100 percent." Soon the true nature of Hitler's Four-Year Plan became evident; its primary goal was to hasten the production of war goods and create the economic environment most favourable to a wartime economy.

On October 24 on the Obersalzberg, Hitler received the son-in-law of Mussolini, Count Ciano, who had recently been named Foreign

Minister in Italy.²¹² Hitler decided to make the most of the situation and announced that Germany would officially recognize the Italian Empire of Ethiopia. This most certainly was good news for the Count. The press statement on the two-day talks was most confident and congenial in tone. Italy and Germany expressed a concurrence of opinion on all political questions of importance, agreed to continue to work for peace and promised mutual aid in the restoration of their respective homelands. Mussolini himself pronounced the existence of the “Rome-Berlin Axis” on November 1 in Milan.

A day earlier, the Gau Gross-Berlin celebrated the tenth anniversary of its foundation within the NS Party organization. On this occasion, Hitler gave an effusive laudatory at 11:00 p.m. in the Sportpalast, to his “shield-bearer” Goebbels:²¹³

Just as everywhere in Germany, from the largest to the smallest context, the man is what counts—that is how it was back then, too, in the Capital of the Reich. For two years I racked my brains asking, “Where is the man?” And when I heard this man speak for the first time and spoke to him myself, I knew: he and no other is capable of doing it, he has to do it! [—]

That marked the real beginning of the history of the National Socialist Movement in Berlin; what had gone before was only its prehistory. Just as I once joined an association already composed of six members; yet I believe that the history of the association—the history of the Party—commenced on the day I joined it. [—]

I can understand the sentiments that fill you today, my dear Doctor, when you once again gaze upon this old company of your first fighters, the company that stood by you in loyalty and devotion through all these years, when you first began a nearly hopeless struggle and marched at the fore of this struggle as a devout zealot into this very Berlin, this awakening Berlin. Hence today I would like foremost to thank you, my dear Doctor: you to whom I handed a flag back then, ten years ago, a flag you planted in the Reich Capital as the banner of the nation. Your name stands for this ten-year struggle of the National Socialist Movement in Berlin! It is inseparably bound up with this struggle and shall never be erased from German history, from the history of the National Socialist Movement, and above all from the history of this city.

You, my Berlin Party Comrades, men and women, have had the good fortune of seeing one leader at the fore for the space of ten years. I have had the good fortune of knowing I had a loyal, unshakeable shield-bearer (*Schildknappe*) of the Party here doing outpost duty these ten years. And you, my dear Doctor, you and I have both had the good fortune these ten years of having encountered so many manifestations of affection and loyalty such as those evidenced here again today before us in this hall. This will enable the entire German Volk to understand yet again why the National Socialist Movement is so proud of its evolution, of its struggle, and why it is so closely-knit; why this Movement’s following and its leader are one as no one else can be. [—]

I believe we all still have so tremendously much more work to accomplish in our Volk that we will witness a further anniversary celebration. For whoever expects to accomplish a great deal will be kept younger by these accomplishments than others; thus, on this tenth anniversary of the founding of the Gau of Berlin, I look forward to celebrating the twentieth—in the conviction that you, my dear Doctor, will then also be here. And if God so wishes, perhaps I will be here as well. And then—this I know—you will look back with even more pride on the past which will then have become ever so grand. [—]

I ask all of you to join me in hailing the man who has borne our banner as my Statthalter in Berlin and as your leader: to our Dr. Goebbels—*Heil!*

Even though Hitler's vision of a twenty-year anniversary of the Gau of Berlin did not stand the test of time, in a sense the city was indeed inseparably intertwined with the fate of the Führer and his *Schildknappe*. Instead of celebrating the anticipated anniversary in 1946, a year prior to it they committed suicide together in the bunker beneath the Chancellery, amidst the rubble of a collapsed empire and of a destroyed city, about to be overrun by the victorious Allied Powers.

It is evident that it was Hitler, and not Goebbels, who was responsible for the tragic turn events took in the following years. Hitler never accepted advice from anyone in questions of principle and did not tolerate others meddling with these affairs, least of all Goebbels. As Goebbels aptly phrased it in 1932 in the Berlin edition of *Der Angriff*: “I do not represent any particular direction in the Party. We have only one single direction, and that is the one the Führer determines.”²¹⁴

To his last breath, Goebbels lived up to this maxim. His address to “our Hitler” on the latter's birthday in 1945 was identical in content with the one he had given in 1933. In 1945, he still had the courage to stand up and defend his master in public, when Hitler himself had for a long time already been quiet and other Unterführers, like Göring and Himmler, were hastily preparing for their own “survival.”

At the Berghof on November 4, Hitler had a three-hour-long conference with Cardinal Faulhaber on the topic of the relationship between Catholic Church and Third Reich.²¹⁵ On November 8, Hitler delivered his traditional address in the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, marking the anniversary of the 1923 Putsch.²¹⁶ Looking to the past as well as to the future, Hitler was concerned mainly with military matters, in other words, with his right to decide upon either war or peace.

I took the first step when I made the decision to found the Movement. And it was a very difficult decision indeed for me to imprison the Bavarian

Government and proclaim a national revolution in Germany. For the first time one was forced to make a decision on life and death without having been given any orders. And I believe that was a good thing; in the past three-and-a-half years I have had to make very difficult decisions [on life and death] in which, at times, the fate of the entire nation was on the line. Unfortunately, I never had that famous fifty-one-percent certainty when doing so.²¹⁷ Often enough there was a ninety-five-percent chance of failing and merely a five-percent chance of succeeding. Yet perhaps that eighth of November 1923 helped me to later be able to decide on issues fraught with danger. Moreover, that decision became an important lesson for the future.

Perhaps that is the achievement of which I am personally most proud and for which history will surely one day give me the most credit: the fact that I succeeded not only in not shattering the Army, but in forming it into cadres for the new German *Volksarmee*.

And this gives us all a deep sense of inner satisfaction: when I appeared in this hall for the first time, I myself was still a soldier. All of us came from the old army, we all wore this garb, and it was because we were all so very attached to this gray garb that we were unable to ever reconcile ourselves with the revolution that had sullied this garb! It was as soldiers we began this struggle, and as politicians we won it out! Yet the wonderful thing about this struggle is that we have now been able to present the German Volk with a new gift of the old army. And just as the old army once fought for the old Reich, so shall the new army—if ever the hour so require—fight and prevail for the new Reich.

There is but a single difference: when the old army went off to war, it was armed with weapons against everything but the propaganda of infiltration and decay. Today the Army carries with it the talisman of political immunity against every attempt to infiltrate this Army.²¹⁸ Never again will our opponents succeed there. This Army is the National Socialist Army of the new Reich, and by virtue of the fact that, year for year, we send one generation after another from our National Socialist offspring into this Army, it becomes ever more closely bound up with our modern Volk and its spirit. We are increasingly endowing it with the strength of our Weltanschauung. This is perhaps the greatest achievement of all we have accomplished after these many long years.

This is the one thing of which I am personally most proud. I believe that one day posterity will give me the most credit that I did not confine Germany to defenselessness for fifteen years, but that I succeeded in creating, in scarcely four years' time, a great German National Socialist *Volksarmee* from the army of 100,000; that all those who might otherwise have become our enemies are working and helping us in this Army. When the trial came to a close in 1924, I predicted—back then—that the hour would come in which both phenomena would unite to become one. And that prediction has now come to pass! Cannot we thus quite rightly say that those who were killed in 1923 did not die in vain; that their sacrificial death was worth it? I hold that, were they to rise from the dead, theirs would be eternal bliss were they to see what has now come to be. [—]

There are perhaps those who say, "You're virtually making them into martyrs!" Yes, that is my intention. I want to make of these dead the first sixteen martyrs of the National Socialist Movement, sixteen persons who were killed believing in something completely new that would only become a reality ten years later. Sixteen persons who marched under a completely new flag to which they pledged their oath of allegiance sealed with their blood. These sixteen made the utmost sacrifice and deserve that we keep them in constant remembrance. Hence it is my wish that for all time, beyond centuries and millenniums, the National Socialist Party and with it the whole of Germany shall always commemorate this sacrifice on this day, that they may thus remember these men again and again. [—]

That is also why we are gathered together here once more today, thirteen years after that day. This year in particular we have very strong reasons to evoke a recollection of that former time. For today I can assure you: this is the first time I am celebrating this day of commemoration without deep concern for our German Volk.²¹⁹

I can already see the time coming in which our own numbers will slowly decrease and the young circle of new and coming generations will rise up around us. Yet one thing I know is that even after the last one of us has fallen from our ranks, the youth will hold our flag clenched firmly in their hands and be ever mindful of those men who believed—in the age of Germany's deepest humiliation—in a shining resurrection.

At the march commemorating the event of November 9, a new protocol was introduced. After the formation reached the Feldherrnhalle and stood silently before the monument erected there, the Reich Minister of War, Field Marshal von Blomberg, joined the first row of bearers of the Blood Order on Hitler's left. The procession then marched on to the Königsplatz. Colonel General Göring had positioned himself to the right of Hitler. Next to Gauleiter Wagner strode the General in Command of the troops in Munich, Walter von Reichenau. The Old Fighters wore their simple brown shirts, only Himmler appeared in full SS uniform complete with sword. Small details such as these may appear trivial, but they amount to significant symbolic statements by their bearers. At midnight in front of the Feldherrnhalle, the new SS recruits took their loyalty oaths. In a special address, Hitler swore them to the task of sacrificing their lives relentlessly, and he personally spoke the words of the oath.²²⁰

On November 12, Hitler received the newly appointed Argentinian Ambassador Eduardo Labougle and the Bolivian Envoy Sanjumes, holding the usual welcoming speeches.²²¹ The next day in Berlin, Hitler attended a concert of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.²²² On November 18, Hitler officially recognized the Franco regime. Telegrams were exchanged with Franco, the contents

of which were never made public.²²³ Italy followed suit and announced its support for Franco that day, too.

On November 19, Hitler received the new Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Guido Schmidt, for a two-hour consultation on pending matters.²²⁴ This in itself was a sign of the changed climate in German-Austrian affairs that had developed over the previous months. Before an assembly of eight hundred Gauamtsleiters at the Ordensburg Vogelsang, Hitler gave a speech on November 20 in the Eifel mountains.²²⁵ The NSK reported as follows:

The Führer spoke on the topic of the principle ideas of our time. On the doorstep to the third millennium of German history into which National Socialism is guiding the German Volk today, he outlined the German history of the past two millenniums.

On November 24, Hitler sent a telegram to Reichsleiter Amann, congratulating him on his forty-fifth birthday.²²⁶ In addition, he honored the surgeon Professor August Bier by presenting him with the *Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches* medal and sending him a telegram.²²⁷

The following day, Goebbels announced in a radio broadcast that Germany and Japan had concluded an agreement directed against the Communist International (Comintern).²²⁸ The pact was primarily directed against the Soviet Union. In all likelihood, it was also intended as a warning to Great Britain to not further underestimate the Führer!²²⁹ The fact that he assigned Ribbentrop—not Foreign Minister von Neurath—to draft and sign the document was intended to reinforce the affront against the English. Up to 1938, Hitler repeatedly employed this approach in his dealings with Britain. This resulted in the ludicrous situation that Ribbentrop, in his eighteen months as German Ambassador to Great Britain, spent less time in London than traveling from one European capital to the next in attempts to snub the Government in London. The pact of November 25 read as follows:²³⁰

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of Imperial Japan,

in the recognition that it is the ultimate goal of the Communist International, termed Comintern, to subvert and ravage the existing states by all means at its disposal,

in the conviction that allowing for a like interference in the internal affairs of a nation by the Communist International to take place, is not conducive to its internal peace and its society's welfare, and that moreover it poses a threat to world peace,

desire to cooperate in the warding off of Communist subversion, and have agreed to the following:

Article I

The High Powers Signatory to this Contract agree to keep each other informed on the activities of the Communist International, to consult with each other on necessary countermeasures, and to do so by close cooperation.

Article II

The High Powers Signatory to this Contract agree to mutually assist third parties, the internal peace of which is endangered by subversion through the Communist International, to effect countermeasures in the spirit of this pact or to join this pact.

Article III

Both the German and the Japanese text shall serve as originals of this pact. The pact is effective the day of signature and will remain so for a period of five years. The High Powers Signatory to this Contract shall confer on the further mode of cooperation between their states in due time prior to expiry of said period.

In witness thereof, the signatories have set their hand to this pact, as the justly and fully accredited representatives of their respective governments, and have affixed their seal hereto.

Thus duly accomplished in dual copy in Berlin on the twenty-fifth day of November 1936, the twenty-fifth day of November in the eleventh year of the Showa Period.

On the occasion of the official signing of the document, Hitler held an evening reception at the Chancellery. In addition to the Japanese ambassador and his military attaché, nearly all the leading men of the Third Reich were present: Hess, Göring, Goebbels, Lutze, Dietrich, etc. The later famous Admiral Canaris was also among the illustrious guests of that evening.²³¹

At the gathering of the Fourth Reich Peasants Day in Goslar, the peasants' lobby under their leader, Minister of Food and Agriculture Darré, pledged its loyalty to Hitler.²³² In return, Darré received a telegram from Hitler expressing his appreciation of the support the peasants accorded him.

On November 27, Hitler was present at the third annual meeting of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the Philharmonic Concert Hall in Berlin. There he spoke to Franz Léhar and Sven Hedin among others.²³³ That same day, Hitler issued an ordinance regarding the envisioned National Socialist *Kampfspiele* (competitive games)²³⁴ which were to take place under the auspices of the SA. The games were planned as "National Olympics." According to Hitler's wishes, they should ensure continuation of the Olympic tradition and one day perhaps replace the International Olympic Games.

On December 1, Hitler gave a short talk before the Reich Cabinet, detailing foreign policy. A whole dozen of laws was enacted that day, of which the most remarkable was the “Law Regarding the Hitler Youth.”²³⁵

§1

Within the boundaries of the Reich, the entire German youth is integrated in the Hitler Youth.

§2

Outside of home and school, the entire German youth is to be educated in the Hitler Youth with regard to physical exercise, mental functioning and ethical requirements, in the spirit of National Socialism, for service to the Volk and the Volksgemeinschaft.

It is worth noting that another law enacted that day was directed against economic sabotage. Price levels were frozen and Hitler named Gauleiter Josef Wagner of Breslau as Reich Commissar responsible for price formation.

The next day, Hitler received the Italian Senator Puricelli, an industrialist who was engaged in the construction of roads. They discussed the building of an Autobahn to connect Berlin and Rome. Thereafter Hitler visited Reichsleiter Philipp Bouhler to thank him for his fifteen years of involvement in the NSDAP.²³⁶ At the Chancellery, Hitler received a delegation of female district leaders (*Obergau-führerinnen*) and other female administrators of the BDM.²³⁷

On December 7, Hitler was present at the launch of the 26,000-ton battleship *E Gneisenau* in Kiel.²³⁸ Leaders of the Hitler Youth and of the SA were invited to attend a December 13 speech by Hitler on the new tasks they faced with his new law on the Hitler Youth.²³⁹

The day after the speech, Hitler sent a telegram to the new British King, George VI, congratulating him on his birthday.²⁴⁰

On December 16, Hitler attended a concert given by the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin.²⁴¹ The following day, Hitler addressed the leading men of the German economy in the Reich Capital and demanded that they increase domestic production in all sectors of the economy. The *Völkischer Beobachter* reported Hitler’s statements:²⁴²

The word “impossible” does not exist here, the Führer declared.

Therefore, he had assigned the accomplishment of the Four-Year Plan to a man of unbending will for whom he knows the phrase “it won’t work” does not exist. This man, his old fellow fighter and Party comrade Göring, would turn his decision and his assignment into reality.

“Trust the man I have chosen,” the Führer continued. “It is the best man I have for this task. A man of supreme willpower and supreme determination. Join forces, all of you, with him. We are thus erecting a firm foundation for a German economy rooted in the strength, in the stability and in the security of the German Reich. If we feel zealously committed to this task, two things will prevail before posterity: the political leadership, because it and its men wanted something and achieved it; and the German economy with all its workers, for they devoted their entire energies to accomplishing this task.”

Around noon on December 24, Hitler participated in a Christmas celebration organized by the Old Fighters of Munich. This time the celebration took place in the Löwenbräukeller. As was his custom, he delivered a short address on the occasion.²⁴³

On December 27, Colonel General von Seeckt died. He had been one of the founding fathers of the Reichswehr, or “100,000-man army,” as Hitler derogatorily referred to it. In the condolence telegram,²⁴⁴ addressed to the Colonel General’s widow, Hitler wrote: “Colonel General von Seeckt will live on forever in our history as a great soldier.” He made no mention of the merit the officer had earned in setting up the Reichswehr. On December 30, Hitler attended von Seeckt’s funeral at the Invalids’ Cemetery in Berlin, where he placed a wreath on the Colonel General’s grave.²⁴⁵ In the evening, the Führer returned to Berchtesgaden.

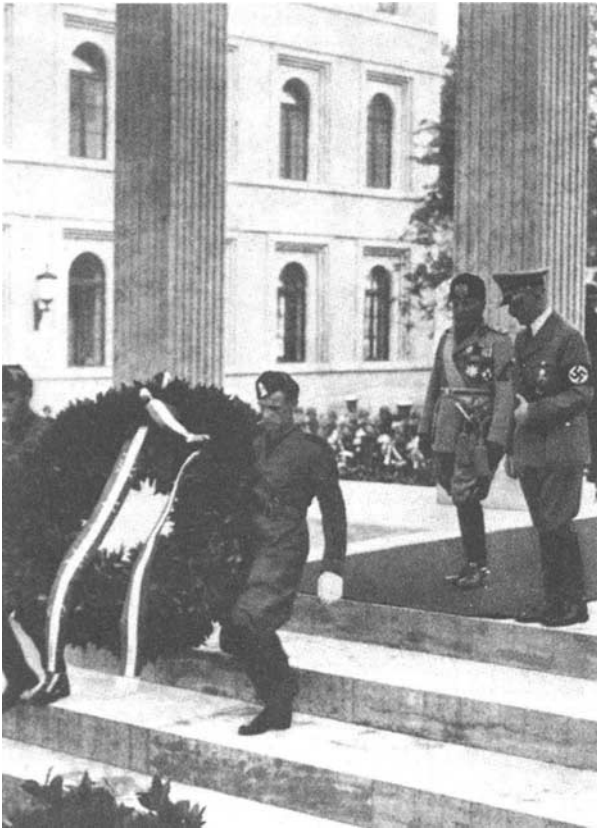
The year dedicated to the “Restoration of Germany’s Honor” had drawn to a close.



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Hitler briefs the Reich Ministers on the upcoming military occupation of the Rhineland. From left to right: Schwerin von Krosigk, Frick, Goebbels, Hess, Hitler, Funk, Göring (covered), Eltz von Rügenach, Schacht, Kcrrl, Rust, Blomberg.

Photo: Domarus archives



XXI Munich, September 25, 1937
Hitler and Mussolini laying wreaths at the pantheons
in honor of the "Dead of the Movement." In front:
members of the Fascist Militia.

Photo: Domarus archives

THE YEAR 1937

Major Events in Summary

The year 1937 marked an important turning point in the years of Hitler's rule. It was in 1937 that Hitler's deeds and ambitions turned to an aggressive stance in matters of foreign policy and military strategy. That year also was a crucial one in Hitler's personal development as he began to reassess his relationship to questions of a religious nature. In the course of the previous four years, Hitler had secured nearly all positions of power within Germany that he deemed worthy of his effort. Naturally, there were controversies still outstanding with those leading men of the military who could not reconcile themselves to accepting Hitler's word as the sole truth. Furthermore, the tedious problem of the Soldatenbund¹ remained. This veterans' organization openly advocated transforming the Third Reich into a military dictatorship. Hitler realized that in one way or another he would have to come to terms with this particular interest group. Yet Hitler was in no hurry to resolve either of these issues. As Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, he could force compliance with his wishes if need be. It was an entirely different matter with regard to his intellectual critics. They were not organized in a manner which would allow Hitler to resolve the affair by simply eradicating members of a social circle. Even if he forbade discussion or outlawed the voicing of critical remarks, there was no way in which he could silence his opponents' unspoken disagreement. He sensed their silent criticism, and it drove him to near insanity. He simply could not deal with the intellectuals.

Within the borders of the German Reich, Hitler had achieved everything he could in matters of military policy. The military provisions of the Treaty of Versailles had been reversed and general conscription had been reintroduced to Germany. Once again, the military sovereignty of the Reich encompassed the Rhineland.

Nevertheless, if Hitler indeed insisted upon pursuing further goals in matters of foreign and military policy it was reasonably clear that he would have to wage a war abroad. The time had come for decision. Before the year 1937 was over, Hitler revealed to his generals and to the pertinent ministers that he intended to carry through the foreign

policy goals he had set for himself in 1919. This, in turn, meant only one thing—war!²

Hitler also resolved to take decisive action with regard to a question that may also have been closely linked to his decision about war. He made a clear break with his previous values and norms, still rooted in a Catholic world view, and declared: “Now I feel as fresh as a colt in a pasture.”³ For religious inspiration he now looked up to a mysterious martial deity, who challenged the German Volk’s strength and courage. He understood himself to be the executor of this divine will.

Judging by outward appearances, 1937 was a tranquil, quiet year. Hitler was preoccupied with his own personal concerns. Neither plebiscite nor election were called for, and Hitler refrained from “tilling” his Volk “as the peasant tills his field.”⁴ The sole excitement 1937, afforded was the German naval attack on the Spanish port of Almería on May 31.⁵ Further glamor was lent to that year by the grand ceremonies on the occasion of Mussolini’s visit in September. Outside of these two events, the year passed by quietly, its flow barely disturbed by the customary celebration of state or party holidays. The dates were the usual ones: January 30, February 24, April 20, May 1, the Day of German Art, the *Erntedankfest* (to be celebrated one last time that year), and finally the commemoration of the November Putsch.

But outward appearances can be deceiving at times, and matters were not as calm as they appeared to be; much was brewing beneath the surface. Numerous secret meetings and talks were held behind closed doors. Of the latter, the most important address was the one of November 5, in which Hitler chose to reveal his immediate military ambitions to the Reich Foreign Minister and to the heads of the Wehrmacht.

Thus in many respects the year 1937 passed by like the lull before the storm.

Report and Commentary

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In Berlin, Hitler's New Year's proclamation to the "National Socialists and Party Comrades"⁶ was remarkably short, consisting mostly of platitudinous and sentimental reflections on the past. With the exception of the passage reproduced below, it contained little worthy of note.⁷

The year 1937 finds us National Socialists determined to take up the new and tremendous fight for the self-assertion of the nation in the economic sphere. The Volk, politically liberated from the shackles of the Treaty of Versailles, will cast off its economic shackles as well in the coming four years. Above and beyond the mockery and talk of the others shall once more stand the National Socialist deed!

May the pledge to that deed constitute a solemn oath this New Year. Although there were some few little journalists who believed for four years that they were capable of doing away with the success of National Socialist work with their lies, reality has shown them unequivocal proof of the contrary. If today they attempt to raise doubts as to the success of the approaching four years with the same phrases, we shall impart to that attempt to mislead public opinion the same instruction in National Socialism: at the end of the four years lying before us it will prove true that the products of a determined will and tireless, diligent work are always greater than the results achieved by the actions of cavillers capable of nothing but incessant drivel.

This year Hitler addressed no separate appeals to any of the Party's subdivisions. The Wehrmacht was the only entity honored this way⁸

Soldiers!

Behind us lies a most significant year in the history of Germany's defense. Ever since March 7, 1936, our regiments have stood at the Rhine River once more. The introduction of the two-year conscription has consolidated the Wehrmacht and thereby has strengthened the defenses of the Reich.

I thank you for your dutiful loyalty. May you serve the eternal slogan next year as well: *Alles für Deutschland!*

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

January 1, 1937

That New Year's Day, a telegram left the Chancellery for Budapest. In it Hitler conveyed his condolences to Archduke Albrecht upon the death of his father, who had always been a favorite with the Führer:⁹

I extend to Your Imperial Majesty my sincere sympathies and those of the German Volk on the death of your father. His merit as a Prussian Field Marshal and leader of German troops in the World War will never be forgotten.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

Each of the editors of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Wilhelm Weiss and Joseph Berchtold,¹⁰ received a telegram from Hitler on January 3. The Führer congratulated both journalists on their tenth anniversary of service with the paper.

The next day, Admiral Paul Behncke died. In the years 1920 to 1924, as the Chief of Navy Command, he had played a pivotal role in the rebuilding of the Reich Navy.¹¹ The Navy had been far more supportive of Hitler in the years prior to 1933 than the Reichswehr had been. Not surprisingly, in the telegram directed to Behncke's widow a day later, Hitler expressed the sincerity of his sorrow far more convincingly than in the telegram he had composed upon von Seeckt's demise a month earlier. This notwithstanding, Hitler did not personally attend Behncke's funeral in Lübeck; he sent Rudolf Hess in his stead.

On January 7, a group of mountain climbers encountered distress on the eastern slope of the Watzmann mountain. From his nearby residence at the Berghof, Hitler dispatched a contingent of fifty soldiers to their rescue.¹² On the same day, the British newspaper publisher Lord Rothermere arrived for a consultation at the Obersalzberg.¹³

With the Führer once again in Berlin, the New Year's reception for the Diplomatic Corps took place at the Chancellery on January 11. Since the Nuncio Orsenigo had been taken ill, the French Ambassador François-Poncet, as senior member of the Corps, relayed its best wishes for the new year to Hitler. In reply, Hitler stated the following:¹⁴

Your Excellency!

It is with sincere thanks that I accept the congratulations which Your Excellency has proffered to me and to the German Volk at the New Year, both on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps and on behalf of the Heads of State represented here. I deeply regret that His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, is unable to take part in today's New Year's reception due to a serious illness. I may echo your Excellency's wishes for his speedy recovery.

In heartfelt gratitude to Providence which has blessed our work, Germany can look back contentedly upon the year now past. Our endeavors have succeeded in scoring major victories in the internal, hard fight for the

existence of our Volk, while securing in regard to its position in the world those same rights accorded to all great nations. Above all, we feel satisfaction in knowing that we have succeeded in further alleviating the plight of unemployment in Germany that constitutes such an oppressing hardship to so many peoples, and have thus enabled numerous Volksgenossen to rise up spiritually as well as economically from the depths of oppression and even despair.

We are determined to continue this work with all our might in the coming year. If, toward this aim, we further increase and stabilize the economic independence of the German Volk, this is not being done with the purpose of isolating ourselves from the environment, but rather with the belief that a truly healthy world economy can only be built upon healthy individual economies and that the solution to the world economic crisis must primarily take as its starting point the solution of the inner political and economic crises of the individual nations.

By endeavoring to put the German Volk in good repair politically, morally, and economically, we are not only safeguarding our own future; in our view, we are thus also doing a service to the rest of the world. For this bulwark of genuinely European culture and the strong sense of social justice will be a more reliable component in European order and peace than a turbulent state torn apart by many warring opinions and suffering from economic problems. Hence we are thereby contributing to alleviating those anxieties and that unease of which Your Excellency, too, has spoken.

It is my hope that this, our sincere desire to make a significant contribution to the progress of all nations by virtue of our cooperation, will increasingly meet with understanding on the part of the other governments. For the concerns of the present should serve as a reminder and an incentive for all peoples to recognize the dangers threatening peace and hence European development in good time, so that they might apply themselves with determination toward achieving genuine understanding and reconciliation between the peoples, which will afford all countries the opportunity to establish their own economic existence and with it the most stable guarantee for the welfare and progress of the entire human race.

In the hope that the New Year may bring us closer to this goal, I may extend to you, Your Excellency, and you, gentlemen—and to your Heads of State, Governments and peoples—the warmest New Year's greetings on my own behalf and on behalf of the German Volk.

After the reception, Hitler privately met with the French Ambassador for an informal talk. He reassured François-Poncet that Germany entertained no expansionist designs on Spain and Morocco. The French news agency Havas published the content of the conversation the following day:¹⁵

On the occasion of yesterday's diplomatic reception in Berlin, the Reich Chancellor Hitler assured the French Ambassador that Germany has no present intention, nor has it at any point in the past intended, to dispute in

any manner the integrity of either Spain or its possessions. The French Ambassador asserted, in the name of his government, that France is determined, within the framework of the existing treaties, to respect the integrity of Spain and the statutes of Spanish Morocco.

On January 15, Hitler issued a decree, attaching his name to all new National Socialist *Oberschulen* (high schools).¹⁶

Given a request by the NSDAP Reichsorganisationsleiter and the Youth Leader of the German Reich, I consent to the newly constructed National Socialist *Oberschulen*, which simultaneously serve as preparatory schools for the National Socialist Ordensburgen, bearing my name.

Berlin, January 15, 1937

Adolf Hitler

In 1937, Hitler did not attend the annual festivities commemorating the fourth anniversary of the Landtag election in Lippe.

On January 16, on the occasion of the “Day of the German Police” he pronounced:¹⁷

I decree that those members of the Civil Police¹⁸ who belong to the SS, be allowed to have the two victoria runes of the SS embroidered upon their police uniforms below the left shirt pocket.

Berlin, January 16, 1937

Adolf Hitler

In Berchtesgaden two days later, the roofing ceremony took place at the site of the Chancellery’s new office building. State Secretary Lammers¹⁹ expounded upon the indispensability of such a structure to house a branch of the Reich Government by stating, “The Führer is always on duty, no matter whether it is during the week, on the weekend or while he is on vacation.”²⁰ Lammers’ choice of the word “vacation” in this context was most unfortunate. It was Hitler’s personal conviction that since he was always on duty, he could never be “on vacation.” He liked to claim for himself that he had never had more than “three days of leave” in his entire life.²¹ In the course of the festivities, Hitler delivered a ‘secret speech’ to the construction workers, describing himself as “one to have emerged from amongst their ranks.”

On January 21, the public was informed that Hitler wished to reserve for himself the exclusive right²² to retort to British Foreign Minister Eden’s remarks regarding Germany in the latter’s January 19 speech.²³ Speaking before the House of Commons, Eden had emphasized that he assessed the Germans not by their words, but by their deeds.

Ironically, Eden’s reprimand appears to have provoked yet another speech by Hitler on the subject of Germany’s policy in Spain. As head of government, he wished to submit to the consideration of the

Reichstag a “statement of account,” explaining his course of action. To this end, he called upon the Reichstag to meet for a session in Berlin on January 30.

On the morning of that day, Hitler reviewed the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in the Wilhelmstrasse. Standing in front of the Chancellery building in an open Mercedes SSK, he greeted the troops with his extended right arm raised.²⁴ Before the Reichstag convened at 1:00 p.m., the *SS Leibstandarte* was displayed one more time in front of the Kroll Opera. Hitler, accompanied by Himmler and other high-ranking SS leaders, reviewed a formation of honor guards. The coats of those accompanying Hitler were now adorned with white reverses, corresponding to the red reverses of the Wehrmacht generals.²⁵ Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag was of extraordinary length, lasting nearly three hours. He opened with the following words:²⁶

Men! Deputies of the German Reichstag!

The Reichstag has been convened today, on an important day for the German Volk. Four years have passed since that moment marking the beginning of the great inner cataclysm and reorganization Germany has experienced, four years which I requested from the German Volk as a period of probation and judgment. What would be more logical than to use this occasion to recount in detail all the success and progress these four years have bestowed upon the German Volk? Within the framework of such a short rally it is not even possible to mention all those things which might well be regarded as the remarkable results of this perhaps most astounding epoch in the life of our Volk!

That is a task more fitting for the press and propaganda. Moreover, there will be an exhibition this year in the Reich Capital of Berlin in which the attempt will be made to give a comprehensive and more detailed impression of what has been created, achieved and begun than I could possibly be capable of giving in a two-hour speech. Therefore I wish to make use of today’s historic meeting of the German Reichstag in order to point out, in a retrospective on the past four years, a few of the generally valid insights, experiences and consequences which are important not only for us to understand, but also for posterity.

Hitler’s speech ran one hour longer than had been planned. In his lengthy “party narrative,” he paid particular attention to the claim that the National Socialist Revolution had been the “revolution of revolutions,” and painstakingly stressed that no blood had been shed in its course.

I can say it with a certain amount of pride: this was perhaps the first modern revolution in which not so much as a window pane was shattered. Yet I do not want to be misunderstood: if the course of this revolution was bloodless, it was not because we were not men enough to stand the sight of

blood. For four years, I was a soldier in the bloodiest war of all time. I never once lost my nerve throughout, no matter what the situation or what I was confronted with. This also applies to my fellow workers. But we perceived the task of the National Socialist Revolution not as destroying human life or property but instead as building up a new and better life. It is our greatest source of pride that we carried out this—undoubtedly greatest—cataclysm in our Volk with a minimum of casualties and losses.

Only where the murderous lust of Bolshevism believed itself capable, even after January 30, 1933, of preventing the triumph or the realization of the National Socialist idea by force have we naturally countered with force—and have done so with the speed of lightning. Then again there were other elements.

We recognized their lack of restraint, coupled with the gravest lack of political education, and these we merely took into preventive custody, only to restore to them their liberty after a very short time, generally speaking. And then again there were those few whose political activities served only as a cover for a criminal attitude evidenced in numerous sentences to prison or penal servitude; these we prevented from continuing their devastating work of destruction by urging them to take up a useful occupation, probably for the first time in their lives.

The Führer then claimed that all those persons who remained in the concentration camps were truly hardened criminals, for they had earlier served lengthy terms in prison or penitentiary. Once more returning to a detailed description of the great National Socialist Revolution of 1933, he continued:

In the space of a few weeks, both the political residues and societal biases of the past thousand years in Germany had been cleared away and eliminated. Germany and the German Volk have overcome several great catastrophes. Naturally, there always had to be certain men—I will be the first to admit—who took the necessary steps and who saw these measures through despite the eternal pessimists and know-it-alls. True, an assembly of parliamentary cowards is most ill-suited to lead the Volk forth—away from destitution and despair!

Hitler then discussed economic problems:

My Deputies! When the German economy seemingly ground to a complete halt in the years 1932 and 1933, the following became more clear to me than in the preceding years: the salvation of our Volk is not a financial problem; it is exclusively a problem of utilizing and employing the available work force on the one hand and exploiting available soil and mineral resources on the other.

The Volksgemeinschaft does not subsist on the fictitious value of money but on actual production, which gives money its value. This production is the primary cover for a currency, not a bank or a vault full of gold! And when I increase this production, I am actually increasing the income of my fellow

citizens; if I decrease production, I decrease income, regardless of what salaries are being paid out. [—]

This concerted resolution of economic issues finds its greatest expression in the Four-Year Plan. It assures that once great numbers of German workers are released by the armament industry and re-enter the labor force, these workers shall find secure employment within our economy. [—]

It is quite clear that neither strikes nor lockouts can be tolerated in a sphere where such views prevail. The National Socialist State does not recognize an economic law of the jungle. The common interest of the nation—i.e. of our Volk—has priority over the interests of all its competing components. Therefore we cannot allow that any means suited for utilization in our Volk's training and education be exempted from this shared obligation. The education of youth, Jungvolk, Hitler Youth, Labor Service, Party, Wehrmacht: all of them are institutions for training and educating our Volk. Books, newspapers, lectures, art, theater, film: all are means for the education of the Volk (*Volkserziehung*). What the National Socialist Revolution has accomplished in these areas is astonishing and colossal. One need only think of the following:

Today, our entire German system of education—including the press, theater, film, and literature—is run and organized exclusively by German Volksgenossen. How often were we told before that removing the *Judentum* from these institutions must result in their collapse or deterioration? And what has happened now? In all of these areas we are witnessing a tremendous flourishing of cultural and artistic life. Our films are better than ever before; the performances on the stages of our first-rate theaters are in a world class all their own. Our press has become a powerful instrument serving the self-assertion of our Volk and does its part in fortifying the nation. German science is doing successful work, and tremendous proofs of our creative architectural will shall one day bear witness to this new epoch!

An incredible immunization of the German Volk has been achieved to all the infiltrating tendencies from which a different world is made to suffer. We now already take for granted several of our institutions that were not yet understood even a few years ago: Jungvolk, Hitler Youth, BDM, Frauenschaft, Labor Service, SA, SS, NSKK—and above all the Labor Front with its tremendous organization—are bricks in the proud structure of our Third Reich. This safeguarding of the internal life of our German Volk needed to be complemented by an external safeguard. And I believe that it is here, my Deputies and men of the German Reichstag, that the National Socialist uprising has achieved the most marvelous of its accomplishments!

When, four years ago, I was entrusted with the chancellorship and with it the leadership of the nation, I assumed the bitter obligation to lead back to honor a people who had been compelled to live the life of an outcast among the other nations for fifteen years. The internal order of the German Volk provided me with the requirements for reestablishing the German Army, and these two circumstances likewise made it possible to throw off those shackles which had been felt to be the deepest mark of disgrace ever branded on a people.

Hitler then proceeded to the climax of his “statement of account,” in which he unilaterally abrogated a series of international agreements. The majority of these agreements either pertained to the supposed sole responsibility of Germany for the outbreak of World War I, or the unfairly restricted freedom of the Reichsbahn and the Reichsbank.²⁷ Since Hitler had already annulled the military stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles, these new abrogations were only of an almost declamatory character.

In concluding this process today, I have but a few statements to make.

First: the restoration of German equality of rights was a process that concerned and involved Germany alone. In its course we neither deprived any other people of anything nor did harm to any other people.

Second: I hereby proclaim to you that, within the context of the restoration of German equality of rights, I shall divest the German Reichsbahn and the German Reichsbank of their prior character and place them completely under the sovereign control of the Government of the German Reich.

Third: I hereby declare that, by virtue thereof, the part of the Treaty of Versailles which deprived our Volk of equality of rights and degraded it to an inferior Volk has now been settled in the natural course of things.

Fourth: above all, I herewith most solemnly withdraw the German signature from that declaration extracted under duress at that time from a weak government against its own better judgment, that Germany was to blame for the war!

My Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

This restoration of the honor of our Volk—most clearly evidenced in an external sense in the introduction of conscription, in the institution of a new Luftwaffe, in the re-establishment of a German Navy, in the reoccupation of the Rhineland by our troops—was the most difficult and most daring task and accomplishment of my life.

Today I must bow down in thanks to Providence, whose mercy has enabled me, once an unknown soldier in the World War, to thus help our Volk to win the battle for the restoration of its honor and uprightness!

Unfortunately, not all the necessary measures in this context could be accomplished by way of negotiations. Be that as it may: a Volk cannot attain its honor by negotiating; it must seize its honor—just as its honor cannot be negotiated away, but only taken away!

Thereafter, Hitler commented cynically, that in order to “make it easier” for the other side to accept his decisions, as “they would have had to at any rate,” he had resolved not to consult Germany’s former enemies before taking action.

But he then softened this slap in the face of his adversaries by declaring that “the period of so-called surprises” had come to an end. From the present onward, Germany would cooperate with other states

January 30, 1937

on all issues in a spirit of loyalty and in recognition of its "role in Europe."

That I took the required action without consulting our former opponents on each point or even informing them, was also due to the knowledge that I had thus made it easier for the other side to accept our decisions, as they would have had to at any rate. Allow me also to add yet another statement, namely, that the period of so-called surprises has now come to an end. As a state with equal rights, conscious of its role in Europe, Germany will cooperate loyally in the future to settle the problems which are a cause for concern to us and to the other nations.

Whenever Hitler made solemn declarations such as these, it was certain that he had already resolved to do precisely the opposite of what he proclaimed in the near future. In the subsequent two years, the world would have ample opportunity to realize how little truth there was to Hitler's declared intent to end the "period of so-called surprises."

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was among the few Englishmen who early voiced precisely what he thought of Hitler. Naturally, the Führer treated him as the epitome of the senile English statesman. As Hitler had announced on January 21, he devoted the second part of his speech on January 30 to retorting to Eden's statements in the House of Commons. First, Hitler rejected Eden's admonition to Germany to refrain from pursuing its program of autarky. To Hitler, such a shift in policy was far from his present thoughts. He explained:

When I now proceed to take a stand on all these basic questions of the present, it is perhaps most feasible to do so along the lines of the remarks Mr. Eden made recently in the English House of Commons.

In essence, they contain all there is to say on the relationship between Germany and France. Here I would like to express my genuine thanks for the opportunity of replying which was offered to me in the both frank and remarkable comments of the honorable British Foreign Secretary.

I have read these comments carefully and, I believe, correctly. Naturally I do not wish to become absorbed in details; instead I would like to try to extract the major points from Mr. Eden's speech and, for my part, clarify and respond to them.

Initially, I will attempt to put right what appears to me to be a quite regrettable error. Namely, the error that Germany has any intention whatsoever of isolating itself, of passing over the events in the rest of the world with indifference, or that Germany had no desire to show any consideration for general exigencies.

What grounds are there for the view that Germany is adhering to a policy of isolation? If the assumption as to Germany's isolation is concluded from what are alleged to be Germany's intentions, I would like to note the

following: I do not believe that a state could ever intend to consciously take a politically disinterested stand on events in the rest of the world. Particularly not if this world is as small as modern-day Europe. I believe that, if a state is in fact forced to take refuge in such an attitude, then only by virtue of being compelled to do so by an alien will imposed upon it. I would like to assure Foreign Secretary Eden here that we Germans do not in the least want to be isolated and by no means feel isolated.

In the past few years, there have been quite a few political ties which Germany has entered into, re-established, improved and, in the case of a number of states I might even say it has set up close and amicable relations. From our perspective, our relations in Europe are normal to most states, and very friendly to quite a few. At the top of this list I might cite the excellent relations binding us with all those states which have, as a result of hardship similar to our own, arrived at similar conclusions.

By virtue of a series of treaties, we have resolved former tensions and thereby made a substantial contribution to improving European conditions. You will recall for example our agreement with Poland which proved advantageous for both states; our agreement with Austria; our excellent and close relations with Italy; our amicable relations with Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Spain, etc.—and last but not least, our no less friendly relations with quite a number of states outside of Europe.

The agreement Germany concluded with Japan for the purpose of combating the Comintern Movement is graphic proof of how little interest the German Government has in isolating itself and how little it thus does in fact feel isolated.

Moreover, I have expressed more than once the desire and the hope of being able to arrive at equally good and friendly terms with all our neighbors.

Germany—and I solemnly reiterate this here and now—has repeatedly declared that there can be no humanly conceivable contentious issues whatsoever between itself and France, to cite an example. The German Government has moreover assured Belgium and Holland that it is prepared to recognize and guarantee these states at any time as inviolable neutral territories. In the light of all the declarations formerly given by us and the actual state of affairs, I am somewhat at a loss to comprehend why Germany should feel itself isolated or even adhere to a policy of isolation.

Hitler then turned to Germany's economic situation. He argued that he had not willfully isolated the Third Reich, but rather that foreign countries had forced him to seek autarky by refusing to deliver needed raw materials. Under no circumstances would he be willing to abandon his Four-Year Plan.

I do, however, fear that I must interpret Mr. Eden's words as meaning that he regards the implementation of the German Four-Year Plan as one element of Germany's refusal to partake in international relations. Therefore, I wish to leave no doubt whatsoever that the decision to implement this Plan is not subject to any review. The reasons which led us to arrive at this decision were

cogent ones. And I have been unable to detect any recent development which might have moved us to refrain in any way from implementing this decision.

Hitler once again resorted to his favorite strategy of blaming everything on the Bolshevist threat to international security; he even held it responsible for the institution of the Four-Year Plan.

Germany has a tremendous number of people who wish not only to work, but also to eat. In other respects as well, our Volk has a high standard of living. I cannot build the future of the German nation on the promises a foreign statesman gives of providing some kind of international aid; I can build it only on the real foundation of a functioning industry whose products I must sell either at home or abroad! And this is perhaps where I, in my mistrust, differ from the optimistic remarks of the British Foreign Secretary.

If in fact Europe does not awaken from the fever of its Bolshevist infections, I fear that, despite the good intentions of individual statesmen, international trade will not increase, but ultimately decrease. That is because this trade is built not only upon the uninterrupted and thus secured production on the part of one specific nation, but on the production of all nations. Initially, however, one thing is certain: every single Bolshevist disruption will of necessity lead to a more or less lengthy disruption in orderly production. Therefore, I am not able to view the economic future of Europe as optimistically as Mr. Eden apparently believes he can. I am the responsible leader of the German Volk and must look after its interests in this world to the best of my knowledge and belief. Hence I am also under an obligation to assess the situation in accordance with what I believe I can perceive with my own eyes.

The history of my Volk would never acquit me were I to omit—for any reason whatsoever—doing something which is imperative for the preservation of this Volk. I am glad, as are we all, of any increase in our foreign trade. However, in view of the unresolved political situation, I shall not fail to do anything which might serve to guarantee to the German Volk its existence even after other states have succumbed to the Bolshevist infection. Furthermore, I must object when this view is dismissed as being but the product of a feeble imagination. For right now there is no doubt about the following: the honorable British Foreign Secretary is showing us theoretical perspectives on life, while in reality, for one, completely different events are taking place. The revolutionizing of Spain, for example, drove fifteen thousand Germans out of that country and did severe damage to our trade.

If the revolutionizing of Spain were to spread to other European states, the damage would increase, not decrease. If, however—this I must also investigate—the reason behind the opinion that Germany is adhering to a policy of isolation might lie in our withdrawal from the League of Nations, I would like to point out that the Geneva League was never truly a league of all the nations; a number of major nations either never belonged to it in the first place or had withdrawn even before we did, whereas no one claimed they were adhering to a policy of isolation. Therefore I believe Mr. Eden has

evidently misunderstood German intentions and our own views on this issue. For nothing is further from our minds than severing either our political or our economic relations with the other world or even to diminish them. On the contrary, the opposite is more to the point.

I have so often attempted to make a contribution to understanding in Europe, and have quite often assured particularly the English people and its government how very much we desire to cooperate and be on sincere and friendly terms with them. And I mean all of us, the entire German Volk, and last but not least myself!

Yet I do admit there does exist a real and, as I see it, unbridgeable difference between the views of the British Foreign Secretary and our own on one issue. Mr. Eden emphasizes that under no circumstances does the British Government wish to see Europe torn in two halves. It is unfortunate that this desire was not expressed and heard earlier. Today this desire is nothing but an illusion.

For sadly the fracture not only of Europe, but of the entire world into two halves is now an accomplished fact. It is regrettable that the British Government did not take the position it does today—that the fracturing of Europe needs to be avoided under all circumstances—at an earlier point, for then the Treaty of Versailles never would have come about. It was in fact that Treaty which introduced the first fracture to Europe, namely, the division into victorious nations on the one hand and vanquished nations, without rights, on the other.

No one suffered from this fracturing of Europe more than the German people. That this rupture was repaired, at least as far as concerns Germany, is essentially the achievement of the National Socialist Revolution in Germany and thus, to a certain extent, probably mine as well!

The second fracture arose as a result of the proclamation of the Bolshevist doctrine, one of whose integral components is that it does not confine itself to a single people but aims to be forced upon all peoples.

At issue here is not a special form of life indigenous to, let us say, the Russian people; rather, it is the Bolshevist goal of world revolution. The fact that the honorable Foreign Secretary Eden refuses to see Bolshevism as we see it is perhaps related to Great Britain's location, perhaps to other experiences of which we have no knowledge. I do, however, hold that, because we speak of these things not as theoreticians, one cannot accuse us of being insincere in our conviction.

For Mr. Eden, Bolshevism is perhaps something sitting in Moscow; for us, however, Bolshevism is a plague against which we have been forced to defend ourselves in a bloody fight; a plague that has attempted to make of our country the same desert it has made of Spain, that had begun the same shooting of hostages we are now witnessing in Spain! National Socialism did not seek contact with Bolshevism in Russia; rather, the Jewish international Muscovite Bolshevism attempted to penetrate Germany! And it is still attempting to do so today! And we have fought a difficult battle against this attempt, upholding and thus defending not only the culture of our Volk, but perhaps that of Europe as a whole in the process.

Hereupon, Hitler claimed that in 1933 it had been he who had rescued Germany in face of the Bolshevist menace, and through this Great Britain as well.

If in those days in January and February 1933 Germany had lost the last decisive battle against this barbarity, and if the Bolshevist expanse of rubble and corpses had spread to encompass Central Europe, perhaps one might have reached other conclusions on the Thames as regards the character of this, the most horrendous menace to mankind.

Since England must be defended at the Rhine in any case,²⁸ it would now already be in the closest proximity to that harmless democratic Muscovite world whose innocuousness is so constantly and ardently hammered home to us.

One last time, Hitler attempted to convince the English that Bolshevism and the Soviet Union posed the actual threat to Europe. He solemnly pledged himself to never enter into a close relationship with either of these forces and vowed to unrelentingly oppose their expansion.

Thus I would like once more to formally state the following: Bolshevism is a doctrine of world revolution, i.e. of world destruction. To adopt this doctrine, to accord it equal rights as a factor in European life, is tantamount to placing Europe at its mercy. If other peoples choose to expose themselves to contact with this menace, Germany has nothing to say on the matter. However, as far as Germany itself is concerned, I would like to leave no doubt that we

1. perceive in Bolshevism an intolerable world menace; and
2. that we are using every means at our disposal to keep this menace away from our Volk;
3. that we are thus endeavoring to make the German Volk as immune to this infection as possible.

This also entails that we avoid any close contact with the carriers of these poisonous germs and that we are specifically not prepared to dull the German Volk's sense of perception for this menace by ourselves establishing connections more extensive than the requisite diplomatic or economic relations.

I hold the Bolshevist doctrine to be the worst poison which can be administered to a people. I therefore do not want my own people to come into contact with this doctrine in any way. And as a citizen of this Volk myself, I will not do anything I would be forced to condemn in my fellow citizens. I demand from every German worker that he refrain from having any relations or dealings with these international pests, and for his part he will never see me quaffing or carousing with them. In other respects, every additional German contractual tie with the present Bolshevist Russia would be completely useless to us. It would be equally inconceivable for National Socialist German soldiers to ever need fulfill a helpmate function in protecting Bolshevism; nor

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would we on our side accept any aid from a Bolshevist state. For I fear that every Volk which reaches out for such aid will find it to be its own demise.

Hitler vowed never to sit down and get drunk with the Russians, i.e. to fraternize with them. As a teetotaler this was an easy pledge to make, and indeed, in his 1939 negotiations with Stalin it was Ribbentrop, not Hitler who sat at the table with the Russians. However, in 1940, Hitler hosted Molotov in a most generous manner during the Russian's visit to Germany.

Eden's challenge to assess Germany in terms of its actions, and not by the words of its leaders or citizens, truly infuriated Hitler. He attempted to distract from Eden's apt observation with a tirade of unfounded allegations against the League of Nations.

I must also take a stand here against the view that the League of Nations might lend its support as such if needed and actually save the individual member states by virtue of its assistance. No, I cannot believe that. Foreign Secretary Eden stated recently that actions speak louder than words. I would, however, like to point out that the outstanding feature of the League of Nations to date has been not actions, but words—with the exception of a single case in which it perhaps would have been better to have been content with words only.²⁹ Moreover, in that one instance—as could be expected—the actions were not able to achieve the desired effect.

Hitler refuted any kind of international armament control, stating:

Mr. Eden holds that, in the future, every state should possess only those arms which are necessary for its defense. I do not know whether and in what form Moscow has been approached with respect to putting this interesting thought into practice, and to what extent promises have already been made from that quarter.

There is, however, one thing I must say: there is no doubt that the amount of the arms required for defense depends upon the amount of the dangers which threaten a country. This is something which each Volk—and each Volk alone—is competent to judge. Thus if Great Britain establishes the limits of its arms today, everyone in Germany will understand this; the only way we can see it is that London alone is competent to decide on the proportions of the protection required by the British Empire. At the same time, however, I would also like to stress that the proportions of the protection and hence defensive arms required by our Volk comprise a matter which falls under our own competence and thus is to be decided exclusively in Berlin.

Hitler countered British claims that the Germans sought to extend their territorial ambitions to Spain by aiding the men rallying around Franco,³⁰ and reasserted Germany's demand for a return of its colonies in Africa and overseas, the majority of which were being administered

by Great Britain. He made this demand simply because he wanted to annoy Eden and the British. That he did not truly desire such a repatriation is evident in *Mein Kampf*.³¹ Here Hitler had proclaimed that Germany's imperial policy of colonial conquest was a policy of the past, to be replaced by a striving to conquer new Lebensraum in Eastern Europe.

The attempt has been made to construe a connection between German sympathy for national Spain and some sort of colonial designs. Germany has no colonial claims against countries which have not taken colonies from it. In addition, Germany has suffered so greatly from the Bolshevik plight that it will not exploit this plight and rob another unhappy people in its hour of need or extract from it some future gain by force.

The German Volk once built up a colonial empire without robbing anyone and without violating any treaties. And it did so without waging war. That colonial empire has been taken away from us. The reasons being brought forth today to rationalize that action are not tenable.

First: "The natives do not want to belong to Germany." Who asked them if they wanted to belong to someone else; and when have colonized peoples ever been asked whether they harbored good will and affection for their former colonial masters?

Second: "The German colonies were not even properly administered by the Germans."

Germany had only gained these colonies a few decades before. Great sacrifices went into their expansion, and they were in the midst of an evolution which would have led to completely different results today than, for instance, in 1914. Yet we had nonetheless developed the colonies to such an extent that others considered them worth waging bloody battles with us to wrench them from our possession.

Third, it is claimed, "Those colonies had no real value."

Were this the case, this lack of value would also apply to other states, and hence it makes no sense that they are depriving us of them at all. Moreover, Germany has never demanded colonies for military purposes, but exclusively for economic ones.

It is obvious that the value of a certain territory may decrease in times of general prosperity; it is, however, just as obvious that such an assessment will undergo an immediate revision in times of distress. And today Germany is living in times of a difficult struggle for foodstuffs and raw materials. Sufficient imports are only conceivable given a steady and continuous increase in our exports. Thus the demand for colonies in a country as densely populated as our own will naturally be put forward again and again.

Subsequently, Hitler once again put forth a new "peace plan." This time, his suggestions to that end consisted of eight items, each one of them a vague and convoluted proposal. One of these ideas was to reorganize the League of Nations to allow it to become "an organ of

revolutionary reason,” and thus be freed from the “reactionary lethargy” crippling it at the moment. Further, he proposed a global approach to the armament question. He claimed this to be imperative to successfully counter “the organized guilds of warmongers” (*Kriegshetzergilde*)³² Hitler emphasized that the mutually beneficial relations between Italy and Germany could serve as a precedent for similar agreements among all nations of Europe.

Nearly nine months had passed since the British had inquired in their note of May 7, 1936, whether Germany considered itself in a position to discuss “real contracts.” The inquiry had been transmitted in the aftermath of the military occupation of the Rhineland. Hitler responded that “it was impossible for the German Government to provide an answer to these questions” and that he hoped Great Britain would respect this.

In concluding these remarks, I would like to take a stand on a document the British Government sent to the German Government on the occasion of the occupation of the Rhineland.

At the outset I would like to establish that we hold and are convinced that the English Government did everything in its power at that time to avoid an escalation of the European crisis, and that the document in question owes its existence to the desire to make a contribution toward untangling the situation at the time. It was nonetheless impossible for the German Government to provide an answer to these questions for reasons the Government of Great Britain will certainly appreciate.

We have chosen instead to settle some of these questions the most natural way of all in the practical handling of our relations with our neighboring states, and now that full German sovereignty and equality of rights have been restored, I would like to state conclusively that Germany will never again sign a treaty which is in any way irreconcilable with its honor, with the honor of the nation and the government representing it, or which is otherwise irreconcilable with Germany’s vital interests and thus cannot be upheld for any length of time.³³

I do believe that this declaration will be easily comprehended by everyone.

After this second affront to the British, Hitler continued with a “short look at the tasks of the future, which are headed by the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.”

These were not the only notions he entertained. The Führer had resolved to “make the German Volk healthier and its life more comfortable.” Both ideas referred to his plans to redesign and rebuild cities in Germany. Moreover, he envisioned a new constitution, which was to become “the immortal basic law for all Germans.”

The great tasks which have been commenced beyond this [the Four-Year Plan] shall be continued. Their goal will be to make the German Volk healthier and its life more comfortable. As external evidence of this great epoch of the resurrection of our Volk shall now stand the methodical expansion of several of the Reich's major cities. Enhancing Berlin to become a true and genuine capital of the German Reich is the first priority. Therefore today—just as this is done for our road-building—I have appointed a General Building Inspector for Berlin who will be responsible for the structural enhancement of the Reich Capital and shall ensure that, despite the chaos of Berlin's constructional development, the strong lines will be retained which do justice to the spirit of the National Socialist Movement and the individuality of the German Reich Capital. A period of twenty years has been allotted for the implementation of this plan.

May the Almighty God grant us the peace to be able to accomplish this tremendous task. Parallel to it there will be a large-scale enhancement of the Capital of the Movement, the City of the Reich Party Congresses and the City of Hamburg.

This, however, shall serve merely as a model for the general cultural evolution to which we aspire as the crowning glory of the internal and external freedom of the German Volk.

And finally, it shall be a task of the future to guarantee, in a constitution, for all time to come the true life of our Volk as it has now taken shape in the form of a state, and thus to elevate that life to become the immortal basic law for all Germans.

Hitler was far from finished with his speech. He could not desist from adding a few sentimental reflections on “the three unusual friends in my life,” namely, “poverty, regret, and concern.” Moreover, he alluded in a most mysterious fashion to the manner in which, later in the day, he intended to honor the non-National Socialist ministers and generals at the Chancellery: he had decided to award them the Golden Party Badge.³⁴

When I look back upon the great work of the four years lying behind us, you will understand that my initial feeling can be none other than that of gratitude to our Almighty God who allowed us to accomplish this work.

He blessed our work and enabled our Volk to stride unscathed and confident through all the perils lining its path.

I have had three unusual friends in my life: in my youth Poverty was my companion for many years. When the Great War came to a close, it was the deepest Regret at the collapse of our Volk that overcame me and prescribed my path. Since that January 30 four years ago I have met my third friend, Concern. Concern for the Volk and Reich entrusted to my leadership. It has never left me since, and will probably accompany me now until I am no more. Yet how could a man be capable of bearing up under the weight of this concern if he did not, faithfully trusting in his mission, have the consent of

Him who stands above us all? It is Fate with special tasks that so often compels men to be alone and forlorn. I also wish to thank Providence here and now that it enabled me to find a company of the most loyal fellow fighters who have linked their lives to mine and who have been at my side ever since, fighting with me for the resurrection of our Volk. I am so happy that I need not stride through the German Volk as a lonely man, but that beside me there are men comprising a guard whose name will live on in German history.

At this time I would like to thank my old comrades in arms who stood by me untiringly throughout these long, long years, and who are now giving me their help, either as Ministers, as Reichsstatthalters, as Gauleiters, or in other positions within the Party and the State. At present, there are fateful events taking place in Moscow which really reveal to us how highly that loyalty which binds leading men deserves to be valued.³⁵

I would further like to extend my sincere thanks to those who, although they have not issued from the ranks of the Party, have come in the course of these years to constitute true helpers and companions in the leadership of the Reich Government and in the rest of the Volk. Today they all belong to us, though this very minute they may not yet have the symbol of our community. I would like to thank the men and women who built up our Party organization and have so successfully headed it. Yet above all I must take this opportunity to thank the leaders of our Wehrmacht. They have made it possible to present the National Socialist weapon to the National Socialist State without any disturbance. Thus today the Party and the Wehrmacht constitute the two eternally-sworn guarantors of the assertion of our Volk's life. We are also aware that all our deeds would have been in vain had not hundreds of thousands of Political Leaders, countless civil servants of the Reich and innumerable soldiers and officers stood by us loyally in the spirit of our uprising. And beyond that—had not the broad front of the entire German Volk stood behind us.

On this historic day, I must once again mention those millions of nameless German people who, from every walk of life, from every profession and factory and from every farm, have given of their heart and their love and their sacrifices for the new Reich. And we, too, Men and Deputies of the Reichstag, wish to join together to thank above all the German women, the millions of our mothers who have given the Third Reich their children. For what would be the sense in all our work, what would be the sense in the uprising of the German nation without our German youth? Every mother who has given our Volk a child in these four years has contributed, by her pain and her happiness, to the happiness of the entire nation. When I think of our Volk's healthy youth, my faith in our future becomes transformed into joyful certainty. And I sense with heartfelt fervency the significance of that single word Ulrich von Hutten wrote before he set aside his quill for the last time: *Deutschland*.

Subsequent to Hitler's speech, Göring announced that the Führer had established a 'National Award for the Arts and Sciences.' The story behind the creation of this award had been a most peculiar one. In Oslo

on November 24, 1936, the author Carl von Ossietzky³⁶ who was in a concentration camp at the time, was awarded the 1935 Nobel peace prize.

This led Hitler to create a separate, national German award. No German was allowed to accept a Nobel prize, now and for “all time to come.” The proclamation of January 30, 1937, implementing this measure, is reproduced below:³⁷

In order to prevent similarly embarrassing incidents from repeating themselves in the future, I today decree the establishment of a German National Award for the Arts and Sciences. This National Award shall be granted annually to three deserving Germans and shall carry a remuneration of 100,000 marks respectively.

Herewith all Germans are barred from accepting a Nobel prize for all time to come.

The Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda shall determine the requirements for receipt of a National Award.

Adolf Hitler

At the end of this “memorable” meeting, the Reichstag unanimously voted in favor of a bill to extend the powers granted to Hitler in the 1933 Enabling Act. The only article contained in the bill read:³⁸

The March 24, 1933 law for removing the distress of Volk and Reich (RGBL. 1, p. 141) shall remain in effect until April 1, 1941.

The January 30, 1934 law for the reconstruction of the Reich shall not be affected by this regulation.

A number of decrees issued on January 30, 1937 were of lesser importance and aimed at promoting the further identification of Party and State. The decree affecting the Reich Leader of the Labor Service³⁹ assigned Konstantin Hierl to guide and preside over all concerns pertaining to the Labor Service within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior.

Another degree created the position for a head of the Foreign Organization in the Foreign Office.⁴⁰ The obvious choice for such a post was Gauleiter Ernst Wilhelm Bohle, who already presided over the NSDAP’s Foreign Organization. The task he thus faced was “to ensure the welfare of all citizens of the German Reich in foreign countries.” In accordance with his earlier announcement in a speech before the Reichstag, Hitler issued a further decree on January 30 to enact an earlier statement before the Reichstag,⁴¹ placing a General Building inspector in charge of the Reich Capital. At the same time, Hitler provided the following:⁴²

Berlin, January 30, 1937

Based upon my January 30, 1937 decree ((R.GBl. I, p. 103), I appoint the architect Professor Albert Speer to the post of General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

After the Reichstag session had ended, Hitler hurried back to the Chancellery to tend to “urgent official business.” The urgency of this meeting can be measured by the fact that he failed to make even a perfunctory appearance before the cheering crowd which had assembled beneath the balcony. In the Cabinet Hall, the highest ranking men in the Reich had gathered, not only the Reich Ministers and State Secretaries, but also the commanders of the Reichswehr, men who bore titles equivalent to a member of Hitler’s cabinet. The official note describing the “ceremony” began as follows:⁴³

The Führer and Reich Chancellor called upon the ministers of the Reich Government to assemble in the Cabinet Hall of the Chancellery on Saturday afternoon for a session, which consisted of a most impressive celebration of the fourth anniversary of the the constitution of the Hitler Cabinet by Reich President von Hindenburg.

Thereafter, Hitler honored each dignitary present in recognition of his specific efforts and achievements. The second part of the official announcement detailed the following:

In full consideration of the forthcoming rescission of the ban⁴⁴ on Party membership, the Führer has taken the first step toward admitting new members. The Chancellor personally initiated those cabinet members who had not yet enjoyed the privilege of membership in the Party.⁴⁵ As part of this initiation, he presented each new member with the Golden Party Badge, the highest distinction awarded by the Party.

Furthermore, the Führer presented the Golden Party Badge to Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch; to Admiral General Dr. h.c. Raeder; to the Prussian Minister of Finance, Professor Popitz;⁴⁶ as well as to State Secretary and head of the Presidential Chancery, Dr. Meissner. Other recipients of the Golden Party Badge were the following Party comrades: State Secretary Dr. Lammers, State Secretary Funk, State Secretary Körner,⁴⁷ and General der Flieger Milch.⁴⁸

Among the men honored that day was one who possessed the integrity to take a stance against Hitler: Eltz von Rübenach, the Reich Minister of Postal Services and Transportation. He returned the Golden Party Badge to Hitler, declaring that he had no intention of joining the NSDAP. What became of this courageous man who so blatantly dared to affront Hitler? Would he be eliminated or at least sent to a con-

centration camp? After 1945, the leading men of the state, economy, judiciary, etc., should claim that their blind obedience was the only alternative to avoid such a fate. Surprisingly—as well as in 1933 with regard to Hugenberg and in 1938 in the case of General Beck⁴⁹—nothing at all happened to von Rübenach. In this instance, too, Hitler was impressed by the fortitude of a man who was willing to suffer even the loss of his position in order to uphold his personal principles. As long as such a man remained loyal and did not conspire against the Führer, Hitler respected him for his decision.

News of von Rübenach's act never reached the public in any official form. Hitler was able to use the current situation to quietly resolve the von Rübenach affair. Following Hitler's announcement before the Reichstag that the Reichsbahn and the Reichsbank had managed to sever their ties to the world market, it appeared to be a logical move to promote the deserving Director General of the Reichsbahn, Julius Dorpmüller⁵⁰, to replace von Rübenach as Minister of Transportation. Thus, without a scandal, the affair was buried, the only indication that something behind the scenes might be amiss being the markedly cool treatment of the former minister in an official announcement, dated February 2. The note read:⁵¹

On the occasion of the final subordination of the Deutsche Reichsbahngesellschaft to the sovereignty of the Reich Government, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has ordered that the interlocking directorates of the Reich Ministry of Transportation and the Reich Ministry of Postal Services be dissolved. The two ministries shall once again be administered separately, as in former times.

As Reich Minister of Transportation the Führer and Reich Chancellor has named the Director General of the Deutsche Reichsbahngesellschaft, Dr. h.c. Julius Dorpmüller, who, pending the re-establishment of both ministries, will remain responsible for the Reichsbahn as well.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the current State Secretary to the Reich Ministry of Postal Services, Dr. Ohnesorge, to assume the new position of Reich Minister of Postal Services.

In a letter to the retiring Reich Minister of Transportation, Freiherr Eltz von Rübenach, the Führer has expressed his gratitude for services rendered.

On February 4, Hitler staged a mass rally, attended by twenty thousand railroad workers on the doorsteps of the Chancellery. In staging this rally, Hitler aimed both to make the appointment of Dorpmüller sound more genuine and to distract attention from the Eltz von Rübenach affair, which had somehow leaked to the public. From the balcony of the Chancellery, Hitler addressed the crowd and pro-

claimed:⁵² “Germany now is free of the bonds of a treaty, which attempted to enslave it for centuries.”

Then he expanded upon the subordination of the Reichsbahn to state ownership, explaining the benefits of this change as follows: “No people in the world can claim ownership to such a magnificent enterprise as the Deutsche Reichsbahn.”

The Reich Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht, paid his respects to Hitler in the Chancellery on February 5 by presenting a document which expressed gratitude for the “liberation of the German Reichsbank from its last ties of bondage to international finance.”⁵³ Two days later, Hitler gave a short honorary speech for the four German officers victorious at the Berlin International Riding and Driving Competition.⁵⁴ On February 11, Hitler inspected the new administration building of the NSDAP at the Königsplatz in Munich. He personally presented the building to the Reich Treasurer Schwarz,⁵⁵ under whose supervision the building was to be placed. Following a tour of its interior, Hitler declared: “It is truly magnificent.”

Afterwards, Hitler returned to the Obersalzberg. There, on February 15, he signed a decree calling for a “Constituent General Synod of the German Protestant Church.” He had grown weary of the constant bickering with Protestant clerics. The decree detailed:⁵⁶

Berchtesgaden, February 15, 1937

Now that the Reich Church Committee (*Reichskirchenausschuss*) has failed to arrive at an agreement among the diverging ecclesiastical groups within the German Protestant Church, the Church shall now see to giving itself a new constitution and thereby a new organization. The complete freedom of self-determination for the parishes shall be preserved.

To this end, I empower the Reich Minister for Church Affairs to prepare for the election of a general synod and to take all steps necessary hereto.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

On the Obersalzberg on February 17, Hitler received a delegation of front-line soldiers from fourteen nations and delivered a speech before the men assembled.⁵⁷

If ever there were any men who knew the significance of the term peace, he declared, then it were those who had experienced upon their own bodies what the term war meant. Any new armed conflict would end in catastrophe for all nations.

The “Law for Preventing Participation in the Spanish Civil War”⁵⁸ was issued the next day. Persons attempting to recruit German citizens

for combat in Spain were advised of legal repercussions. In order to ensure compliance with the law, these measures consisted of the implied threat of jail sentences. Ironically, if Hitler's law had been enforced, all of the Condor Legion—including a number of high-ranking officers in the Army and in the Luftwaffe—would have perforce been incarcerated. Even Hitler himself, along with the commanders in chief of the Wehrmacht, would have been implicated under the section of this law which forbade “instigating individuals to participate” in the civic strife in Spain. However, Hitler did not think of statutes, such as the above mentioned, in terms of a universally applicable system of law. Rather he saw them merely as means to an end. Thus, in 1939 Hitler presented the German veterans of the Spanish Civil War with medals instead of jail sentences.⁵⁹

2

On February 20, Hitler presided over the opening of the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin. His welcoming address⁶⁰ commenced with a lengthy and highly detailed account of efforts connected with the motorization process in the previous four years. Turning to the “tasks of the future,” he stated that the production of the new Volkswagen was a major priority. Evidently the industry continued to be wary of this project, and its opposition to it had yet to be overcome. One more time Hitler had to argue in favor of his brainchild.

I would like to add here that it would be a capital error to believe the production of the cheapest people’s car might in any way reduce the numbers of those who purchase more expensive automobiles. As I have stated, that makes no sense. People do not refrain from buying more expensive and hence better-quality automobiles because they basically want inexpensive ones, but because they are not in a position to afford the expensive ones! And to the extent to which total production figures increase, there will necessarily be a corresponding progressive increase in price reduction. This reflects the constellation of our assets and income! It has, however, invariably been the case in the past that just as the cheaper product aroused and cultivated the attention and interest of the buyers—and consequent owners—in a certain direction, it was from these same classes that buyers for the better products later issued.

Gentlemen! There can thus be only one Volkswagen in Germany, and not ten. Yet in the gap between the forthcoming Volkswagen and the top luxury automobile, there must be a large group of other classes of automobiles corresponding to the economic climb of the buyers.

Hitler employed a markedly sharper tone in his opening address than he had in earlier years. Germany’s leading industrialists were ill at ease with Hitler’s new Four-Year Plan, which was obviously tailored to suit the exigencies of a wartime economy. For them, much was at

risk under the Four-Year Plan: they did not have “everything to win”⁶¹ (as allegedly did the politicians), but rather there was much to be lost indeed. Nevertheless, Hitler reminded them that nothing would keep him from “putting plans once conceived into practice, no matter how.” Here for the very first time he spoke of his “inalterable decision” (*unabänderlicher Entschluss*)—a term that he would employ with increasing frequency, in particular during the years of the Second World War. As time passed, the meaning of this expression would become equivalent to “mad decision.” Yet Hitler was confident that a man such as he—who had “succeeded in rising from an unknown soldier of the World War to the leader of the nation”—would be capable of dealing with whatever the future would bring.

I have no desire to concern myself with those who know only the one well-worn objection to all major decisions: “It won’t work.” For eighteen years I have grown accustomed to hearing this remark as the logical and simple justification for fighting every single new idea, every single new decision and every single new action.

I first encountered this phrase at the time of the November Revolution, when I made the decision to found a new Movement in Germany and use it to seize power: and I heard those same words again when I resolved to build the Reich Autobahn.

Supposedly none of that worked or would work. Since then I have had little trouble dealing with this problem. This phrase “That won’t work” is nothing but the manifestation of that general lethargy that arms itself against every single new idea, every single new concept and every single new action. And I do not need to assure you that a man who has succeeded in rising from an unknown soldier of the World War to the leader of the nation will also succeed in solving any problems to come.

May no man doubt my determination to put plans once conceived into practice, no matter how. [—]

Thus it is my inalterable decision to make the German automobile industry, which is one of our Volk’s greatest industries, independent of the insecurities of international imports, and to place it on its own solid and secure foundation. In one to two years, we will be independent of other countries as regards our needs for fuel and rubber, thus providing a dependable means of existence for countless German Volksgenossen; in similar fashion, we plan to use every means at our disposal to step up the mining of German ore.

Nor let there be any doubt: either the so-called free economy is capable of solving these problems, or it is not capable of surviving as a free economy! Under no circumstances will the National Socialist State capitulate to the idleness, the narrow-mindedness or the ill will of any individual German. Employees and employers both represent contracting parties in the German economic process, and neither has the right to do damage to the interests of the body of the Volk by pursuing one-sided aims.

On February 21, Hitler participated in the festivities surrounding the Heroes' Memorial Day. Subsequent to the official ceremony, which he attended at the State Opera, he placed a wreath at the memorial Unter den Linden. Thereafter he reviewed a defile of troops. This particular celebration was to be the only one in the period 1933 through 1939 whose theme was not eclipsed by a political incident either on the national or international stage.⁶²

On February 24, the usual ceremony in remembrance of the foundation of the Party took place in the banquet hall of the Munich Hofbräuhaus.⁶³ There Hitler spoke of the "marvelous experience of the first fighting years." Then, as if claiming that his eighteen-year involvement with the National Socialist Party were the sole causal factor in the resurgence of Germany, he concluded that "we have today become a world power once again."

Two days later at the Chancellery, he received the past President of the Swiss Confederation, Dr. Schulthess. Hitler conferred with his guest at great length and reassured him that Germany would respect the neutrality of Switzerland.⁶⁴

Come what may, we shall always respect the territorial integrity and neutrality of Switzerland. I am telling you this in earnest. I have never given reason for others to think differently.

Hitler spent the first few days of March 1937 informally attending numerous cultural events.⁶⁵ On March 4, at the National Theater in Munich, he watched a new production of the Richard Strauss opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. The next day, he inspected the construction site of the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg. He again spent several hours at the Automobile Exhibition in Berlin on the following day. On March 9, Hitler attended a ballet performance of *Tanz um die Welt* ("The Dance around the World") by members of the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg. The next day, on the fourth anniversary of the "National Socialist Revolution" in Bavaria, Hitler wired an expression of his gratitude to Minister-President Ludwig Siebert and to the State Minister, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, thanking both men for their involvement in the Movement.⁶⁶ On March 11, Hitler presented State Actor Heinrich George with an autographed portrait which read:⁶⁷ "To the great German artist Heinrich George on his twenty-fifth anniversary on stage. With the best wishes, Adolf Hitler."

The same day, Hitler hosted the completely assembled Party leadership at an informal gathering in the Chancellery.⁶⁸

On March 12, he paid a personal visit to Dr. Frick in the latter's apartment to congratulate him on his sixtieth birthday. In the afternoon, Hitler analysed the political situation in a ninety-minute speech before a group of NSDAP Gauleiters⁶⁹ In the evening, he concluded this busy day by receiving four hundred artists at the Chancellery.⁷⁰

On March 13, Hitler delivered an address in celebration of Field Marshal von Blomberg's fortieth service anniversary. Numerous generals and admirals had assembled in the Ministerial Room of the Reich Ministry of War to hear him speak. The *Völkischer Beobachter* described the address in the following manner:⁷¹

The Führer began his address honoring the Reich Minister of War, Field Marshal von Blomberg, by paying tribute to the historic changes in Germany and the world in the past four years. From the very onset, the NSDAP had felt its mission to be the advance of the political, economical, and psychological prerequisites essential to the build-up of a new and mighty Wehrmacht. Field Marshal von Blomberg had contributed greatly both to the rebirth of the Wehrmacht and to the consolidation of the old Army with the young Party. The Reich Minister of War deserves to be lauded for his merger of the two organizations, and especially for his avoidance of friction between the two parties. He has brought this about in precisely the manner the Führer desired.

An army cannot exist devoid of an ideological base from which it can derive its mission. It is the unrivaled accomplishment of the Reich Minister of War that the National Socialist Weltanschauung was able to provide this moral foundation. In this effort, the Reich Minister was aided by his capacity for facile comprehension and his unerring loyalty. Thanks to the principles engendered in the Weltanschauung, it was possible to arrive at the decisions necessary for the rebirth of the German Wehrmacht.

Taking up the achievements of the Reichswehr, the Führer stated: "One thing is certain—with the exception of the immense material and spiritual efforts on the part of the Chiefs of the various Wehrmacht Commands—it would never have been possible to build up today's German Army within such a short time period, had it not been for Field Marshal von Blomberg. And so it will be entered into the book of history!"

In the Führer's words, the entire German Volk is indebted to the Field Marshal for this. The name of the Reich Minister of War shall live on eternally in the annals of the German Army. In the future as well, he shall remain the foremost custodian of the Wehrmacht.

The Führer proceeded to announce the appointment of the Field Marshal as Chief of the Seventy-Third Infantry Regiment and congratulated him on his service anniversary.

After only a few months, Hitler found himself no longer content with von Blomberg's performance and fired his Minister of War in order to assume the latter's position himself.⁷²

While visiting Berlin, the King of Denmark, Christian X, paid his respects to Hitler at the Chancellery on March 15.⁷³ Two days later, Hitler went to see the exhibition *Das deutsche Bühnenbild* (Stage Art in Germany) on display at the Berlin Haus der Kunst.⁷⁴

On March 18, Hitler ordered renewed exercises for the holders of the SA Sports Badge in an effort to preserve the men's fitness for military service "up to an old age." The ordinance stated:⁷⁵

In my February 15, 1935 decree, I defined the SA Sports Badge as a means for combat training of the body and for keeping alive the spirit of defense in the Volk in all walks of life.

In order to assure the fitness for military service among the recipients of the SA Sports Badge up to an old age, I authorize the Chief of Staff of the SA to make the further possession of the SA Sports Badge contingent upon successful participation in certain training exercises. I further upgrade the *Leistungsbuch* (record booklet) of the SA Sports Badge to a document which shall afford information on the corporeal constitution and the *weltanschaulich* attitude⁷⁶ of its bearer.

Berlin, March 18, 1937

Adolf Hitler

On March 25, Hitler's portrait for the first time appeared on a stamp, a six-pfennig stamp sold in sets of four, as announced in the gazette of the Reich Ministry of Postal Services. The new Minister Ohnesorge had only with great difficulty wrested the permission for the printing of the stamp from Hitler,⁷⁷ for the Führer resented almost superstitiously the reproduction of his likeness. This aversion of Hitler is particularly well-documented for the early years of his domestic struggle.⁷⁸

On March 30, Hitler succeeded in claiming an important victory for himself by finally convincing Ludendorff to consider conciliatory talks. Hitler had baited the old warrior by extending to him the promise of easing the regulations restricting his sectarian religious movement "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis" (German Recognition of God). Ludendorff's acquiescence signaled to the public that within Germany, no man of renown and importance could resist coming under the spell of Hitler. The official press release reporting on the meeting between Hitler and Ludendorff described it in the following terms:⁷⁹

Munich, March 30

In the interest of the German Volk and in order to alleviate the existing disagreements and difficulties, exhaustive conciliatory talks took place between the Führer and Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler and General von Ludendorff. These resulted in the desired reconciliation.

The General expressed his appreciation of the Führer's accomplishments that one by one have torn to pieces the articles of the disgraceful Treaty

(*Schandpakt*) of Versailles. Above all, he rejoiced at seeing Volk and State once again fit to fight and Germany as the master of the Rhine. Ludendorff also stated that it was a most advantageous fact that Hitler had succeeded in reuniting the Germans spiritually, and thereby prepared them to face the tasks of the future.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor spoke of his personal experiences and voiced his pleasure at seeing that the Third Reich and its Wehrmacht once again enjoyed the confidence of the great Commander of the World War, reminiscent of the ties between the Fighters of November 9, 1923, and the Old Army.

Ludendorff as well published the above communiqué in his movement's journal, which bore the title of *Am Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft* (At the Holy Fountain of German Strength).⁸⁰ However, he added to the above statement the following remarks:

The Führer and Reich Chancellor of the Reich has removed the restraints which up to the present have encumbered my own and my family's *weltanschaulich* activities. Those Germans who profess the "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis" shall now receive equal treatment to the members of other religious communities,⁸¹ which already enjoy the toleration guaranteed in Article 24 of the Party statutes.

I am grateful to the Führer and Reich Chancellor for this. It has now become easier for me to follow my calling, which compels me to endeavor to build up strong foundations for a completely *völkisch* state. I am also confident that this shall render my efforts for the benefit of this State more effective.

I now, in turn, expect that those of you who listen to my words, and in particular of those who are followers of the "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis," and who do not belong to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, but also of those within that Party, that you not lose sight of our original goal. It is our ambition to give strength to the German human being.

We wish to promote unity and accord among the German people in a *völkisch* and total state. It is now that I ask of you to do your utmost to reach this goal. Once and for all we shall thwart the efforts of supranational powers—which have been particularly obvious of late—to undermine our young *völkisch* Reich.

These forces are attempting to extend their all-encompassing grasp over our Volk. I implore the reader of the journal *Am Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft* to follow me with a joyous heart on the way to spreading the spiritual message of my house.

As emphasized by the last sentence, Ludendorff cherished "the spiritual message of his house"⁸² more than he did the personality of the Führer and Chancellor. Nevertheless, the Führer was adamant, and finally, a few weeks prior to Ludendorff's demise, Hitler persuaded the stubborn old General to consider himself one of the Old Fighters.⁸³

March 30, 1937

On March 30, too, a note was published acknowledging Hitler's substitution of von Blomberg for him at the coronation ceremonies of King George VI in London:⁸⁴

Berlin, March 30

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has commissioned Field Marshal von Blomberg to partake in his stead at the coronation ceremonies in London. The Commander in Chief Naval Station of the North Sea, Admiral Otto Schulze, and Major General of the Luftwaffe Stumpff shall constitute the remainder of the German delegation.

The fact that a purely military delegation was to represent Germany at an official state ceremony of such importance was contrary to all diplomatic procedure.⁸⁵ In fact, this was a renewed sharp affront to Great Britain. The act produced the impression that it was Hitler's intent to relay to the English that should they wish to contact him in the future, they had best do so through his Minister of War (!).

The "Greater Hamburg Ordinance,"⁸⁶ which provided for the incorporation of smaller neighboring districts to the city state, became law as of April 1. On this occasion, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the Reichsstatthalter and Gauleiter of Hamburg, Karl Kaufmann. In reply to the greetings extended by Kaufmann, Hitler stated the following:⁸⁷

I thank you for the greetings you sent me on the occasion of yesterday's festivities. I greet you in return, adding the heartfelt desire that the Greater Hamburg Ordinance, which has begun the development of the economic and residential potential of the Lower Elbe region, might bear the richest fruits for the benefit of Hamburg and Germany's economy.

Adolf Hitler

On April 7, Hitler congratulated the industrial magnate and Privy Councillor Emil Kirdorf on his ninetieth birthday in the telegram reproduced below:⁸⁸

I extend to you my heartfelt best wishes on your ninetieth birthday.

In recognition of your great service to Germany's economy, I hereby bestow upon you the highest distinction accorded by the Reich, the *Adlerschild*. Its inscription reads: "Dem grossen deutschen Wirtschaftsführer!" (To the great German leader of industry) .

Along with my best wishes for your future welfare, I extend to you the German salute, and I remain faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

In the course of Hitler's early years, Kirdorf had repeatedly rendered both financial and psychological assistance to him. Hence,

April 7, 1937

Hitler honored the elderly gentleman by paying him a lengthy visit at his country estate “Streithof,” located near Mülheim an der Ruhr.⁸⁹

On April 16, Hitler addressed the Gau Commissioners of the Winterhilfswerk in a speech at the Chancellery.⁹⁰ He expressed his gratitude for their active involvement in the Movement, calling the Winterhilfswerk “a crucial instrument in the educational process of turning the German Volk into a true socialist community.”

That same day, the Austrian Minister of the Interior, Glaise-Horstenau, who was well-known for his National Socialist leanings, visited Hitler for a “one-hour confidential talk at the Chancellery.”⁹¹ As a former director of the War Archives in Vienna, Glaise-Horstenau had come to attend the opening ceremonies of the Army Archives in Potsdam. Another guest from Austria of a National Socialist persuasion who called on Hitler that very same day was the retired General Alfred Krauss. In the presence of Göring, Hitler discussed the issues of the day with Krauss.⁹²

On April 19, the British Socialist George Lansbury⁹³ visited Hitler in the Chancellery. Inspired by Hitler’s numerous “peace proposals,” the renowned pacifist had decided to put before the German Chancellor his own ideas pertaining to the best approach to securing world peace. Hitler listened to him with a faraway, unheeding expression on his face. He was bored stiff by this “senile” Englishman. As the interpreter Schmidt noted, Hitler dismissed his guest in a rather rude manner after having made a few vague assurances of his willingness to participate in any peace conference which would possibly convene. To Hitler time was too precious to be wasted on an Englishman’s obsessive preoccupation with peace.

Moreover, the Führer had yet to prepare an address he would deliver at 7:00 p.m. on the eve of his birthday. Talk of peace would be most inappropriate in a speech before the Wehrmacht! Prior to Hitler’s speaking appearance, a military parade traversed the Wilhelmsplatz and marched past the Chancellery. The Wehrmacht was to receive ninety new troop banners on this occasion. The content of Hitler’s speech, which was broadcast on the radio, is reproduced below.⁹⁴

Soldiers!

You are assembled here to receive the new banners. May these banners signify to you threefold:

First of all, may they remind you of the great past. Each of these banners holds that iron Cross which decorated hundreds of thousands of brave officers and troops in so many campaigns. By virtue of this Iron Cross, these

April 19, 1937

banners shall remind you above all of the greatest campaign of all time, of the World War. Immortal, undying heroism is bound up with this symbol! For the German soldier, there can be no remembrance of this greatest of experiences that is more splendid and more proud than the Iron Cross displayed on your banners.

And secondly, these banners remind you of the great battle of the present. Luckily the old banners were lowered after the collapse of 1918. Hence they were not made to witness the saddest period of German disintegration, German impotence, German weakness, and German humiliation.

Yet even in those years of deepest humiliation, there began a struggle for a new German Reich. While the environment was being shaken up by crises, in Germany, a new Volk, a new nation was born. And this new German Volk manifested itself politically in a new Reich. What centuries before us have yearned for has today become a reality: one Volk, one Reich, one idea, one will, and hence one symbol! The swastika you find on your banners is the symbol of this great inner process of recuperation, the symbol of the rebirth and hence the resurrection of our Volk. And it is also the symbol under which the new German Wehrmacht has come to be. It is the national symbol of the National Socialist German Reich, and you are its soldiers!

The third—the history of the future—you yourselves must now write! You and the generations following you who will enter the Wehrmacht of the German Reich year after year. And this history of the future must be just as proud as the past. It will be easier, because for the first time a German Volk will now shape its own history and destiny. And you, soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, are the representatives of the defense of and struggle for its freedom and honor!

Hence in your hands you hold not only the symbol of a glorious past and of a great struggle in the present, but—be it God's will—moreover that of an even greater future!

This “even greater future” apparently entailed the reaping of laurels in military campaigns.

On April 20, Hitler proclaimed the foundation of the National Socialist Air Corps (Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps, NSFK) and dissolved the German Air Sports Association (which, from 1935 onward, had no longer been needed to serve as a guise for the Luftwaffe). The decree effecting the organization's dissolution read as follows:⁹⁵

I determine the following in order to keep alive and foster the idea of flying in the German Volk, to provide for flying training prior to the military tour of service and to standardize the numerous leisure activities connected to flying in Germany:

1. The registered Deutscher Luftsportverband (DLV) and its subdivisions (Landesgruppen, Ortsgruppen, etc.) are dissolved herewith. They shall be replaced by the Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (NSFK).

2. The Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps shall be a corporation under public law. The Corps Leader of the NSFK shall head the organization. He shall be responsible to the Reich Minister for Air.

3. Association in the NSFK shall be on a volunteer basis. However, members of the NSFK may not simultaneously be members of either SA, SS or NSKK.

4. Members of the NSFK shall continue to wear the present bad weather attires of the DLV, to the left upper arm of which a swastika armband shall be affixed.

5. Administrative agencies, public institutions and other corporations under public law shall grant the same privileges to members of the NSFK that they grant to members of the various subdivisions of the NSDAP. Previous membership in the DLV shall be accounted for in favor of NSFK members.

6. Sports activities connected to aviation shall be conducted in accordance with guidelines issued by the Corps Leader of the NSFK.

7. The Reich Minister for Air shall tend to measures regarding the implementation of this decree.

Adolf Hitler

The NSFK was set up as an autonomous organization of equal importance to the SA, SS and NSKK. Hitler appointed Major General Christiansen as its Corps Leader. Christiansen was a highly distinguished pilot and recipient of a “Pour le mérite” award.⁹⁶

On the morning of April 20, a huge military parade filed by Adolf Hitler in the Berlin Tiergarten. The Commander of Wehrkreis III, General von Witzleben,⁹⁷ once again reported a list of figures to the Führer: 1,550 officers, 13,000 enlisted men, 1,500 horses, and 950 vehicles standing at attention.⁹⁸ After the parade, Hitler flew to Munich and arrived there “completely unexpectedly,”⁹⁹—at least according to the *Völkischer Beobachter’s* account.

Two days later, Albert Forster, Gauleiter of Danzig, came to the Obersalzberg for private talks¹⁰⁰ with Hitler. Though the content of the conversation was never made public, it seems reasonably clear that the topics discussed pertained to the latent tensions straining the relationship of Danzig to Poland.

On April 29, Hitler delivered a two-hour ‘secret speech’ to an assembly of NSDAP Kreisleiters, who had gathered at the Ordensburg Vogelsang in the Eifel mountains for a training course.¹⁰¹ As mentioned before, the primary purpose of the *Ordensburgen* was to educate and train the Political Leaders and their junior staff.¹⁰² In addition to physical tests of bravery, these men submitted to a *weltanschaulich* indoctrination, where information Hitler had approved was presented to them for incorporation into their political belief system or “credo.”¹⁰³ At the

Vogelsang castle, Hitler raged for hours on the subject of the “complete insanity of parliamentary democracy.” He also explained that, as a matter of principle, he never called for a plebiscite on an issue unless he had already resolved it. Thanks to this procedural technique, he could demonstrate to the entire world that each and every German was in full support of his policies.

Had I believed that the German Volk was not in complete support of these measures, I would have acted nonetheless—however, without conducting a plebiscite. I would have simply said that this was a risk I had to take!

Toward the end of his speech, Hitler returned to the topic of Spain and alluded to the German participation in the Civil War raging there. However, he assured his listeners that Germany had no intention of turning “Spain into a National Socialist state.”

However, it is desirable for us not to have a Bolshevik state in existence there, which might form a land bridge connecting France and North Africa.

On the last day of April, Hitler spoke before the convention of the Reich Chamber of Labor (*Reichsarbeitskammer*) in Berlin. He spoke on the topic of the new economic and social order Hitler envisioned for Germany.¹⁰⁴ He also bestowed upon thirty firms the honorary title of *NS Musterbetrieb* (exemplary NS enterprise),¹⁰⁵ which he hoped would inspire other firms to strive for excellence as well. In the end, Germany’s entire economy would be made up of exclusively “exemplary National Socialist enterprises.”

That same day, Hitler attended the opening of an exhibition, bearing the title *Gebt mir vier Jahre Zeit* (Give Me Four Years’ Time). The show was set up on the fairgrounds in Berlin. First mention of this illustrated documentary on the past four years of National Socialist rule in Germany had already been made in Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag on January 30. The exhibition represented the opening of this year’s festivities, which were focused upon the national holiday.¹⁰⁶

At 9:00 a.m. in the morning of May 1, Hitler spoke in Berlin’s Olympic Stadium, addressing 120,000 boys and girls for whom he had prepared the usual youth rally platitudes:

There is but one German Volk, and hence there can be but one German youth. [—] We want a healthy youth. [—] We want a proud youth. [—] We want manly boys, and we want feminine girls. [—]

We do not want cowards, hypocrites or bootlickers; instead, we want our German youth to become an open and straightforward race. We want you to be a cheerful youth ... [etc., etc.]

Hitler's peroration resounded with the pathos of a mass held in Latin:

And thus this Germany of which you, my dear boys and girls, are so fond, this our Germany shall and must be equally fond of you. You are for us all by far the greatest treasure there is. You are for us all the promise of faith and hope for our Volk. When we see you we have boundless trust and immense confidence in the future of our Volk, the Volk whose youth you comprise, whose men and women you will one day be; the Volk to which we all belong, now and until the end of time.¹⁰⁷

At 11:00 a.m., Hitler attended the customary ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg, where the film award was presented to Emil Jannings as best actor, and the National Socialist author Friedrich Bethge received the book award. An hour later, the official celebration began in Berlin's Lustgarten. Here a "mere" 1.2 million people paraded before their Führer. However, their ranks were reinforced by another seven million people from "all over the Reich," who listened to the event on the radio.

Hitler's listeners that day heard a far more aggressive Führer than the one who had spoken on other May Day celebrations in the past. Hitler quite openly voiced Germany's demand for new Lebensraum and he delivered numerous unrelenting attacks on the ruling classes, whose members had hitherto assumed leading positions within Germany. Neither did he spare the church nor his intellectual critics.

The problems of our life are worse than those of other peoples. Perhaps there are peoples who can afford the luxury of waging war at home, of wrangling and bashing each other's heads in. Where Nature has given human beings everything in abundance, they will perhaps accord less importance to the necessity of uniform action and thus of a uniform will. Yet Nature has not been very kind to us Germans here on earth. A great Volk, an infinitely competent Volk, an industrious Volk, a Volk who has a will to live and a right to make demands on life, is living in a space much too tight and too confined to possibly provide to it everything it needs, even given the greatest diligence. When we sometimes hear foreign politicians say, "Why do you need a further, broader scope for life?" we might respond by asking them in turn, "Then why do you place such great emphasis on it?" It is for the very reason that our life-struggle is so much more difficult than elsewhere that we must draw specific conclusions from this fact which constitutes our fate. We cannot exist on phrases, clichés and theories, but only on the fruits of our labor, our ability and our intelligence. [—]

For at the fore of our National Socialist economic leadership stands not the word "theory," nor the word "money," nor "capital," but the word

May 1, 1937

“production.” Believe me, my Volksgenossen: it requires more brain-work, more effort and more concentration to draw up and implement a Four-Year Plan to secure for our Volk the requisite vital goods for the future than to start up the rotary press to print more paper money.

It is very easy to stride before the public and say, “We’re raising salaries, earnings and wages”—and then tomorrow we shall raise prices. And it is very easy to say, “We’ll shorten working hours—that means output—and raise wages instead.” That may be popular at the moment. But the collapse is inevitable, for the individual does not live on a paper wage but on the total sum of the production of his Volksgenossen. That is the foremost precept of National Socialist economic policy. [—]

Life itself puts every generation under an obligation to wage its own battle for that life. Yet what centuries of prejudice and irrationality have built up cannot be completely eliminated within four years’ time. Everything cannot be accomplished at once! But we have the will to master this problem and, armed with this will, we shall never capitulate! And we are applying ourselves thoroughly to our task; you will have to admit that. In these four years, we have established order; we have ensured that it is not the undeserving who walk off with the wages in the end, but the millions comprising the upright working masses in the cities and the countryside who are able to gain their just reward!

In Germany we have truly broken with the world of prejudices. I may regard myself as an exception. I, too, am a child of this Volk, and did not issue from some palace; I come from the work site. Neither was I a general; I was a soldier like millions of others. It is a miraculous thing that, here in our country, an unknown man was able to step forth from the army of millions of German people, German workers and soldiers, to stand at the fore of the Reich and the nation!

Next to me stand German people from every class of life who today are part of the nation’s leadership: former agricultural workers who are now Reichsstathalters; former metalworkers who are today Gauleiters, etc. Though, mind you, former members of the bourgeoisie and former aristocrats also have their place in this Movement. To us it makes no difference where they come from; what counts is that they are able to work for the benefit of our Volk. That is what matters. [—]

For subordinating oneself is something every person must do. We, too, subordinated ourselves. For nearly six years I was a soldier and never voiced a contradiction, but instead simply obeyed orders at all times. Today Fate has made me the one who gives orders.

And this I must demand of every German: you, too, must be able to obey; otherwise you will never be deserving or worthy of giving orders yourself! That is the prerequisite! It is thus we shall train our Volk and pass over the stubbornness or stupidity of the individual: bend or break—one or the other! We cannot tolerate that this authority, which is the authority of the German Volk, be attacked from any other quarter.

This also applies to all the Churches. As long as they concern themselves with their religious problems, the State will not concern itself with them. If

they attempt, however, to presume by virtue of any actions, letters, encyclicals, etc. to claim rights which accrue solely to the State, we will force them back into their right and proper spiritual-pastoral activities. Nor is it acceptable to criticize the morality of a state from that quarter when they have more than enough reason to call their own morality into question.¹⁰⁸ The German leadership of state will take care of the morality of the German State and Volk—of that we can assure all those concerned both within and without Germany. [—]

Hence this May Day is the illustrious holiday of the resurrection¹⁰⁹ of the German Volk from its disunity and its fragmentation. It is the illustrious day of the erection of a new and great Volksgemeinschaft that unites city and country, workers, peasants and intellectuals above and beyond any divisions, allowing the Reich to stand as sole presider over all in full panoply.

What is, therefore, more logical than for us to again wholeheartedly pledge ourselves to our Volk on this day of all days? We cannot renew this pledge often enough: that we wish to belong to this Volk, that we wish to serve it and will endeavor to understand one another; that we wish to overcome all that divides us and thus defeat the stupid doubters, the mockers and the incessant little cavillers; that today above all we wish to renew our faith in our Volk, our confidence that it is a marvelous, competent, industrious, and decent Volk, and that this Volk shall have its future because we are the ones responsible for that future!

As had become his custom on such occasions, Hitler received several delegations of workers from all over the Reich at the Chancellery that afternoon. Later he hosted the winners of the *Reichsberufswettkampf* (Reich Job Competition) and received Jannings and Bethge, the recipients of the film and book award. Subsequently, a delegation of Italian youth leaders and journalists called on Hitler.

In Hamburg, Hitler attended the launch of the KdF ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* on May 5,¹¹⁰ followed the next day by a cruise on the light battleship *Grille* to Cuxhaven and the Kiel Canal. Two days later, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the Deutsche Zeppelin shipping company upon learning of the explosion of the *Hindenburg* on its approach to the Lakehurst airport in New York.¹¹¹

On May 11, the new British Ambassador Sir Nevile M. Henderson paid his respects to Hitler at the Chancellery and presented his credentials to the German Head of State. At the same time in London, ceremonies began at the coronation of George VI, to which Hitler had sent his Minister of War, von Blomberg—well aware that this was an insult to the new King.

Henderson had been named British Ambassador to Germany on February 5, a few weeks after the accession of George VI to the throne, but arrived to assume his new responsibilities much later, on May 11.

May 11, 1937

The fifty-five-year-old Eton graduate and member of Britain's diplomatic corps had been Ambassador in Paris in the years 1928 through 1932, and had also served his country in Belgrade and Buenos Aires. Without a doubt, he was one of the most excellent diplomats in Great Britain at the time, and his assignment to Berlin clearly demonstrated the importance the British government accorded its representation there. In any case, the British wanted to be certain that Hitler would never be in a position to accuse the British Ambassador of incompetency should Anglo-German relations deteriorate. Neither could anyone claim that the new British Prime Minister, Sir Neville Chamberlain, had not done his utmost to appease Hitler. Chamberlain was to replace Baldwin toward the end of the month. Henderson pointed out the gravity of his mission in the following words:¹¹²

Dear Herr Reichskanzler!

I am greatly honored to present to you this letter which recalls my predecessor to our country. In it Your Excellency shall also find that my King, my most gracious sovereign, has deigned to send me here as his Ambassador Plenipotentiary to Your Excellency.

I am deeply touched by the honor my King thus bestows upon me in entrusting me with a mission of such importance. It is not merely a phrase when I state that I wish to begin my life among your great German people, so akin to our own, with the resolution to do everything in my power to further understanding between Great Britain and Germany.

Precisely this is the greatest desire of His Majesty, indeed of His Majesty's Government and the entire British people. If my mission is to succeed, I must do the utmost to achieve the fulfillment of this noble wish.

I am convinced that between us stand no matters that could not be resolved by mutual good will and peaceful cooperation. I am confident that my own personal connections to Your Excellency and to Your Excellency's Ministers will permit me to find the support and trusting cooperation so essential to mastery of this demanding task.

Hitler's reply to Henderson was the following:

Your Excellency!

I am honored to receive from Your Excellency's hands the letter of recall of your predecessor, you have presented to me along with a letter of His Majesty, King George VI, accrediting you as His Majesty's Ambassador Plenipotentiary here.

It is with great satisfaction that I listened to Your Excellency's words, with which you have defined your mission here as one of doing your utmost to further British-German understanding, in accordance to the desires of His Majesty the King, the British Royal Government, and of the entire British people.

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Let me assure you that I myself, the Reich Government, and the German Volk sincerely welcome this.

Your Excellency has expressed his conviction that there are no differences, separating our two countries, which could not be resolved given mutual good will and peaceful cooperation. This is also my conviction. I would like to add that I regard this peaceful cooperation as a prerequisite to the prosperity of both our peoples, the kinship among which you have stressed in particular, and as crucial in the interest of peace worldwide.

Let me assure Your Excellency, that you can be certain of my personal assistance of your striving to carry out your mission, and that you shall also find the Reich Government most cooperative.

I am most grateful for the warm wishes, expressed and penned by His Majesty, King George VI, in a hand-written note, for the prosperity of Germany and for my personal welfare. I most sincerely return these in kind and bid Your Excellency a heartfelt welcome to the German Reich.

Simultaneously, Hitler sent the following congratulatory telegram to King George VI:¹¹³

May it please Your Majesty to accept the congratulation of both myself and the German Reich Government upon your coronation. Please also accept our best wishes for the future welfare of Your Majesty and the Royal House. May Providence impart upon Your Majesty a long and joyous reign to the benefit of Great Britain, Ireland, India, and the Crown's overseas possessions as well as in the interest of the maintenance of peace throughout the world.

That same day, Hitler welcomed the newly appointed envoy from Guatemala, Gregorio Diaz, who had in the past already officiated as Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, as well as his Mexican colleague General Juan D. Azcarate.¹¹⁴ Later Hitler and his ministers lavished their attention on the Polish Minister of Justice Grabowski and his wife. The couple had come to Berlin so that Minister Grabowski could attend the constituent session of a syndicate concerning questions of legal relations between the Third Reich and Poland.¹¹⁵

On May 20, Hitler delivered yet another two-hour 'secret speech' to a group of workers assembled at the Obersalzberg to celebrate the opening of a communal hall. Here Hitler spoke on the nature of National Socialist economic policy "in a language intelligible even to the least of the workers," as the *Völkischer Beobachter* put it.¹¹⁶ Later that day, Hitler received a delegation of NSKK men, to whom he presented an autographed portrait of himself.¹¹⁷ In addition, he agreed to a discussion of social problems with Abel Bonnard, a member of the Académie Française. The interview was printed in the French newspaper *Le Journal* on May 22. Bonnard reported:¹¹⁸

Everything the Führer told me corresponded exactly to what I had seen in Germany during the past few days. Every word of our conversation pertained to the subject of the social reforms in the country of which he is head of state—with the exception of a remark about former front-line soldiers. To him, these men represented the most trustworthy group in any country because of their great experience and good judgment.

Our talk began with a comparison of the pre-World War society to its present state. Because I consider it a self-evident truth, I had maintained that even if the world had been a more comfortable and agreeable place in former times, granted that the well-being of the individual had been rendered greater justice, the present has its advantages, too. Precisely because it is not an easy life we live, the world today offers us splendid and numerous opportunities to prove our manliness. Today's reality is a harsher and more dramatic one, but it may also be more poetic, as our struggle with reality leads us to greater depths of understanding life and all it entails.

With a wave of his hand, the Führer signals his assent to this, but I still can tell that he is not quite in agreement with my opinion.

"Without doubt," says he, "the world today may provide some men of energy with a thrilling sensation in view of these challenges. I for my part would never have been happy living in the period from 1860 to 1914. However, these feelings apply to very few individuals, and the mass of the people simply is not interested in these problems.

"Certainly one can raise the crowd's awareness so that the people appreciate the vital interests of their Fatherland. However, this in itself does not satisfy the masses. Many people work eight hours a day, subjected to a working environment that may be most unpleasant, and in a profession they themselves did not choose. They need to have an inner drive, a feeling of happiness, that makes life bearable for them. To really improve their lot, it does not suffice merely to change the material conditions of their existence!"

Then the Führer turns to speak of the organization *Kraft durch Freude*, the purpose of which is "to spread joy among the people and teach them to enjoy themselves."

"All in all, I say, a human being ought to be understood in his soul, as in his profession, so that he can arrive at a better understanding of his essence as reflected in his work and in his personality. It is not merely a question of building each citizen a house, one also needs a light to shine inside of it."

The Chancellor continues: "The majority of people abroad seem to believe that we in Germany live under a dictatorship, without realizing that prior to 1933 there was a much greater dictatorship we suffered under. A government like ours could never remain in power without the will of the people to support it. The German Volk stands behind me because it knows that I truly care about its spiritual problems and advocate its concerns."

The Chancellor proceeds to explain what he has done for his Volk already and what he still intends to do. Returning to his comparison of past and present, he maintains that it is an extraordinarily difficult and unprecedented struggle for Germany to attain autarky. Germany is trying to extract sufficient natural resources from its own soil since it cannot obtain sufficient thereof on

the world market to meet its current needs. Foreign countries do not buy enough German products to allow for this.

Next he mentions the general distinction that was commonly made to differentiate between mental and manual labor. He correctly appraised this distinction as one that is not as easy as it may seem at first. There is mental work that is involved in physical tasks; certain mechanics and production line workers do indeed perform mental calculations as well. On the other hand, there is the bookkeeper, who considers himself to perform a mentally trying task while actually most of his work consists of automatic or mechanic routines.

Nevertheless, the Chancellor's train of thought keeps returning to that one key problem, i.e. how to go about instilling the largest social class of the Volk with a different mental approach to its daily life.

Nearly up to the present, he says, there has always been a most striking contrast between the way passengers and the way the men of the crew were accommodated on the luxury liners of the great shipping lines. On the one side, there was everything that could be desired and all sorts of refinement imaginable; on the other, neither comfort nor amenities found their way into the crews' quarters, but rather there were plenty of difficulties engendered in the daily exigencies of life and survival, not to mention those posed by the insanitary and unhealthy surroundings. All our efforts to change this had been for naught. When we demanded that the crew members be given better quarters, the ship owners simply replied that space on a liner was too expensive to accommodate our wishes. When we demanded that there ought to be a deck reserved for the crewmen, where they might catch a breath of fresh air, we received the reply that this posed construction problems that had not yet been resolved by the engineers.

"Today the cabins of the crew members are decent ones. There is a deck at their disposal, equipped with good lounge chairs, with radios for entertainment. Further, there is a saloon where they can dine with the warrant officer—and all these improvements were not that expensive—one just had to will them."

The Führer then turns his attention to the motor vehicle. As he states, the number of cars on German roads is persistently on the rise. He spoke of voyages that workers today can undertake to Madeira or the Canary Islands, or to the island of Rügen, where a beach with a yearly capacity of between 800,000 and 900,000 visitors is being constructed. In this manner, amenities that previously had been reserved for a small and exclusive group are now accessible to the general public. This way the fuel for jealousy is cut back significantly. In Berlin, an enormous luxury hotel is under construction. But at the same time and on the same street, a house for the *Kraft durch Freude* organization will be built, designed to bring light into the lives of the common people.

According to the Führer, it is not a question of taking much from a few but rather of giving a little to the many. The Chancellor speaks in a calm and composed manner, with few pauses. His face is drawn, perhaps because of the gravity of the concerns of which he speaks.

In Berlin on May 25, Hitler participated in a meeting of the Reich Military Research and Development Council, presided over by Artillery General Becker.¹¹⁹ In the course of the next two days, Hitler received two groups of military men as his guests. First, on May 26 he received a group of Japanese naval officers headed by Rear Admiral Kobayashi. The following day, a delegation of naval officers from Argentina led by Rear Admiral Scasso came to call on Hitler at the Chancellery.¹²⁰

On May 29, Hitler had the German Chargé d’Affaires in Rome present an extraordinarily pointed note to the Vatican. Already at the May 1 rally, Hitler had spoken against various encyclicals in an uncharacteristic manner. After a speech by the American Cardinal Mundelein, Hitler seized upon the opportunity to declare “the further conduct of normal diplomatic relations between the German Government and the Curia as being impossible.”

Nevertheless, Hitler’s note did not elicit any reproof nor did it carry with it any consequences. Its text read verbatim:¹²¹

The German Ambassador has recently had to bring before the Holy See remonstrances concerning Cardinal Mundelein, who, in front of a congregation of five hundred priests in the Chicago Archdiocese, has referred to the German Head of State, members of the Reich Government, and to certain church-political happenings in Germany, in a most insulting manner. In particular, the German Ambassador expressed his great displeasure that a prelate of such standing as Cardinal Mundelein would debase himself to decrying the German Head of State in such unqualified a manner. Hereupon the German Ambassador to the Holy See was presented with an oral reply, which was later verified by a written response, to which I replied in the following manner in the name of my Government:

The German Reich Government based its approach to the dispatch issued to its Ambassador in Rome, who completed his task in this spirit, on the premise that, in the interest of the relations between Germany and the Vatican, no one should have a greater interest than the Holy See in discouraging injury, such as has been inflicted upon the relations between Germany and the Curia by the base assaults launched by the Cardinal upon the German Head of State.

The German Reich Government had held it to be self-evident that the Holy See would wish to distance itself from the unfortunate remarks of the Cardinal, correct these, and express its regret over the incident. This has at all times been the custom in the conduct of international relations. To the great consternation and displeasure of the German Government, the Holy See has evidently deemed it appropriate to reply with the completely unsubstantiated and incorrect remark—which is all the more conspicuous—that the Cardinal had at most returned like with like.

Obviously, this was a pretext in order not to have to reply to the note presented by the German Ambassador. The German Reich Government has

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hence reached the conclusion that the Holy See has done nothing to amend the unqualified and public defamation, by one of its Curia's most distinguished members, of the person of the German Head of State, which in the eyes of the world must appear as though it approved of it.

The Holy See must realize that, as long as there is no remedy of the situation, its unexpected and incomprehensible demeanor in this issue has made the further conduct of normal diplomatic relations between the German Government and the Curia impossible. The Curia bears sole responsibility for this development.

On May 29, Hitler also delivered an address on the occasion of a commemorative meeting of the "National Club of 1919."¹²²

The next day, Hitler attended the opening of an exhibition of the Reich Food Estate (*Reichsnährstand*) in Munich. During the ceremony, Hitler received notice of an incident in Spanish coastal waters. The night before, a fighter plane of the Spanish government troops had dropped two bombs on the German armored ship *Deutschland*, at Ibiza. There had been both casualties and numerous injured among the crew. Immediately Hitler called the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral General Raeder, to Munich. In addition, a declaration was published in the name of the Reich Government:¹²³

Berlin, May 30, 1937

After Red airplanes bombed British, German, and Italian ships lying in the harbor of Majorca a few days ago and killed six officers on an Italian ship, German ships were forbidden to remain in the harbor any longer. On Saturday, May 29, 1937, the pocket battleship *Deutschland* was lying in the roadstead of Ibiza. The ship belongs to the forces assigned to the international sea patrol. In spite of this, the pocket battleship was suddenly bombed between 6.00 and 7.00 p.m. by two planes of the Red Valencia Government¹²⁴ in a gliding attack. Since the ship was off duty, the crew was in the unprotected crew's quarters forward. One of the Red bombs hit in the midst of the enlisted men's mess, just as in the recent attack on the Italian ship the officers' mess was hit. The result of this criminal attack was that 20 were killed and 73 wounded.¹²⁵ A second bomb hit the side deck but caused only slight damage there. The ship, which is fully operative, sailed to Gibraltar to put the wounded ashore. The ship had not fired on the airplanes.

Since the Red Valencia Government was twice warned by the Non-Intervention Committee and the German Government against further attacks on the ships engaged in the international patrol, this new criminal attack on the German ship compels the German Government to take measures of which it will immediately inform the Non-Intervention Committee.

Neurath

Precisely which "measures" ought to be taken next, was the topic of Hitler's conference with Admiral Raeder in Munich. After returning

to Berlin around 6:30 p.m., it again was the chief concern discussed with von Blomberg, Neurath and Raeder in the Chancellery. From 8:00 p.m. on, they were joined by Göring, who had been brought in with a special plane from Weimar. On May 31, the result of these talks was presented to the world in form of this official German press release:¹²⁶

In retribution for the criminal attack performed by Red bombers on the armored ship *Deutschland*, which was peacefully lying at anchor, the German Naval Forces have in the small hours of this day shelled the fortified seaport of Almería.¹²⁷ Once the port facilities had been destroyed and the hostile Red batteries had been silenced, the retaliatory action was discontinued and the enterprise terminated.

As is officially noted further, additional ships of the German Navy will immediately be put to sea to strengthen our forces in the Spanish waters.

Contrary to the announcement, Hitler did not report these reprisals to the Non-Intervention Committee, but had his representative there present the Committee with the following "Decision of the Reich Government":¹²⁸

The Reich Government will no longer participate in the control system nor will it contribute to the work of the Non-Intervention Committee, unless it is provided with the assurance that incidents of the kind just experienced will not be repeated. As a matter of course, the Reich Government reserves for itself the decision on what measures will have to be taken toward the Red powers in response to this most malicious attack. As long as the situation stands unresolved, the Government, in addition, has instructed its warships in Spanish waters to employ force to ward off any Red Spanish warship and plane approaching them.

From the standpoint of a strict interpretation of international law, Hitler's order to fire upon the seaport of Almería was still within the limits of legality. However, even such actions of retribution against supposedly guilty parties meet with universal disapproval because they violate the same principles as does the shooting of hostages. Italy had not resorted to a reprisal akin to the German shelling of Almería despite the fact that, as mentioned in the May 30 official German note, Italian officers had been killed in a similar incident.

Hitler's blatant display of brutality in this incident portended the cruelty of his wartime reactions. This was precisely the message Hitler wished to convey to the Western Powers. The incident was intended as a foretaste of what lay in store for them if they dared to oppose him. Notwithstanding his firm conviction that such actions would instill terror in the Anglo-Saxon Powers, they were not impressed by his show

of force. This tactic failed him in this instance, exactly as it would in the course of the Second World War.

In Berlin on June 2, Hitler delivered a ‘secret speech’ to the high-ranking Führerkorps of the Party. He enumerated various foreign policy concerns, discussed economic problems, and spoke on the topic of “spiritual and cultural foundations of the Party.”¹²⁹ That same day, he received a delegation of participants in the Eleventh International Congress on Tourism, to whom he related the international significance of travel.¹³⁰ Two days later, Hitler sent Franco a telegram expressing his sorrow over the death of the Spanish general Mola.¹³¹

On June 6, Hitler honored the Gau Party Congress of the Bavarian Ostmark¹³² with his presence at its meeting in Regensburg. That day he also placed a wreath before a bust of Anton Bruckner, which had recently been dedicated in the *Walhalla* (hall of fame). Hitler gave a short address in appreciation of this deed at an official reception in the City Hall in Regensburg.¹³³

At 4:00 p.m., the Führer again spoke at a mass rally, attended by 200,000 men and women.¹³⁴ Once again he lashed out at Germany’s past in a “party narrative:”

For us there was the hard choice: either-or! Either relinquishing claim to the remnants of a bad past, remnants that had become as ridiculous as they were harmful—or relinquishing claim to the future of Germany. We would rather relinquish claim to the past and fight for a future!

You are standing here in an ancient German city in which a King once erected the Walhalla with the bequest to unite in it all great German men of our history and hence lend expression to the German Volk’s indissoluble bond of blood. We believe that today we have practically accomplished our primary task of creating one Volk; before us stands a goal, and this goal has hypnotized us. It is under the spell of this goal that we march on! Let he who stands in our way not complain if, sooner or later, the march of a nation sweeps over him.

He then explained the economic policy pursued by the National Socialists in the course of the previous years.

We have not practiced a policy of using cheap popular phrases. We have divested money of its phantom-like traits and assigned to it the role it deserves: neither gold nor foreign exchange funds, but work alone is the foundation for money! There is no such thing as an increase in wages if it does not go hand in hand with an increase in production. This economic insight has enabled us to decimate seven million unemployed to approximately 800,000 and to keep prices almost completely stable for all essential vital goods. Today there is work going on everywhere. The peasant is tilling his fields, the worker

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is supplying him with manufactured products, an entire nation is working. Things are looking up!

Taking a stance on both the Ibiza and Almería incidents in Spain, Hitler expounded:

The German Volk is not a Volk that suddenly starts a war today or tomorrow. The German is not only peaceful and peace-loving in his entire being, but above all peaceable. He wants to work.

In our country there are millions of peasants who want to till their fields and harvest their crops; millions of workers want to pursue their work. This Volk does not want to quarrel, but it equally does not want others to look for a quarrel with it. It wants only its right to live—though, mind you, it does not stand for insult or attack from just anyone who comes along. And to anyone who believes that, since the German Volk is so peace-loving, he can drop bombs on German ships underway on international assignments, we will demonstrate that we know how to defend ourselves.

Then Hitler launched an attack on all those who maintained that the German armament policy would spell ruin for its economy,¹³⁵ declaring that: “The German shall wear his steel helmet!”

It is for the protection of our liberty and hence our honor that we have built up this grand, new German Wehrmacht. German man, you no longer need to bow your head; you once again have equal rights and can walk proudly in this world with your head held high. For you know: no one will touch you without the entire Volk coming to your rescue! This equality of rights also constitutes the single prerequisite for the effectiveness of our immeasurable economic labor: would anyone work at all for an economy if he could not be certain that the fruits of his labors can neither be stolen from him nor reduced? Would anyone give thought to the future of financial projects if he lacked the security only liberty can vest in a Volk? There would be no financial enterprise were not the steel shield of the nation’s armor held above it!

If anyone tells us we will not be able to wear it in a short time, may he take note: the German shall wear his steel helmet! In any case as long as the others are able to wear it! Yet should ever the time come when the helmets must truly be removed, we will remove ours, too, with honor—but always be prepared, if necessary, to put them back on our heads immediately. I believe this is absolutely the best way to ultimately promote the cause of peace.

Only a few days ago I was happy to hear from the lips of an English statesman that Great Britain would only be in a position to enforce peace, if a large stock of arms were placed at its disposal. That is also my opinion with respect to Germany.

In scarcely four years, we have dismantled piece by piece the Treaty that was thrust upon us and brought the greatest disgrace upon our Volk; we have liberated the nation and restored to it all the qualities that characterize a free people and a free nation.

The last part of the speech reflected Hitler's personal preoccupation with questions of a religious nature that year. For the first time, Hitler himself employed the term *Gottgläubigkeit* (belief in God), evidently in order to indicate that in the future he, too, could be counted among the adherents of this confession.¹³⁶

I will never allow anyone to ever again tear this Volk asunder, to reduce it to a heap of warring religious camps.

We have gone through enough in German history and need not undergo any more such experiences. They have been the sorriest experiences ever. Once our Volk numbered 18.5 million people; after a thirty years' war, a mere 3.6 million were left.¹³⁷ It is my belief that some of those who are dissatisfied with the fact that we have finally created one Volk will attempt to reestablish that situation in Germany, but this attempt, too, will fail: they will never, ever destroy the German Volk and the German Reich. [—]

Generation after generation of our Volk will march on thus in our history, with this banner always in mind, this banner that places us under an obligation to our Volk, its honor, its freedom, and our community—to our truly National Socialist fraternity. They will then consider it only natural that this German Volk takes but the one path Providence has bade it take by giving these people a common language. We, therefore, go our way into the future with the deepest belief in God (*Gottgläubigkeit*). Would all we have achieved been possible had Providence not helped us? I know that the fruits of human labor are hard-won and transitory if they are not blessed by the Omnipotent (*Allmacht*). Work such as ours which has received the blessings of the Omnipotent can never again be undone by mere mortals. As long as the pillars of the Movement hold this banner fast in their grip, there is not an enemy alive, no matter how powerful, who will ever be able to wrest it from our grasp.

Obviously, Hitler already had arrived at a belief in the divine origin of the Reich he had created. Hence, the empire could not be destroyed by mere mortals. This nascent conviction can be read even more clearly between the lines of his speech in Würzburg on June 27.

On June 13, the Chinese Minister of Finance, H. H. Kung, paid his respects to the Führer at the Chancellery, during a stay in Berlin.¹³⁸

Three days later, an assemblage of 1,300 Italian Youth Leaders—both male and female—marched up the Wilhelmsplatz in front of the Chancellery. Hitler addressed them in the speech below:¹³⁹

Young Italian Comrades!

It is a pleasure for me to greet you today on this square in Berlin. You are paying a visit to a Reich governed by the same principles and ideas which govern your own country. Italy and Germany have sought, under similar circumstances, to find a way—and they found it: a way leading out of national weakness and onward to national power, strength and hence, as we know, to national rights.

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On your trip through Germany, you will sense how strongly these same ideas are expressed in the feelings of friendship and affection here. German comrades have brought these same impressions of Italy back to their homeland before you. Italy and Germany are filled with the conviction that the two pillars of this idea do not stand isolated in the world, that these ideals have found a home not only in these two states, but proceeding from them also hold attraction for other countries and peoples.

Above all, together we are guided in this age by the same defense against one of the greatest perils to the world there is: against Bolshevism.

It makes us feel fortunate to know that Italy, too, is standing by as we are, a country in full panoply, and that this people has now dispatched its youth to Berlin as its representatives. Just as the German Volk is proud of and pleased with its youth, the Italian people, too, can be proud of and pleased with its youth! That, too, is something which links us: a youth that has ideals and is prepared to live for these ideals and, if necessary, to die for them, too! Knowing this makes us proud.

There is no way I can better welcome you to this city and hence to the German Reich than by telling you: millions upon millions see in you the young representatives of a nation we call our friend. *Heil Euch!*

At 11:00 a.m. on June 17, Hitler attended the ceremony in Wilhelmshaven to mourn the dead of the armored ship *Deutschland*. Already on June 1, he had ordered both their remains and the ship to be returned to Germany. In the afternoon of June 17, Hitler also inspected the prostrate ship at the Wilhelmshaven shipyard.¹⁴⁰

The news that Spanish submarines had assaulted the German cruiser *Leipzig* reached Hitler on June 18, while he was at the Rheinhôtel Dreesen in Bad Godesberg.¹⁴¹ As a result, he returned to Berlin early that night. According to Hitler's account of the events in his June 27 speech in Würzburg, the *Leipzig* had been torpedoed four times. It is not clear whether this was indeed the case. In any event, this incident provided a pretext for Hitler to permanently withdraw from the Non-Intervention Committee. Germany had returned to this body as recently as June 12. Hitler's disdain for this international agency had persisted since, in his opinion, like all international organizations, it served only to restrict his freedom of action.

When Franco captured the city of Bilbao on June 20, Hitler sent him a congratulatory note, lauding this accomplishment.¹⁴² That same day the State Secretary to the Foreign Office, von Bülow,¹⁴³ died of pneumonia at the age of fifty-two. Hitler wired von Bülow's mother the following telegram:¹⁴⁴

Frau von Bülow, Berlin, Elisabeth Hospital

Please accept my sincere sympathy on the great loss which you, Madam,

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and your daughters have suffered as a result of the unexpected death of your son, the highly revered State Secretary von Bülow.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler also expressed his sorrow at the demise of von Bülow in a telegram of condolence to the Reich Foreign Minister.¹⁴⁵

I extend my sincere sympathy to you, Herr Reich Minister, and to the staff of the Foreign Office on the occasion of the great loss which the Foreign Office has suffered as a result of the death of its State Secretary, Herr von Bülow. The excellent capabilities of the departed and his great personal worth ensure that his memory shall be a lasting and an honorable one.

Adolf Hitler

That same day, Hitler ordered a state funeral in Munich for the late Abbot Schachleitner. Aside from this, Hitler also exchanged telegrams with the Fourth Convention of the Nordic Society, meeting in Lübeck.¹⁴⁶

The Reichsautobahn segment connecting Dresden and Meerane opened for traffic three days later, on June 23. Hitler spoke before the road construction workers there. He lavished praise on them, his laudation carrying him to the point of blatant exaggeration:¹⁴⁷

Of this we are most proud: that in this enormous Reich, we pave the way for any able-minded person—no matter what his background—to the highest positions, provided only that he is capable, energetic, industrious, and determined.

Furthermore, I did not doubt for a second that we would find workers to build the Reich Autobahn network. I know that the work on the Reich Autobahn in all weathers, in blizzards and the blazing sun, is no easy job. Yet the work of our Volksgenossen is difficult everywhere: the miner who toils many hundreds of meters below the surface, and the peasant who slaves away his summers in the fields for twelve or fourteen hours. If we want to survive with our 137 people per square kilometer, we will simply have to make more of an effort than those who occupy a square kilometer with only ten or twelve persons. The German must wring what he can from his barren soil. Therefore, our problems are graver than those in other countries. Yet there is no better worker in the whole world than the German.

Hence we are building roads with the German worker that are nowhere else to be found. Today we can once more witness how this work is progressing. Every year a further 1,000 kilometers are delivered up, and in seven years we will have completed our first portion.

You can all be proud of the fact that you have had a part in accomplishing this task, whether as engineers or as laborers. In it, you are creating a work which will stand even after a thousand years have passed. It is a work which will bear witness to yourselves, even if not as much as a speck of your dust will still exist on this planet. These roads will live on. It is magnificent and

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wonderful to live in such an age and be able to take part in such a work. In the future, every single German will come to profit from this work, just as was the case with the railroad. In the space of but a few decades, these roads will witness a vast amount of traffic in which the entire Volk will figure. Millions of our Volkswagens, the large busses of our KdF excursions, and the huge volume of long-distance traffic and tourists will roll along these roads.

In the evening, at the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Hitler attended Puccini's *La Bohème* performed by the ensemble of the Milan Scala.¹⁴⁸

On June 26 and 27, the *Reichskriegertag* (Reich Warriors' Convention) took place in Kassel upon the initiative of the Federation of German Veterans' Associations (Kyffhäuserbund). Its Bundesführer, SS Gruppenführer and retired Colonel Reinhardt, extended his greetings to Hitler in a telegram, to which he received the below response:¹⁴⁹

I wish to express my gratitude for the report on the opening of the 1937 German Reich Warriors' Convention and the greetings relayed to me by wire. I hail the old comrades from the front and the soldiers of the Old Army gathered here for the Reich Warriors' Convention in comradely closeness, and I wish to warmly welcome to Germany the foreign front-line soldiers who are attending this rally as guests. It is my sincere desire that your gathering, so infused with soldierly spirit, may contribute to the mutual understanding of front-line soldiers throughout the world and thus constitute your contribution to peace.

Adolf Hitler

At the celebration of the Gau Party Congress of Mainfranken,¹⁵⁰ Hitler spoke at a mass rally on the square in front of the Würzburg Residenz on June 27. In the course of the "party narrative," Hitler called the National Socialist Revolution one of the most ingenious and important of all times. According to him, the Revolution had never transgressed the boundaries of legality.

Hence a new Volk was born—painfully, just as everything which is born can only be born in pain. Yet I believe that we can say, as history is our witness, that in no other case in history was this painful process carried out more intelligently, more reasonably, more cautiously, and with more feeling than here.

The future will one day describe this process as one of the most intelligent—and I may say so myself—one of the most brilliant ever to take place. As one of the most tremendous revolutions ever, the course of which did not abandon the premise of unconditional legality for a single second.

Hitler then proceeded to use the incidents in Spain to again vent his anger at international organizations.

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It is the sole desire of National Socialist Germany, while preserving its own rights, to live in peace and enter into friendly cooperation with its environment as a whole. However, we do have reason to doubt the effectiveness of certain international promises or warranties. I have attempted to test the effectiveness of such international agreements in practice in a particular case. You know that only recently Marxist-Bolshevist criminals launched a treacherous attack and bombed a German ship, which cost us thirty-one dead and seventy-three injured. At that time I resolved to immediately relay to those gentlemen of Valencia that specific warning which is, in my opinion, the sole effective way to call such criminals to order and bring home to them that the times when the German nation was treated as such are over and done with once and for all.

Then came the objection that this would be a completely unjustified course of action. In our modern times, the correct thing to do in respect to such measures would be to approach those institutions which presently endeavor everywhere to divest the individual nations of defending their own interests and place this in collective hands.

I complied with this request, and we went back to the Control Commission with the good intention and sincere hope that such plans would now be put into practice. As a result of our declaration that from now on we would fire at any approaching Red aircraft and ocean-going vessels, the Bolshevist criminals were no longer able to attack by sea; therefore the Bolshevist rulers have now gone under water and launched four torpedo attacks on the *Leipzig*. We had expected that international solidarity would initiate collective and mutual action to protect the peace. But you yourselves have seen what happened: commissions were to be formed for the purpose of investigating whether, etc. We had demanded only that the rulers in Valencia be shown—by means of a mutual demonstration of all participating control powers—that they are no longer dealing with a single power only, but with all the powers. And even this modest measure was no longer practicable. This is an indication of what we Germans would have to expect were we ever to deliver the fate of the Reich into the hands of those types of institutions or such agreements. That is one thing of which London may be certain: the experiences we have gained this time are a lesson we will never again forget! From now on we will opt instead to take into our own hands the freedom, the independence, the honor, and the security of the nation and protect ourselves! And thank God today we are in fact strong enough to be able to protect ourselves!

The conclusions we have drawn from this incident will apply for all time to come. In the future, we will no longer be obfuscated by empty promises in parliaments or from the lips of statesmen. We have experienced one attack, seen how it was handled, and have thereby been cured forever!

I did what anyone must have done as his duty. We gave it a try, and today no one in the world can claim that we are in any way maliciously prejudiced against collective agreements.

No! Had this collective agreement of June 12 proved useful, one might have considered continuing nonetheless. But now that even this most minimal agreement has proven unworkable in practice, it should be a warning

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to us not to one day experience a similar disappointment yet again in what might be a worse case.

Any cat can burn its paws once, and every human being makes mistakes, but only fools make the same mistake twice!

Neither I nor the German nation have any desire to expose ourselves to that kind of danger again.

Then Hitler spoke of domestic fault-finders and carpers, declaring:

The coming generation—this I can predict to all the former destroyers of the consolidation of the German Volk—is something they will not get! To those carpers who ask, “Who do you think you are to make predictions like that?” [I say:¹⁵¹ Who was I to predict as a soldier in 1919 that I would create a movement that would one day conquer Germany? Who was I to believe in 1933 that we would come to power, that we would rescue Germany once more, that we would rebuild our Wehrmacht, make the economy function, eliminate the individual parties? I was the one who did so because I believed in us! We German National Socialists believe in nothing on this earth—besides our Lord God in heaven—except our German Volk.

What then followed was a type of religious credo, to which Hitler recently had pledged his allegiance. He expressed the essence of his new-found belief with the assertion that his activities in the past five years had not been “the work of man alone.” Rather these years had proved the existence of a supreme being, acting through him. How else, he argued, would he have been capable of navigating the “dizzying paths” to which Fate had led him.

And I can tell those doubters something else, too, namely, that I am well aware of what a human being can accomplish and where his limits lie, but it is my conviction that the human beings God created also wish to lead their lives modeled after the will of the Almighty.

God did not create the peoples so that they might deliver themselves up to foolishness and be pulped soft and ruined by it, but that they might preserve themselves as He created them! Because we support their preservation in their original, God-given form, we believe our actions correspond to the will of the Almighty.

As weak as the individual may ultimately be in his character and actions as a whole, when compared to Almighty Providence and its will, he becomes just as infinitely strong the instant he acts in accordance with this Providence. Then there will rain upon him the power that has distinguished all great phenomena of this world. And when I look back on the five years behind us, I cannot help but say: this has not been the work of man alone. Had Providence not guided us, I surely would often have been unable to follow these dizzying paths. That is something our critics above all should know. At the bottom of our hearts, we National Socialists are devout! We have no choice: no one can make national or world history if his deeds and abilities are not blessed by Providence.

Toward the end of his address, Hitler spoke of the “resurrection of an entire nation,” which was visible on a reduced scale in the city of Würzburg. It was the third time Hitler had spoken there since 1932, although he had never particularly liked the town. Ignoring the official reception which had been prepared at the City Hall, he abruptly returned to his car and proceeded to the military airport on the outskirts of town.

Back in the Chancellery on June 28, Hitler delivered a short address to a delegation of representatives of the International Chamber of Commerce, which had been convening at the German Opera House.

On July 13, Hitler honored his old Munich party comrade, Frau Carola Hoffmann, with a visit on her eightieth birthday.¹⁵² The next day, talks took place in preparation for the “Day of German Art,” which was to be held in Munich on July 18. Numerous activities were scheduled for that day, such as a procession through town depicting “2,000 years of German culture.”¹⁵³ In the presence of the Führer, a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in the Munich National Theater opened the festivities.¹⁵⁴ The dedication of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in the Prinzregentenstrasse took place on July 19. Hitler had laid the cornerstone there in 1933. The new building was to serve as a replacement for the old “Glass Palace,” which had been an art gallery located at the old Botanical Garden. In former times, art collections had been exhibited in the building until it had been completely destroyed by a fire in 1931. The opening of an art exhibition complemented the dedication of the new building. Another exhibition, entitled *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerated Art), was on display at the same time.

On this occasion, Hitler gave a “culture speech”¹⁵⁵ that was markedly more interesting than his annual “lectures” on the subject, which he delivered at the Party Congresses. Speaking in a building, the construction of which he himself had directed and architecturally influenced, Hitler found inspiration for an unprecedented succinct articulation of his ideas on art. The concepts he expressed in his speech revealed that Hitler’s understanding of art was steeped in the bourgeois mentality of the 19th century. His speech also demonstrated more clearly than ever his determination to see his opinions on the subject prevail—even if coercion was necessary to that end. The “party narrative” on this occasion included a lengthy description of the “decadence of civilization,” which had emerged in the times of the Weimar Republic:

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Thus at this time I would like to make the following observation: Before National Socialism acceded to power, there was a so-called "modern" art in Germany, i.e., just as the word itself indicates, a new art every year. National Socialist Germany, in contrast, wishes to re-establish a "German art," and this art shall and will be eternal, just as is every other creative merit of a people. If it lacks such eternal merit for our Volk, then it is today without significant merit as well.

When the cornerstone was laid for this building, it marked the beginning of construction of a temple not for a so-called modern, but for a genuine and eternal German art—or better: a building for the art of the German Volk and not for some international art of 1937, '40, '50, or '60. For art is not established in terms of a time, but only in terms of peoples. Thus the artist does not so much erect a memorial to a time, but rather to his people. For time is something changeable: the years come and go. Whatever would exist only within a certain time would have to be as transient as time itself. And not only what was accomplished before our time would fall prey to this transience; it would also encompass what is being accomplished today or will be shaped at some future time.

We National Socialists acknowledge only one type of transience, and that is the transience of the Volk itself. We know the reasons. As long as a Volk prevails, it constitutes the calming influence in the world of fleeting phenomena. It is that which is abiding and permanent! And hence art, too, as the characteristic feature of this abiding, constitutes an immortal monument, itself abiding and permanent, and thus there is no such criterion as yesterday and today, or modern and out of date; instead, there is but the single criterion of "worthless" or "valuable," and hence "immortal" or "transient." And this immortality lies anchored in the life of the peoples as long as these themselves are immortal, i.e. prevail. [—]

The question has often been asked what it really means "to be German." Among all the definitions which have been put forth by so many men throughout the centuries, there is one I find most fitting; one which makes no attempt whatsoever to provide any basic explanation, but instead simply states a law. The most marvelous law I can imagine as the lifelong task for my Volk in this world is one a great German once expressed as: "To be German means to be clear!" Yet that would signify that to be German means to be logical and above all to be true.

A splendid law—yet also one that puts every individual under an obligation to subordinate himself to it and thus abide by it. Taking this law as a starting-point, we will arrive at a universally applicable criterion for the correct character of our art, because it will correspond to the life-governing law of our Volk.

A deep-felt, inner yearning for such a true German art bearing the marks of this law of clarity has always been alive in our Volk. It inspired our great painters, our sculptors, those who have designed our architecture, our thinkers and poets, and perhaps above all our musicians. On that fateful sixth of June, 1931, when the old Glass Palace went up in flames, an immortal treasure of truly German art perished with it in the fire. They were called

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“Romantics” and yet were the most splendid representatives of that German search for the real and true character of our Volk and for a sincere and decent expression of this inwardly-sensed law of life.

What was decisive in characterizing the German being was not only the choice of subject matter they portrayed, but also their clear and simple way of rendering these sentiments.

And thus it is no coincidence that these masters were closest to the most German—and hence most natural—part of our Volk. These masters were and remain immortal, even today when many of their works no longer exist in the original but have been preserved only as copies or reproductions. Yet how far removed were the deeds and works of these men from that pitiful marketing of so many of our so-called modern “creative artists,” from their unnatural smearing and dabbling which could only be cultivated, sponsored and approved of by the doings of characterless and unscrupulous men of letters and which were always completely alien—and in fact detestable—to the German Volk with its sound instincts?

Our German Romantics of yore had not the slightest intention of being or wanting to be ancient or even modern. Feeling and sensing as Germans, they naturally assumed their works would correspondingly be valued permanently—corresponding to the lifetime of the German Volk.

After further statements on the topic, Hitler expressed his great satisfaction that he had erected the building, not his political opponents:

In 1931, the National Socialist takeover was still so far off in the distant future that there was scarcely a chance to provide for the construction of a new exhibition palace for the Third Reich.

In fact, for a while it did seem as though the “men of November” would provide an edifice for the exhibition of art in Munich which would have had as little to do with German art as it, conversely, reflected the Bolshevik affairs and circumstances of their time. Many of you perhaps still recall the plans for that building which was intended for the old Botanical Garden which has now been given such a beautiful design. A building quite difficult to define. An edifice which could just as easily have been a Saxon thread factory as the market hall of a mid-sized city—or perhaps a train station, or then again even an indoor swimming pool. I need not press upon you how I suffered at the thought back then that the first misfortune would be followed by yet another. And that therefore, in this case in particular, I was truly glad, really happy about the fainthearted lack of determination on the part of my political opponents at the time. In it lay perhaps the only chance of maybe ultimately saving the erection of a palace for art exhibitions in Munich to become the first great undertaking of the Third Reich.

Thereafter, Hitler eulogized the late architect Professor Troost:

Now, you will all understand that I am presently filled with truly painful concern that Providence has not allowed us to witness this day with that man

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who, as one of the greatest German architects, drew up the plans for this work immediately after the takeover.

When I approached Professor Ludwig Troost, who was already working on the Party buildings at that time, with the request to erect an edifice for exhibiting art on this square, that exceptional man had already produced a number of grandly-conceived sketches for such an edifice—corresponding to the specifications given at the time—on the site of the old Botanical Garden. And these plans, too, revealed his masterful skill!

He nonetheless did not even send these plans to the jury as part of the competition—for the sole reason, as he bitterly confessed to me, that he was convinced it would have been a completely futile endeavor to submit such work to a forum which regarded all sublime and decent art as detestable, and whose sole aim and ultimate purpose was the Bolshevization—in other words, the chaotic infiltration—of our entire German and hence cultural life. Thus the public never became aware of these plans at all. Later it did come to know the new draft which now stands consummated before you.

And this new concept of building—you will all have to concede this today—is a truly great and artistic success. This edifice is so unique and so original that it cannot be compared to anything else.

There is no such thing as a building of which one could say that it is the original, and this here is the copy. As all truly great creative works of architecture, this building is unique and memorable; not only will it remain, in its originality, in everyone's memory—moreover, it is in itself a symbol, yes, I might even say it is a true monument to this city and above and beyond that to German art.

At the same time, this masterpiece is great in beauty and practical in its design and features, without allowing any utilitarian technical requirements to dominate the work as a whole. It is a temple of art, not a factory, not a district heating plant, not a train station, and not an electric reversing plant!

This great and unique artistic structure matches the specifications and the site itself; moreover, the precious materials used and the painstakingly exact execution do so as well. I am talking about the careful execution which is part of the great school of that departed master who wanted this building not to be a market place for artistic goods but rather a temple of art. And it has been in accordance with his wishes that his successor, Professor Gall, has loyally adhered to this legacy and brilliantly continued construction, advised and accompanied by a woman who has a proud right not only to bear the name but also the title of her husband.¹⁵⁶

Master builder Heiger later became the third to join the group. Its plans have now been carried out and completed by the industriousness and artistry of German workers and craftsmen.

Hence an edifice has been built which is worthy of providing the highest accomplishments of art the opportunity to show themselves to the German Volk. And therefore the construction of this building shall also mark a turning point, putting an end to the chaotic architectural bungling of the past. This is one of the first new buildings to take its fitting place among the immortal achievements in the history of German art-life.

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Next Hitler's attention turned to the first art exhibition in the new building. He called the event a change which marked the end of art's deterioration and the beginning of its heyday.

You will, however, understand that it cannot suffice to donate this building to the German fine arts, this building that is so decent, clear-cut and genuine that we can rightly call it a Haus der Deutschen Kunst; the exhibition itself must now work toward bringing about a change from the deterioration we have witnessed in art, sculpture and painting.

When I presume at this time to pass judgment, to voice my views and to take action corresponding to these insights, I am claiming the right to do so not only because of my attitude toward German art as such, but above all because of the contribution I myself have made to the restoration of German art. For it was this modern state—which I won over and organized with my fellow fighters in a long and difficult struggle against a world of adversaries—that has provided the great basis upon which German art can blossom new and strong.

It has not been Bolshevik art collectors and their literary henchmen who have laid the foundations for the establishment of a new art or even ensured that art can survive in Germany; we have been the ones, we who breathed life into this state and have been allocating immense sums to German art ever since, funds it needs to ensure its survival and its work, and above all: we are the ones because we ourselves have assigned to art new and great tasks.

Had I accomplished nothing else in my life but this one structure here, I would already have done more for German art than all the ludicrous scribblers in our former Jewish newspapers or the petty art-dabblers (*Kunstkleckser*) who, anticipating their own transience, have nothing to recommend themselves but their own praise of the modernity of their creations.

Yet I know that, quite independent of this new work, the new German Reich will bring about a tremendous blossoming in German art, for never before has it been assigned more gigantic tasks than is the case in this Reich today and will be the case in the future. And never before have the funds thus required been appropriated more generously than in National Socialist Germany.

Yet when I speak before you here today, I am also speaking as the representative of this Reich, and just as I believe in the eternity of this Reich—which is to be nothing other than the living organism comprised of our Volk—I am likewise capable only of believing in and hence working on and for an eternal German art.

The art of this new Reich therefore cannot be gauged by the standards of ancient or modern; rather, as German art, it will have to secure its immortality in our history.

The fact is, art is not a fashion. Just as the essence and blood of our Volk does not change, so must art, too, dispose of its transient character in order to embody instead in its constantly improving creations a graphic and worthy expression of our Volk's course of life. Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism,

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Impressionism, etc. have nothing to do with our German Volk. For all these terms are neither ancient nor are they modern: they are merely the affected stuttering of people from whom God has withheld the grace of a truly artistic talent and instead whom He endowed with an ability to talk rubbish and to deceive.

After Hitler had asserted his expertise and expounded his opinions in this matter, he proclaimed his “inalterable decision” to wipe out the so-called modern art.

Therefore I wish to pledge a vow in this hour that it is my inalterable decision to now purge—just as I have the field of political confusion—the life of German art of phraseology. “Works of art” which cannot be understood in and of themselves but require, as justification for their existence, a bombastic set of instructions as to how to finally discover that shy creature who would patiently accept such stupid or insulting nonsense will from now on no longer find their way to the German Volk!

All these catchwords such as, “inner experience,” “strong cast of mind,” “powerful intention,” “promising sensation,” “heroic attitude,” “sympathetic significance,” “time experienced as order,” “primal crudeness,” etc.—all these stupid, false excuses, phrases and prattles will no longer be able to absolve or even recommend themselves for products that show no talent and are hence merely worthless.

If a person has a powerful intention or an inner experience, let him prove it in his work and not in driveling phrases.

Basically, we are all much less interested in so-called intention than in ability. Hence an artist who anticipates exhibiting his work in this building or playing any public role whatsoever in tomorrow’s Germany must have ability. The intention goes without saying from the very onset!

It would be absolutely unthinkable for a person to pester his fellow citizens with works with which he ultimately pursues no aim at all. When these drivellers attempt to make their works attractive by presenting them as the expression of a new age, they must be told that it is not art which creates new times; rather the peoples’ life in general takes on a new shape and therefore frequently attempts to find a new form of expression. Yet those who have been talking about a new art in Germany in the past decades have not understood the new German age. For a new epoch is not shaped by litterateurs but by the fighters, i.e. by those contemporaries who truly shape and lead peoples and hence make history.

These pitiful, muddled artists and scribblers can hardly be deemed as belonging to this group. Furthermore, it is either an insolent affront or a nearly inconceivable stupidity to present works, above all in an age such as ours, which could have been done ten or twenty thousand years ago by a Stone-Age man.

They talk about the primitive nature of art—and completely ignore the fact that it is not the task of art to detach itself backwards from the evolution of a Volk; instead, its task can only be to symbolize the living evolution.

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Subsequent to further offensive remarks, Hitler declared:

The opening of this exhibition marks the beginning of the end of German infatuation with art (*Kunstvernarrung*) and with it the destruction of our Volk's culture. From now on we will wage a ruthless war to eradicate the last few elements that are subverting our culture.

After directing a few cordial phrases to the established and the coming generation of artists, whose works were on display, Hitler concluded his speech:

And when one day in this field as well, sacred conscientiousness has been restored to its rightful position, I have no doubt that the Almighty will once more choose those few from among the masses of decent artists and elevate them to the heights of the eternal starry skies where the immortal, divinely-gifted artists of great ages dwell.

For we do not believe that, with the great men of past centuries, the age of the creative power of gifted individuals has ended and will, in the future, be replaced by a respective power of the collective masses!

No, we believe that today above all, at a time when superlative individual achievements are being accomplished in so many areas, the most highly-valued power of the individual will once more become triumphantly manifest in the field of art. Therefore, the sole desire I wish to express at this moment is that this new building may be fortunate enough to be able to house within its walls many more works of great artists in coming centuries and to show them to the German Volk, thereby making a contribution not only to the fame of this truly artistic city, but also to the honor and standing of the entire German nation.

With that I hereby declare the 1937 Great German Art Exhibition in Munich open to the public!

That afternoon, Hitler observed an enormous parade in Munich. The next day, he toured the art exhibition one more time.

In reference to the demise of Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of radio telegraphy, Hitler sent Mussolini the following telegram:¹⁵⁷

Berchtesgaden, July 20, 1937

It is with deep regret that I have received news of the death of Marconi, that great son of Italy who, by means of his inventions, did an immortal service to the whole of mankind. I may extend to you and the Italian nation my sincere condolences at this heavy loss.

On July 21, Hitler received the new Soviet Ambassador, Konstantin Yurenev. The diplomat had to make a special trip from Berlin to Berchtesgaden to present his credentials to the Chancellor. Once there, Yurenev addressed Hitler in German:¹⁵⁸

July 21, 1937

Herr Reichskanzler!

I am honored to present to you these credentials, which the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have vested in me as its Ambassador Plenipotentiary. May I also tender to you the letter recalling my predecessor, Ambassador Jakob Suritz, to Moscow. Provided that the creation and maintenance of normal diplomatic relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the German Reich remain in the best interest of both nations, and that these are conducive to the attainment of world peace, I shall direct all my efforts toward the resolution of this mighty task. In so doing, I take the liberty of relying on your assistance and on that of the government which you head.

Hitler replied:

Your Excellency!

I have the honor of accepting from you the credentials by virtue of which you have been certified to me as Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. At the same time, I accept the letter informing me of the dismissal of your predecessor. It is with satisfaction that I have taken cognizance of your statement to the effect that you wish to strive in your endeavors to establish and maintain normal relations between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

I share with you the view that such relations between the German Reich and the Soviet Union will do justice both to the principles of non-intervention, more imperative today than ever before, as well as to the interests of both countries, and can thus represent a contribution to the cause of peace in general. Therefore, I may assure Your Excellency that in carrying out all the tasks you have set yourself, you will be given every necessary support both from myself and from my government.

On July 23, Hitler attended a performance of *Parsifal* at the Bayreuth Festival.¹⁵⁹ On July 30, he inspected the models for the planned new *Grossbauten* (giant buildings) to be constructed in Bayreuth. The *Völkischer Beobachter* proudly proclaimed: "The Führer is building a new Bayreuth."¹⁶⁰

The next day, Hitler once again delivered a 'secret speech' to construction workers employed at the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg.¹⁶¹ Later that day, he journeyed to Breslau and spoke at a one-hour commemoration at the German Sängerbund Festival before a crowd allegedly numbering more than 500,000. Numerous German chapters of the Sängerbund had come from abroad to participate in the festival. Hitler's particular gift no doubt was his facility for arousing nationalistic instincts in his audience. He reminded his listeners that of the ninety-five million Germans, only two thirds enjoyed the privilege of living within the borders of the German Reich. Then he emphasized

the importance of an “ideal” substitute for “the lack of actual political unity.” In his view, this national oneness expressed itself through the common use of the German language and through the German Lied.

As an expression of this view, he assigned the song *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* to a prominent place in the middle of his speech, as if his primary concern were to unite all Germans present through song. His speech is reproduced below.¹⁶²

Germans! German Volksgenossen! My German Singers!

It has not always been the case that the German nation could welcome you at these festivals in the German Reich through the words of *one* man. Today I have the right to both welcome you to this city for your great festival of German song and to congratulate you in the name of these sixty-eight million people who live within the boundaries of the Reich. You who have come here from all the Gaus of the Reich and from those territories lying outside its boundaries in which you nonetheless live as members of our German Volkstum!

It has nearly always been the misfortune of our particular Volk to lack political unification. Even today, millions of Germans live outside the Reich, nearly half the number of those who have their homes and residences within Germany itself. Yet especially a Volk that has not been able to form a political unit for so many centuries must possess other attributes which allow it to compensate, at least in an ideal sense, for the lack of actual political unity.

The first of these is our German language, for it is spoken not by sixty-eight million, but by ninety-five million people.

A second factor is the German Lied, sung not only within the boundaries of the Reich but sounding beyond them, everywhere Germans live throughout the world. This song accompanies us all the way from the cradle to the grave.

It lives in us and with us and, no matter where we are, it conjures up in our mind's eye the image of our ancient homeland, namely of Germany and the German Reich. A bird that has lost its sight tends to sing and express its sorrow and its feelings even more fervently in its song. And perhaps it is no coincidence, either, that the German—so often forced to endure a sorely tormented existence on this earth—has sought refuge in singing in times like those; there he was able to express everything harsh reality denied him.

Today we are perhaps more conscious than ever of that bitter truth. Particularly in these world-shattering and troubled times, German Volkstum as a whole—including its members beyond the Reich's boundaries—is looking to that ancient homeland, to Germany, and in the absence of any other way of establishing a bond, it is seeking a connection in German song! And thus the songs of our Volk are sounding today not only within the Reich, but far beyond its borders, too. They are sung with faithful ardor, for in them resides the hope and yearning of all Germans.

Thus it follows that the song which we Germans perceive as most sacred is a great song about this yearning. There are many, in other countries, who do not understand this: in this song above all they choose to see something

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as imperialistic which is as far-removed from their idea of imperialism as can be. What hymn for a Volk can be more splendid than that which constitutes a vow to seek one's fortune and well-being within one's Volk and to place one's Volk above everything else on earth?

And when today you sing this song of the Germans which was born in an age of torment, you are singing it with the joyful feeling that this Germany has now once again become worthy of being our Germany; that in our eyes it once again truly deserves to stand above everything else the world has been able to offer us. Whoever loves his Volk this much, whoever loves his homeland thus cannot be bad! Whoever stands behind his Volk and stands behind his homeland thus will continuously reap new strength from both! This is why the German song has always been a source of strength in the past and why it has today again taken on this role. Today *Deutschland über alles* is a pledge that fills millions with great strength, with the faith that is stronger than any other power on earth can be.

Hence this song also constitutes a pledge to the Almighty, to His will and to His work: for man has not created this Volk, but God, that God who stands above us all. He formed this Volk, and it has become what it should according to God's will, and according to our will, it shall remain, nevermore to fade!¹⁶³

Once again we have before us a proud Volk and a strong Reich, and all those who must leave this city at the close of these days of festivities and cross the boundaries of the Reich will reflect with pride, with joy and with confidence on what they were able to witness here and what was revealed to them. They will all leave with the feeling: a Volk has arisen once more, a Reich has been born anew! The German being has come unto himself. And in doing so, he has acted in accordance with the will of his Creator.

What power would have the right and the strength to block the course of life of a Volk which seeks, in its song, none other than itself: a strong Reich, a proud Volk, so great and so sublime that now every German can once more gladly proclaim: I am a German, and I am proud of it!

And this recognition must come upon us in such a solemn hour! We who are gathered here today from all the German Gaus, from many territories outside the Reich: we all perceive ourselves here as one community. You are singers and thus the spokesmen of German Volkstum!

It is such a pleasure for us to be able to overlook all that divides us in this hour and to perceive ourselves as indissolubly united and belonging together, one for all, and all for one. And I myself am infinitely pleased and proud to welcome you here in this hour on behalf of the Reich and the German nation residing within the Reich, and to be able to thank you not only for cultivating the German song, but also for devoting yourselves with this song to your German homeland and allying yourselves with it.

To you who were not deterred by the lengthy journey, to you who have come to this city from all the corners of Europe and beyond, I may extend a special welcome! May you leave this place with the firm belief: Germany stands strong, and nevermore will this Reich fade!

3

In Berlin on August 1, the NS War Victims Organization (Reichskriegsopferversorgung) held a conference, presided over by its leader Oberlindober. He and Hitler exchanged telegrams on the occasion.¹⁶⁴ At the Chancellery the next day, Hitler received the Turkish Minister of Labor Getinkaya, who was then visiting Berlin.¹⁶⁵

On August 3, the Commander in Chief of the Army, von Fritsch, received the following congratulatory telegram:¹⁶⁶

I transmit to you, my dear Colonel General, my heartfelt best wishes on your fifty-seventh birthday.

I hope that you shall remain in the best of health for your continued blessed work serving both myself and the Fatherland's Army as its leader.

Adolf Hitler

In a few months, Hitler completely forgot about these pious utterances to Fritsch. Likewise, he would fail to recall Blomberg's invaluable service to the Reich, which he had extolled so verbosely on the occasion of his War Minister's fortieth service anniversary. Blomberg and Fritsch were fired on the same day and for the same reason. In November of that year, both men ventured to express doubt over Hitler's foreign policy predictions. The Führer's anger would show consequences on February 4, 1938, when he ousted both his so highly acclaimed assistants.

At the Obersalzberg on August 6, Hitler received Antonio Marquez de Magaz, whom Franco had designated as his Ambassador to Germany. After Marquez de Magaz had introduced himself in a short address, Hitler extended his welcome in the following words:¹⁶⁷

Your Excellency!

I am greatly honored to accept from Your Excellency's hands the letter of His Excellency, Sr. Francisco Franco y Bahamonde, Chief of the Spanish

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State and Generalissimo of its National Army, accrediting you as his Ambassador Plenipotentiary.

It is to my great joy that I greet you here as the representative of the Spanish people, whose struggle for unity and freedom I have long followed with great sympathy. For centuries the bonds of old friendship have closely tied together the German and the Spanish peoples. These relations have proven themselves strong by withstanding the ragings of the World War. The German Volk follows the heroic struggle of the Spanish people and the building of the Spanish State with great sympathy.

It is the sincere desire of both the German Volk and myself that the Army of your Head of State, General Franco, might succeed in winning the battle for freedom and peace for the Spanish people. Thereby, he might also remove that imminent danger which transcends the borders of your country and threatens all of Europe.

I am in complete agreement with your conviction that our mutual goal of warding off the destructive forces of international communism binds our two peoples. It is also my great desire that a furthering of the economic relations between our countries might be understood to be in the interest of both Germany and Spain.

I hope that the exchange of goods between our countries shall be increased as much as possible. Please rest assured that in your efforts to pursue this goal and to conduct your mission you may always count upon my personal support and the benign disposition of the Reich Government.

On August 13, Hitler greeted the participants of a Franco-German youth camp on the Obersalzberg with a short address.¹⁶⁸ On the same day, he signed the following appeal in a fund-raising drive for the benefit of the Hindenburg association.¹⁶⁹

On the occasion of the forthcoming ninetieth birthday of Hindenburg, the Hindenburg Foundation, for the support of disabled war veterans and war orphans, calls for a fund drive. I hope that many of our Volksgenossen will participate.

Berchtesgaden, August 13, 1937

Adolf Hitler

On August 14, Hitler met with several Reichsleiters to discuss the preparations for that year's Reich Party Congress. The following day, he again toured the Congress Grounds. On August 16, Hitler met with von Blomberg and von Neurath to discuss the upcoming congress.¹⁷⁰ For the first time, both the ambassadors of Great Britain and France accepted an invitation to attend the congress. That day, Hitler sent the Reichsstatthalter General Ritter von Epp the following congratulatory telegram:¹⁷¹

Today, on the fiftieth anniversary of your entry into the Army, my thoughts turn to you in appreciation and gratefulness for the great feats you have

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accomplished in times of war and peace for the benefit of Germany. Let me extend to you my best wishes on your anniversary.

With kind regards,

Adolf Hitler

The next day, Hitler attended a performance of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* at the Bayreuth Festival.

On September 1, Hitler again honored his Minister of War von Blomberg with a telegram, phrased in the most congenial terms:¹⁷²

My dear Field Marshal!

I congratulate you on your fifty-ninth birthday both in my own name and in that of the German Volk. May Providence preserve you in the future for the Fatherland and its Wehrmacht.

In appreciative association,

Adolf Hitler

On September 4, it was announced that Mussolini would visit Germany during the second part of the month. The frequency of Hitler's focus upon Italy in his speeches at the Party Congress revealed the extent of his preoccupation with the upcoming event.

The "Reich Party Congress of Labor" began to convene in Nuremberg on September 6. Four days later in a speech before the Political Leaders, Hitler explained the reasoning behind his choice of the above title for the congress: "Now that we have freed Germany within the last four years, we have the right to enjoy the fruits of our labor." This wording apparently signaled that Hitler had no extraordinary decisions to announce for the future, but would self-complacently contemplate the past.

Indeed, the Party Congress was remarkable only for its unusual tranquility, reflecting the mood of the entire year 1937. With the exception of his customary verbal assaults upon world Bolshevism, not even Hitler's words could disturb the apparent peace. Rather, in every one of his speeches,¹⁷³ Hitler relished in eulogies of his successes in the past and his ambitions for the future. The word "gigantic" crossed his lips quite easily during those days.

In his welcoming address at the Nuremberg City Hall on September 6, Hitler announced the construction of additional *Grossbauten*, of which only a few ever materialized:

The gigantic plans for the new Reich Party Congress grounds are becoming step by step a reality. The Luitpold Arena has been completed this year, as has the Zeppelin Field—with the exception of minor indoor installations. The foundations for the Congress Hall have been laid. The inner core of the first wall is growing forth from its base.

The initial construction work on the wide avenue extending from the Märzfeld to the Luitpoldhain has been completed. On the Märzfeld, the first preliminary work has been accomplished, and the artistic architectural design has been finalized. On Thursday, September 9th, the cornerstone will be laid for the German Stadium, the most tremendous arena a Volk has ever erected for the training of its physical strength and beauty. Thus this city, perhaps as a forerunner for the rest of Germany, is being given its form for the future and thus for eternity.

The first part of the proclamation of September 7 contained similar announcements, which were read by Gauleiter Adolf Wagner as usual.

Since then, this city has represented in miniature both how our Movement and Germany have evolved as well as the evolution of this city. A gigantic forum is in the process of emerging. Its parade grounds are the most extensive in the world. As of tomorrow, the cornerstone will be laid for the erection of a stadium the likes of which have never before been seen on earth.

Within a mere two years' time, the shell of the colossal Congress Hall will have risen to constitute the first granite monument to bear witness to the magnitude of the idea to which it owes its design, and to the magnitude of the entire facility. A parade ground and rally site worthy of the demonstrations—initiated by National Socialism—of the greatest transformation in our German history!

Then Hitler expounded upon the necessity of party congresses in general, neglecting, however, to mention the supreme importance of these for his own feelings of self-esteem and lust for power.

How can the peasant in his village, the laborer in his workshop or factory, the employee in his office—how can they all grasp the extent of the total result of their innumerable personal sacrifices and their struggle?

But once a year, on the occasion of the general display of the Party, they will stride forth as one from the modesty of their narrow existence to gaze upon and acknowledge the glory of the fight and the triumph! Then many of them will perhaps experience for the first time the overwhelming certainty that their small-scale troubles and efforts have not been in vain, but that they have been the basis for this tremendous success, and that the many minor setbacks they have experienced were pale in significance when compared to the overall outcome of the fight of the Movement and—today—of their entire Volk.

And when, during these few days, hundreds of thousands march once again to Nuremberg, and hence from all of Germany's Gaus an endless stream of warm life flows into this city, all of them—looking back and around from this elevated site—will be able to come to the same conclusion: we are truly the witnesses of a transformation more tremendous than any the German nation has ever experienced. Collectively, socially, economically, politically, culturally, and racially, we are living in the midst of a gigantic metamorphosis of time. [—]

My Party Comrades!

We are living at an incredibly great time in history.

Admittedly, every century has had its wars or revolutions, by virtue of which people have risen or fallen and states been built up or torn down. However, it is only seldom that a people's life is shaken up by tremors which penetrate as far as the deepest foundations of the structure of the societal order and threaten or even destroy them!

Here Hitler was referring to the evils of "world Bolshevism," which he perceived to be an imminent threat. This danger would, however, be overcome by the National Socialist *Führungsauflage* (leadership elite). Thus the "dear Fatherland could rest assured," as the well-known song read.

Building up a new leadership elite in our nation without the devastating chaotic destruction of existing conditions is one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of our Volk. [—] There is one comforting certainty the German nation can then call its own: even if the whole world around us catches on fire, the National Socialist State will rise forth from the Bolshevist flames like platinum.

Now Hitler continued on the topic of the economic difficulties of the past, present and future:

It is a fact that Germany has solved its most pressing social problem, and solved it absolutely: there are no longer any real unemployed in our country. On the contrary: today there are already shortages in countless areas, particularly of skilled workers. I believe this is a greater social accomplishment than what other countries succeed in doing—just as was also done here in the past—to undermine and destroy production until finally the so-called liberated proletariat has been relieved not so much of its troubles, but of its work and thus of its daily bread.

Addressing all those who continued to doubt Germany's unlimited opportunities, Hitler stated categorically:

May no one deceive himself: a Volksgemeinschaft that succeeds in building up an enormous army, mobilizing a huge labor service running the mammoth organization of the German Reichsbahn, etc., will also be capable of bringing German steel and iron production up to the requisite level! We have been capable of mastering quite different tasks from those laid down in the Four-Year Plan!

And today I would already like to assure you, my Party Comrades, that this work will progress under the direction of Party Comrade Göring at exactly the prescribed speed!

And this was precisely "the speed," at which Hitler wished to proceed. In his eyes, Schacht was too slow, always hesitant and

skeptical.¹⁷⁴ Göring was quite the opposite—there was a man who made for a completely different recipient of orders!

Here, a claim for Germany's lost colonies was imperative, if only to annoy the British.

Therefore the demand for colonial possessions belonging to the Reich is a demand grounded in our financial need, and the position of other powers as regards this demand is simply beyond comprehension.

Germany neither robbed nor stole its colonies from these powers in the past. In a world such as ours today, where people are so saturated with moralistic phrases, it would be only appropriate to take this fact into consideration as well!

Hitler placed his remarks on the reversal of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles in the context of his goal of maintaining security in Europe. On a worldwide scale, this effort relied upon concerted action by Germany, Italy, and Japan.

I would like to cite three facts in closing one chapter of German history today.

First: The Treaty of Versailles is dead!

Second: Germany is free!

Third: The guarantor of our freedom is our own Wehrmacht!

Yet at the same time Germany is not isolated today, but bound in friendship to powerful states. The natural community of interests of National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy has increasingly grown in the past few months to prove itself a factor in safeguarding Europe from the madness of chaos.

In the future, it will be impossible to ignore this community of will in any particular instance, and to simply carry on as usual. Our agreement with Japan serves the same purpose: to join forces in warding off an attack upon the civilized world that might today take place in Spain, tomorrow in the east or the day after perhaps somewhere else.

The development thereafter proved contrary to Hitler's predictions. Just as Franco's Fascist movement, in pursuit of its own interests, had caused the civil strife in his country, the next few years in Germany, Italy and Japan would show that these nations acted not in self-defense, but rather pursued their own aggressive notions and self-serving interests.

Toward the end of the proclamation, Hitler referred to the new German man, making racially-tainted remarks which he had only infrequently done in his earlier years. Despite his complex with regard to the Jews, one may doubt whether Hitler really believed in the racial theories he propounded. In any event, he was more concerned with

power-politics than racial theories. In 1937, however, it seemed to become opportune for him to inject some racial comments into his speeches.

However, the greatest revolution Germany has undergone was that of the purification of the Volk and thus of the races which was launched systematically in this country for the first time ever.

The consequences of this German racial policy will be more significant for the future of our Volk than the effects of all the other laws together. For they are what is creating the new man. They will preserve our Volk from doing as so many historically tragic past prototypes of other races have done: lose their earthly existence forever because of their ignorance as regards a single question.

For what is the sense of all our work and all our efforts if they do not serve the purpose of preserving the German being? And what good is any effort on behalf of this being if we omit the most important thing to preserve it pure and unadulterated in its blood?

Any other mistake can be rectified, any other error can be corrected, but what one fails to do in this area can often never again be amended. Whether our work in this area of purifying our race and thus our Volk has been fruitful is something you can best judge for yourselves here during these few days. For what you are encountering in this city is the German being. Come and see for yourselves whether he has become worse under National Socialist leadership or whether he has not indeed become better. Do not gauge only the increasing number of children being born—gauge above all the appearance of our youth.

How lovely are our girls and our boys, how bright is their gaze, how healthy and fresh their posture, how splendid are the bodies of the hundreds of thousands and millions who have been trained and cared for by our organizations!

Where are there better men to be found today than those who can be seen here? It is truly the rebirth of a nation, brought about by the deliberate breeding of a new being (*bewusste Züchtung eines neuen Menschen*).

In his “culture speech” of that same day, Hitler sharply attacked the art critics and authors concerned with cultural issues within Germany, whom he derided as “bourgeois ballad-singers of freedom.”

The weapons of those bourgeois ballad-singers of freedom (*Freiheitslieder*) were, at worst, pen and ink. Yet the National Socialists were expected to bear a thousand privations. But their struggle gradually brought about genuine freedom. A freedom which is not the product of poetic contemplation, but the result of hard political battles compounded not of essays or leading articles, but of historically established events and hence accomplishments. Of course it was more difficult to arrive at a March 16, 1935, or to occupy the Rhineland than to concern oneself in newspapers or literary pamphlets with theoretical discussions on the true nature of genuine freedom.

In history, however, surely only the factual counts; that means that in history, neither political desire nor theoretical contemplation will be material, but political achievement, and that means the deed itself. It is the task of cultural policy—just as in the area of politics in general—to lead onwards to new and, in this case, cultural achievements! [—]

Therefore the civilized nations have always constituted the counterpole to the nations without culture, just as within them the artist is, in turn, the solitary figure in contrast to the masses of the artistically indifferent, or to people even lacking any understanding whatsoever. This, however, is due to the following: the genius consistently stands out from the masses in that he unconsciously anticipates truths of which the population as a whole only later becomes conscious! [—]

Of all the questionable concoctions of our so-called “Modern Art,” not even five percent would have been able to gain a place in the art collection of the German Volk had it not been that, by means of propaganda having nothing at all to do with art, but oriented along political and *weltanschaulich* lines, public opinion had been talked into them—indeed, even forced into them—by like-minded political factors. The Volk’s deep-seated aversion to the enrichment of its art by virtue of such products is something obvious to anyone from the impressions made upon the viewers of the “Entartete Kunst” exhibition in Munich.

However, a clever and indeed cunning Jewish cultural propaganda has nonetheless succeeded in talking at least his so-called “appointed art experts”—but not healthy individuals—into smuggling these supremely pitiful concoctions into our galleries and thus ultimately forcing them upon the German Volk after all.

The path from the sacred and serious work of our good old German masters to the great painters of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was certainly more difficult than the path from the average decent art of the nineteenth century to the primitive scrawlings of our so-called “Moderns,” whose products basically attract attention only because they are behind modern times by a few thousand years.

We have our litterateurs to thank for this ignominious retrogression. They have succeeded, by perpetually using the word “kitsch” to describe a well-meant,¹⁷⁵ decent, average accomplishment, in breeding those exalted aberrations which, to a blasé literary attitude, might perhaps seem to present an interesting and even phenomenal innovation, but in fact are nothing but a disgraceful reversion, a deterioration of culture which has never before taken place at any time in the past—and never could take place, either, because never before had litterateurs been accorded such an outrageous influence on the performing and visual arts.

In this context, it is now amusing to note that it is least of all the products of these so-called “Moderns” which can be judged as being, for example, “original” or possessing “originality.”

On the contrary, all of these so-called modern artists are the most pathetic and inept copyists of all time. Naturally not copyists of what is decent, but of nonsense!

Above all, Hitler cherished his building projects. While expanding on the topic, he betrayed the true incentives which had prompted him to insist on their construction. In his eyes, they served as pillars and tangible expressions of his authority.

Never before in German history were greater and more noble edifices planned, commenced and completed than in our time. [—]

The authority that is saving the German Volk from collapse in the twentieth century, that has snatched it away from the chaos of Bolshevism, is not the authority of an economic association, but that of the National Socialist Movement, of the National Socialist Party and thus of the National Socialist State! The opponents will sense it, but the adherents above all must know it: it is to fortify this authority that these structures are being built!

Therefore these edifices are neither designed for the year 1940 nor for the year 2000; instead, they are to tower, like the cathedrals of our past, into the millenniums of the future. And if today God perhaps allows the poets and singers to be fighters, He has, in any case, given the fighters the architects who will ensure that the success of this fight finds an immortal substantiation in the documents of a unique and great art! That is something small minds perhaps cannot comprehend, but then again they have not understood our fight on the whole. It may embitter our opponents, but then again their hatred has never yet been capable of thwarting our success, either. One day, however, it will be understood with utmost clarity how very great the blessing is which shines forth throughout the centuries from the tremendous edifices of this history-making age. For they above all will help, in a political sense, to unify and fortify our Volk more than ever before; in a collective sense, they will—for Germans—become part of a proud feeling of belonging together; in a social sense, they will prove the ridiculousness of any other differences of this world in comparison to these tremendous, gigantic witnesses of our sense of community. [—]

This State shall neither be a power without culture nor a force without beauty. For the armament of a Volk is only morally justified when it is the sword and shield of a higher mission. Therefore we are not striving for the brute strength of someone like Genghis Khan, but instead for an empire of strength which is instrumental in shaping a strong social and protected community as the support and guard of a higher culture!

It was because of this “higher mission” that Hitler believed his assault upon Poland, the Soviet Union and other countries to be ethically justified.

Hitler’s September 8 speech before members of the Reich Labor Service, like so many others, leaned toward the grotesque:

The proudest deed which National Socialism has accomplished toward establishing a future German Volksgemeinschaft was its founding the Reich Labor Service! This Party Congress revolves around the theme of labor. The accomplishments you have shown us are themselves only a product of

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untiring labor. Your number-one worker, my comrades, is your leader, Party Comrade Hierl! [—]

You, my comrades, have become a part of our Volk within the space of these few years, a part we can no longer imagine doing without. You belong here in this state which the Party has established, just as the Wehrmacht belongs here. We can no longer imagine doing without you, and you will never again be done without!

And for us, it is an edifying thought to know that, long into the most distant future, generation after generation will shoulder the weapon of peace—the spade—and report for duty at the service of our community and thus of our Volk. We feel fortunate in knowing that a guarantor for the eternal strength of Germany and the greatness of our Volk and our Reich has thus been established anew. Today you are no longer a fantasy; instead you now have already become a tremendous reality!

On the occasion of laying the cornerstone to the German Stadium on September 9, Hitler expressed three wishes—none of which was to come true:

Germans!

At this historic moment, when I now lay the cornerstone for the German Stadium, I am filled with three fervent wishes.

First: May this tremendous edifice contribute to the glory and pride of the German Volk.

Second: May it be an eternal witness of a nation united in National Socialism and a powerful Reich.

Third: May it be for all time a reminder to German men and women and lead them to that power and beauty constituting the highest expression of the nobility of genuine freedom.

I hereby declare the National Socialist Competitive Games of 1937 in Nuremberg open to the public.

The day after the speech, Hitler addressed several units of the German police force, which at this Party Congress appeared for the first time as a separate formation. He declared:

In the year 1933, the National Socialist leadership of state immediately undertook the attempt to lessen the burdens of this position [as representatives of the authority of the state] for you. By limiting your arms exclusively to the live weapons,¹⁷⁶ the police have been relieved of that so despised and characteristic feature of the November days. At that time we were of the conviction that it must be possible to enforce and apply the authority of the state, i.e. what the community required of the Volksgenossen, without an appendage as shameful as the rubber truncheon was. At that time we held the view that there were only two alternatives: either it would suffice to enforce the authority of the personality of the individual and the authority of the community, or it would be necessary to use the most effective of weapons

to establish respect and obedience for this authority. It is not, however, an alternative to beat the citizens of a Volk as though they were subservient tribes in some colony and hence disgrace them. [—]

Now a further step is to be taken. The German police shall be increasingly connected with the Movement that not only represents modern Germany in a political sense, but also personifies and leads it. And it is to this end that you are to receive today's banners personally from my hand. This shall constitute a further act demonstrating the visible integration of the German police in the great front line of the German Volksgemeinschaft marching and fighting for the nation.

I know that you will bear these banners just as do all the other associations which have the appointed task of serving the strength and power of the nation. It is in these banners above all that you will perceive the symbol of your alliance with the German Volk that is shaping its new life today under this same banner.

You will thereby be guided by two principal ideas:

First, in being the representative of the State, also being the Volk's best friend.

Second, in being the representative of the State, being the most relentless representative of this Volksgemeinschaft toward those asocial, criminal elements which sin against it.

Subsequent to the speech, Hitler distributed to the police units flags and standards which were markedly similar to those of the SA and SS. Despite initially declaring that he merely wanted to express his "gratitude for the great work accomplished," he launched into a lengthy address to the NS Frauenschaft the same day. Soon he found himself "philosophizing" upon the relationship between man and woman, purporting the following insights:

The more masculine a man is, the more he is undisputed in his sphere of influence from the very start; and the more feminine a woman is, the more her own work and thus her own position is conversely uncontested and undisputed. And the mutual respect of the sexes for each other will ultimately not be achieved by the rules set up by two different formations, i.e. the formation of men and the formation of women; instead, it must be acquired day by day in real life. The more a man is faced with a woman who is truly female, the more his arrogance will be disarmed from the very beginning—so disarmed, that at times it might be unbearable; and conversely the more a man is a whole man and carries out his work and his life-task in the highest sense of the word, the more the woman will find her natural and self-evident place beside him. In this constellation, the two can never cross each other on their life-paths; they will instead join one another in a wholly shared, great mission; and ultimately this mission is none other than preserving the community of mankind as it exists today and ensuring that, in the future, it will be the way we desire it to one day be.

Thus the individual alliance of man and woman will always stand out from this joint alliance of the two sexes. We know that here, too, this alliance—if it is to be really lasting—must equally rest upon the awareness of this great comradeship for life. Yet because this is so, we must also understand that seeking and finding this comradeship for life cannot simply be brought about by commands or orders, either, but that it is moreover ultimately a problem not only of reason, but here an affair of the heart as well. And, therefore, it is also understandable if there are many—particularly women—who do not succeed in solving this problem for the simple reason that the heart cannot always bow to reason. We wish to have a maximum of understanding for this. For there is yet another great task ahead, the work in our community itself.

In the course of such recognition, he naturally could not refrain from making such exclamations as, “everything we do we are ultimately doing for the child!” In his peroration, Hitler extolled the virtues of the leader of the NS women’s organization, Frau Gertrud Scholtz-Klink:

The way you have begun here—and this I can say to you, Party Comrade Scholtz-Klink—is right, and it will help us to more easily achieve this goal [of building a community of the German Volk].

For you have demonstrated a truly remarkable talent for avoiding that the organization of women has created, for instance, a counterpole to men, but on the contrary ensured that the German women’s organization has become a complement to the male fighting organization.

On that same September 10, an appeal was issued to the Political Leaders, whom Hitler increasingly saw as his “disciples,” too. Therefore, he addressed them in words similar to those of the Master recorded by St. John, as he had previously done only when speaking before then of the SA or SS: “You once found your way to me and ... I found you.”

Nevertheless, the physical appearance of the Political Leaders in no way corresponded to the new heroic German man Hitler envisioned for future generations. However, they were completely dependent upon Hitler—nearly every one of them held a position that was in one form or another paid for by the Party or the State. It was precisely this dependence which made the Political Leaders particularly dear to Hitler, even more so than the SA, whose personal ambitions were usually quite modest, the majority of them wishing to be nothing more than true patriots. On September 10, Hitler preached the following “Gospel” to his Political Leaders:

For us zealous National Socialists, these days are the most splendid celebration of the whole year! How much trouble and sacrifice does it mean for the individual; how difficult and strenuous it is for many of you—but for

us, too—to keep coming here! Yet nonetheless, when these days come to their close, we are all struck by a sadness; we are like children who are deprived of a great celebration.

For us, these days comprise a remembrance of the time of our historic struggle for Germany. Among you there are many standing before me who still know the Movement from the time when it was difficult and dangerous to support it. Particularly for these old, true comrades in arms, these days are the most splendid remembrance and, at the same time, a reward. Once a year we see each other face to face again, just as so often before. Once a year you are again with me, as so often before in the battles for Germany. Back then I could go forth in your Gaus, and each of you knew me. Today you must come to me, and here at this place we see each other again and again as the Old Guard of the National Socialist Revolution! [—]

We have chosen the motto of “Labor” for the Party Congress of 1937. There are a scattered few who perhaps—particularly outside of Germany—might raise the question: Why such a slogan? After having liberated Germany within four years’ time, we have the right to rejoice in our labor! [—]

I am so pleased to have my old Fighters before me again once a year. I always have the feeling that, as long as the human being has the gift of life, he should yearn for those with whom he has shaped his life. What would my life be without you! The fact that you once found your way to me and believed in me gave your life new meaning and a new goal! The fact that I found you was the prerequisite for my own life and my struggle! [—]

The German nation, under the leadership of its Party, will protect Germany and never again allow it to fade! And our faith is bound up with this knowledge. It was not the point of the actions of Providence which has accompanied and blessed our miraculous path that now, perhaps in the final act, the fruits of this struggle should be lost. The Almighty has allowed us to take this wonderful path and will continue to bless us. For we are fighting here for a higher right, for a higher truth and for a higher human decency. I can look forward to the future so serenely because we have now in effect put our own affairs in order. [—]

Germany shall not be overrun, neither from within nor from without! And I believe that this fact is one of the highest contributions to peace, because it warns all those who attempt, from their base in Moscow, to set the world on fire.

Afterwards, Hitler held a diplomatic reception in the Deutscher Hof Hotel in Nuremberg. For the first time, ambassadors from France and Great Britain were among the guests.¹⁷⁷ In his address, Hitler stressed “that the Reich Party Congress was not a political Party event, but a national celebration of the entire German *Volk* and to be seen as such.” On September 11, Hitler spoke at a celebration organized by the Hitler Youth. Once again there was no *Hitlerwetter* in sight—it was pouring rain—a fact which Hitler had to account for appropriately in his speech:

My Youth!

This morning I learned from our weather forecasters that, at present, we have the meteorological condition "V b." That is supposed to be a mixture between very bad and bad. Now, my boys and girls, Germany has had this meteorological condition for fifteen years! And the Party had this meteorological condition, too! For the space of a decade, the sun did not shine upon this Movement. It was a battle in which only hope could be victorious, the hope that in the end the sun would rise over Germany after all. And risen it has! And as you are standing here today, it is also a good thing that the sun is not smiling down on you. For we want to raise a race not only for sunny, but also for stormy days!

I would hold all of the training that National Socialism accomplishes to be in vain if the result of this training were not a nation which can prevail at all times, even in the worst of times. And in the future, my youth, you yourselves will be that nation! What you do not learn today you will not know in the future!

We have conceived of other ideals for youth than those held in times past. Once—this is something you do not know—a boy of eighteen or twenty looked different from today. And girls were raised differently, too, than they are now. That has changed. In place of a youth that was formerly raised on pleasure, today a youth is growing up who will be raised on forbearance and sacrifice, and above all raised to breed a healthy, robust body, for as you know, we believe that without such a body, even a healthy spirit cannot rule the nation for any length of time.

That is why, for us National Socialists, the time of struggle back then was good, although the sun did not shine on us; actually, it may well be that in human life one remembers the days of battle and storms longer than the days of sunshine. And I am of the conviction that you will remember this day, too, perhaps for the very reason that it rained, and you are standing here in spite of it.

Hitler concluded his speech with the following observations:

That is the wonderful thing: that you complete the training cycle of our Volk. With you it has begun, and only when the last German sinks into the grave will it end!

Never before in German history has there existed such an inner unity of spirit, of formation of will and of leadership. That is something many generations before us have yearned for, and we are the fortunate witnesses of its fulfillment. But in you, my boys and girls, I see this thousand-year-old dream coming true most marvelously! Just as you are standing before me here today, year for year, centuries from now the young generation will stand before their respective Führers to come. And will again and again pledge that vow to the Germany we have secured today. *Deutschland Sieg Heil!*

Directly from his speech at the youth rally, Hitler proceeded to his next engagement before an assembly of the German Labor Front. Here

too, he opened his address with an excuse for the bad weather and his increasingly hoarse voice:

Party Comrades! My German Volksgenossen!

The fact that I have come to you somewhat late is due to the obligations which are part and parcel of the Party Congress. Therefore, I have asked my friend, Party Comrade Göring, to speak to you in my stead. For I must conserve my voice a little. Now that the weather has become worse, and much speaking must be done outdoors, that wears somewhat on the vocal cords. Now that does not necessarily have to awaken in our foreign correspondents¹⁷⁸ the joyful hope that I have cancer and my voice is gone for good. They will still be hearing it quite often and quite frequently. But basically it makes no difference at all which of us is talking. Because each of us will say the same thing. What we have to say is much more than merely a memorized speech. It is the rendering of our profession of faith.

In the course of his speech, Hitler described the attempt to reeducate the German individual, an attempt which could best be attained by duplicating the methods of the military in the barracks' square. He declared:

If we go so far as to believe that we will have educated everyone or perhaps had educated everyone, others will come after them who need to be educated. That is the same as in the military. One class of recruits has finally, finally been brought to the point that it can stand and walk alone. And then it moves on, and then the next class comes, and then it starts all over again. But that is not such a misfortune after all: on the contrary. The mission of educating is always the best of all. For it is an eternal one, a lasting one.

We had ranks in former times, too, in which the consciousness of rank was hammered (*eingepaukt*) into the people. Now we are hammering into them a consciousness of the Volk in certain organizations. Those are ranks, too. One of these ranks is the Labor Front. Its job is to help hammer home to German Volksgenossen the consciousness of the Volk. It is a consciousness of rank, too! Namely, the consciousness of belonging to the ranks of German Volkstum!

At the moment, this is perhaps inconvenient for some. But when a recruit reports to the barracks for duty, he, too, finds a number of things inconvenient. First he needs a good rubbing-down until he has dispensed with what he had before. And he is usually most attached to what he should not be attached to at all, because it gives him no reason to be proud. It is so difficult to teach him even, let us say, about cleanliness. And things are no different on a larger scale. People are so very attached primarily to what is not at all worth one's having such an affinity with. All of this now needs to be removed. And that is a wonderful task.

And if someone says to me, that has not been accomplished yet—well, we are only in the fifth year of our calendar. Just give us one or two hundred years' time. [—]

This morning I saw some of our youth join the Party. And I must say so myself: it is really wonderful. That is a magnificent young generation we are now getting. And above all, they are coming to the Party from all walks of life. And seriously, one wouldn't know it from seeing them: they have the same brown shirt. No one asks where they come from. But they all look as alike as peas in a pod. Here are children of the proletariat, there are former sons of the bourgeoisie and of entrepreneurs and employees and peasants, etc. But they all look exactly alike. And that is the wonderful thing. They are already growing up like that. And our other organizations will help to cultivate that slowly but surely. That is what the Party is for, and its organizations, the SA and the SS. And then comes the Labor Service. And then comes the military. And thus the individual German is kneaded until he gradually learns to come into actual contact with his neighbor. And all of this takes place not so much perhaps under the heading "ideal." No, no, all of this goes by a much more simple heading, namely the word, "reason."

Now Hitler replaced the term "ideal" with a new expression which he had been fond of using for some time: "reason." In the end, it mattered little which word he employed—the message remained the same: do as the Führer commands. Coming to the conclusion of his speech, Hitler eulogized the professional worker who, he claimed, was generally known to be Germany's "most loyal son."¹⁷⁹

I might not be standing before you now, that is to say I would certainly not be standing before you, had I not once been a soldier and, as a soldier, acquired this absolute faith in the value of my Volk, my Volksgenossen, and above all the workers. For you yourselves know that one could so often hear from bourgeois quarters, "Oh, those people are good for nothing, they're just riff-raff, pure and simple, etc." I have always said that was not true at all.

Those people are comrades. I have experienced that myself many a time. Those are the comrades who, God knows, have risked their lives so often for this Germany. They are all decent people. They are all men who are prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice everything, even their lives, for an ideal—and that too is an ideal, if someone goes out on the battlefield for Germany.

Hitler had indeed correctly assessed the situation. Of the various social groups within Germany, the ordinary worker was the most willing to let himself be carted off to the battlefield.

On September 12, Hitler spoke before an assembly of the SA, the SS, the NSKK, and the NSFK, which he addressed under the umbrella title of "National Socialist Fighting Movement." Here, too, he spoke of the "spirit of reason," which in the fighting days had found itself obstructed by "a conspiracy of baseness and meanness," and continued:

It did not want reason and insight to reside in our Volk. And when the first men stood up in order to preach the new reason of a Volksgemeinschaft

with me and behind me, those whose interest lay in tearing the Volk asunder rose up against us. We all shared but one possession: a boundless love for our Volk and an unshakeable faith in its resurrection. And today Germany has truly risen once again, and its rising is our achievement! [—]

A mere ten or fifteen years ago, these people were only barely able to communicate with one another, and today the entire German nation is following one command, one order! In his life on this earth, man needs external, visible symbols which can be carried before him and which he strives to imitate. For the German, the most sacred symbol has always been the flag; it is not a piece of cloth, but a conviction and a pledge and hence an obligation.

In the long yearn of our struggle for the German being against its adversaries, the flag was carried at your fore, the one which is today the flag of the German Reich. These standards of our struggle at that time were inconspicuous and faded, wholly unprepossessing; yet how we loved our flag regardless, a flag that had nothing to do with the disintegration of the nation but to us seemed to be the sunshine of a new and better German future! How the tens of thousands and later hundreds of thousands of our party comrades clung to this flag, and how they rallied around this flag! There are times when we still see them today, these oldest storm banners of the party, so faded and hleached—and nevertheless shining stars for us all. They accompanied us in the time of a fantastic struggle, the likes of which perhaps has never existed in any other country as it has in our Volk and as it has at such length.

Today they have been raised before us as symbols of the State we have earned and the German Volksgemeinschaft we have fought for and won.

The more Hitler personally distanced himself from religion, the more intensively he duplicated the rites of the Catholic Church through the use of secular symbols (flags, liturgical formulas, etc.). As he turned away from the beliefs of his childhood, a new, peculiar fetish gained a strong foothold in his daily life. Hitler ordered that, from this day on, a portrait of Frederick the Great, which he believed magically endowed its possessor with great strength, be taken with him. Indeed, the portrait accompanied him to the very end in the bowels of the Führerbunker.¹⁸⁰

Later that day, Hitler invited his foreign guests for tea at the Deutscher Hof Hotel. Among these was a delegation of Turkish businessmen, led by State Secretary Kurtoglu, as well as several Iranian and Afghan economists.¹⁸¹

On the morning of September 13, Hitler delivered the address below to members of the Wehrmacht, who had assembled outdoors on the Zeppelin Field to hear him speak.

Soldiers!

For the fourth time now you have assembled here on this field on the occasion of this great day of the nation. Much has changed since then, not for the worse, but all for the better! Today, Germany is more splendid, greater

and above all stronger than back then. You yourselves constitute visible proof of this strength! In a few weeks, some of you will leave the barracks and return to civilian life after two years of service for the German Volk and hence for our homeland. Not only have you given these two years to Germany; you, too, have been given them! For in these two years you have not only become soldiers, but above all men, men of whom the nation has reason to be proud and of whom it shall be proud in the future!

The evolving German Army has made it possible not only to win external freedom for the German Reich but moreover to commence and perform the great works you see in Germany today. Most of all, it has enabled us to preserve peace for our Volk in a time of unrest and general insecurity. Peoples who were weak have never been blessed by peace, but only those who have been strong. The fact that Germany is strong again today is something it owes first and foremost to its soldiers!

Germany is fond of you, and above all, it is proud of you. For it sees in you the pillars of an immortal, glorious past. You, too, have just as much reason to be fond of Germany, for once more you can be proud of your Volk, your homeland and our German Reich! *Deutschland Sieg Heil!*

At noon, in the Kaisersaal of the Nuremberg castle, Hitler held a luncheon reception for the Japanese Prince Chichibu, the brother of Emperor Hirohito.¹⁸²

On the evening of September 13, near the end of the Party Congress, Hitler gave a several-hour valedictory address. In his “party narrative,” he claimed that “seen from a higher vantage point,” it would have been a great disaster for Germany had it indeed won the War in 1914. In order to explain this unorthodox argument, he declared that at the time there had been “an ignorance of the meaning of the blood-related sources of the power of the Volk.”

How often we dwell on the question of what would have happened to Germany if Fate had granted us a swift and easy victory in 1914. What we were all striving for at that time with hearts aglow would presumably—seen from a higher vantage point—have been but a misfortune for our Volk. That victory would probably have had extremely grievous consequences. For in the inner sphere, it in particular would have prevented us from gaining the knowledge that today allows us to look back in horror at the path on which that Germany of the past was already making its way. The perceptive few who were preaching caution had lapsed into ridiculousness.

The State, grounded only in the external military means of power which bore it up, would sooner or later have become the annihilator of its own existence and its own means of existence, wholly ignorant of the meaning of the blood-related sources of the Volkskraft! Phenomena such as we have had an opportunity to observe in many other countries after their supposed victory would have descended upon us. Instead of being jerked back from the brink of destruction by a disruption of a catastrophic nature, we would all the more

surely have gradually succumbed to the insidious poisons of inner decay of the Volk! In our case, the accuracy of a wise saying can be said to have been proven true: there are times when Providence demonstrates the deepest love it has for its creatures in an act of punishment!

This fresh interpretation of the World War and the collapse of 1918 failed to mention the “November Criminals.” Further, it omitted to refer to the fact that without these calamities, Hitler’s dictatorship might never have arisen. Instead the listeners were admonished never to forget this “punishment” with which Fate had demonstrated its love for its (German) creatures.

The main topic of the final address revolved around the threat Bolshevism posed to the entire international community. This indeed amounted to a grandiose attempt by Hitler to flood the “Western Europeans” with rhetoric to persuade them—particularly the English—to entrust Hitler with the defense of Europe against Bolshevism. Once assigned this mission, he hoped to obtain *carte blanche* to proceed in the East at his own discretion. Hence Hitler liberally applied his anti-Communist rhetoric, on a scale equaled only in 1932 and 1933. In these years, this tactic had worked miracles for him in winning the favor of the German Nationalists and their adherents. Hitler declared Bolshevism a brain child of the Jews, a symptom of “an all-encompassing, general attack against modern societal order.” Since the “birth of Christianity, the triumphant advance of Mohammedanism or the Reformation,” the world had not seen a similar process.

One would have to be incredibly naive to dispute the fact that Bolshevism does indeed have that international character, i.e. a revolutionary character, in an age when Bolshevism hardly allows a day to pass without stressing its mission of world revolution as the be-all and end-all of its program, and hence the basis for its very existence! Only a bourgeois-democratic politician would refuse to believe what the programmatic¹⁸³ foundation of this Red world movement actually is and what, in reality, is revealed in fact to be the most significant feature of this world movement. National Socialism was not the first to claim that Bolshevism was international; it was Bolshevism itself—the strictest rendering of Marxism—which solemnly proclaimed its international character.

Now, if one of our Western Europeans still insists on denying that Bolshevism is international, i.e. that it uses internationally uniform means and methods to pursue an internationally self-same goal, one is left to fear that, in the near future, we will be hearing from the lips of one such world-wise person correspondingly that National Socialism, contrary to its program, does not intend to stand up for Germany, and neither does Fascism for Italy! I would nonetheless find it regrettable if we were not to be believed. And it pains me

just as much that no one even believes Bolshevism when it itself asserts its intentions and proclaims what it is.

Moreover, he who has no concept of the magnitude of this world menace and above all holds, for reasons of domestic and foreign policy, that he is not allowed to take this menace seriously, will all too easily intentionally overlook everything which might perchance be seen to constitute proof of the existence of this world menace. [—]

As National Socialists, we are fully conscious of the origins and conditions of the fight which is today causing unrest in the world. Above all, we comprehend the extent and dimensions of this struggle. It is a gigantic event in terms of world history! The greatest menace with which the culture and civilization of the human race have been threatened since the collapse of the nations in Antiquity.

This crisis cannot be compared to any of the otherwise habitual wars or any of the revolutions that take place so often. No, this is an all-encompassing, general attack against modern societal order, against our spiritual and cultural world. This attack is being launched both against the essential character of the peoples per se, against their inner organization and against the race's own leadership of these bodies politic, as well as against their spiritual life, their traditions, their economies, and all the other institutions which determine the overall essence, character, and life of these peoples or states. This attack is so extensive that it draws nearly all of the functions of life into the sphere of its actions. The duration of this battle is unforeseeable. One thing which is certain is that, since the birth of Christianity, the triumphant advance of Mohammedanism or the Reformation, nothing of this type has ever before taken place in this world. [—] What others profess not to see because they simply do not want to see it, is something we must unfortunately state as a bitter truth: the world is presently in the midst of an increasing upheaval, whose spiritual and factual preparation and whose leadership undoubtedly proceed from the rulers of Jewish Bolshevism in Moscow.

When I quite intentionally present this problem as Jewish, then you, my Party Comrades, know that this is not an unverified assumption, but a fact proven by irrefutable evidence.¹⁸⁴

Hitler then presented a racial interpretation of the states within Europe and portrayed Russia in a manner that corresponded little to the historic reality.

All our European states originated in what were initially small racial cores but which are to be regarded as the truly powerful and hence determining factors in this constellation. This fact is most pointedly demonstrated in those states in which, as late as our modern times, the formed and guided masses and the forming and guiding powers were not brought into a balance—or perhaps they could not be, but probably this was not even intended. One of these states was Russia. A very thin—not Russian-*volklich*, i.e. not Slavic—layer of leadership pieced this state together from an assortment of small and even smaller communities to form a virtual colossus of a state, which was

seemingly impregnable, but whose greatest weakness always lay in the discrepancy between the number and merit of its ruling class—non-Russian in terms of blood—and the number and merit of its national Russian elements.

Therefore it was particularly easy for a new racial core to successfully penetrate and attack; it intentionally manifested itself as a *volklich* leader in disguise in contrast to the old, official leadership of state. Here the Jewish minority, which was in no way proportionate to the Russian Volk itself in terms of numbers, took the detour of appropriating the leadership of the national-Russian proletariat to succeed not only in ousting the former social and state leadership from its position, but in exterminating it without further ado.

Yet for this reason in particular, the Russia of today is basically no different from the Russia of two hundred or three hundred years ago. A brutal dictatorship by a foreign race which has seized utter control of genuine *Russentum* (Russian civilization) and is exercising that control commensurately.

To the extent that this process of forming a new state came to its conclusion in Russia, one might be able to simply take cognizance of the fact as a historic reality just as with any other similar situation, and leave it at that. Yet now that this Jewish racial core is seeking to bring about the same effects in other peoples and thereby views modern Russia as its already conquered base and bridgehead for further expansion, this problem has exceeded the dimensions of a Russian problem and become a world problem which will be decided one way or another, because it must be decided.

After this digression into his version of Russian history, Hitler returned to the present and delivered an attack upon Jews, who aimed at plunging democracy into the chaos of Bolshevism.

While one part of the “Jewish fellow citizens” demobilizes democracy via the influence of the press or even infects it with their poison by linking up with revolutionary manifestations in the form of peoples’ fronts, the other part of Jewry has already carried the torch of the Bolshevik revolution into the midst of the bourgeois-democratic world without even having to fear any substantial resistance. The final goal is then the ultimate Bolshevik revolution, i.e. not, for example, consisting of the establishment of a leadership of the proletariat by the proletariat, but of the subjugation of the proletariat under the leadership of its new and alien master.

Once the incited, insane masses—gone wild and supported by the asocial elements released from the prisons and penitentiaries—have exterminated the natural, indigenous intelligence of the peoples and brought them to the scaffolds to bleed to death, what will remain as the last bearer of—albeit miserable—intellectual knowledge is the Jew. For one thing should be made clear here: this race is neither spiritually nor morally superior, but in both cases inferior through and through. For unscrupulousness and irresponsibility can never be equated with a truly brilliant disposition. In terms of creativity, it is an untalented race through and through. For this reason, if it seeks to rule anywhere for any length of time, it is forced to undertake the extermination

of the former intellectual upper classes of the other peoples. Otherwise it would naturally be defeated by their superior intelligence within a very short time. That is because, in everything that has to do with true accomplishment, they have always been bunglers, and bunglers they will remain. In the past year, we have shown in a series of alarming statistical proofs that, in the present Soviet Russia of the proletariat, more than eighty percent of the leading positions are held by Jews. This means that not the proletariat is the dictator, but that very race whose Star of David has finally also become the symbol of the so-called proletarian state.¹⁸⁵

And incidentally, we have all experienced the same thing in Germany, too, of course. Who were the leaders of our Bavarian soviet republic? Who were the leaders of Spartakus? Who were the real financial backers and leaders of our Communist Party? Now that is something even the most well-meaning Mister World-Democrat can neither do away with nor change: it was none other than the Jews! That is the case in Hungary, too, and in that part of Spain which the truly Spanish people has not yet recaptured.

Finally arriving at the topic of Spain, Hitler, unrestrained by any consideration of good taste, declared that not Franco, but the “usurpers” in Valencia bore the responsibility for the bloodiness of the revolution.

As you know, in Spain this Jewish Bolshevism proceeded in a similar fashion starting with the detour of democracy up to open revolution. It is a crass misrepresentation of the facts to claim, as is being done, that the Bolshevist oppressors of the Volk there were vested with legal power, while the fighters of national Spain were illegal revolutionaries.

No! We regard General Franco’s men as the genuine and above all lasting Spain, and the usurpers of Valencia as the international revolutionary troop hired by Moscow, a troop which today is ravaging Spain and tomorrow may be ravaging a different state.

Hitler then responded to the accusations of the British and the French in connection with Germany’s intervention in the Spanish Civil War. Britain and France feared that this imperiled the balance of power within Europe.

In England and France, one professes to be worried about the idea that Spain might even be occupied by Italy or Germany; we are just as appalled in the face of the possibility that it might be conquered by Soviet Russia! By no means would this conquest have to be effected in the form of an occupation by Soviet Russian troops; rather, it will become a *fait accompli* at that moment when a Bolshevized Spain has become a section, i.e. an integral component, of the Central Bolshevist Office in Moscow—a branch which receives both its political directives and its material subsidies from there. In any case, we principally regard every attempt to further expand Bolshevism in Europe as a shift in the European balance of power. [—]

I am merely stating a fact! Therefore we have a serious interest in preventing this Bolshevist plague from spreading even further in Europe. In other respects, in the course of history we have naturally had a number of confrontations with, for instance, national France. However, somehow and somewhere, we still belong together in the great European family of peoples, most of all when we all look deep into our innermost selves.

It is then I believe that, in essence, we do not really want to miss any of the truly European civilized nations. We have each other to thank not only for a certain amount of aggravation and suffering, but also for an incredible cross-fertilization. We have given each other models, examples, and lessons—just as, on the other hand, we have also given each other a certain amount of pleasure and many things of beauty. If we are just, we have every reason to harbor mutual admiration instead of hate! In this community of the civilized European nations, international Jewish Bolshevism is a totally alien element which has not the slightest contribution to make to our economy or to our culture, but instead wreaks only havoc; which has not a single positive accomplishment to show for itself in an international perspective on European and world life, but merely propagandistic tables of forged figures and rabble-rousing posters.

Hitler followed with an imperious reference to the confrontation between Berlin and Moscow. He recalled the great achievements that Germany had already attained in its historic struggle against Bolshevism and added subtle threats of military repercussions should any foreign power dare to attack Germany.

Furthermore, to us Germans the thought that this Europe could be guided or ruled by Moscow of all places is simply unbearable. The fact that, in other countries, this type of presumptuousness is tolerated as a political demand, is something which we can only register with astonishment and regret. For us, at any rate, the mere idea of taking orders from a world so very far beneath us is just as ridiculous as it is outrageous. Furthermore, the stated goal of an uncivilized, Jewish-Bolshevist, international league of criminals to rule over Germany—an established member-country of European civilization—from a base in Moscow is yet another insult. Moscow can remain Moscow, and Soviet Russia can remain Soviet Russia, for all we care. Our German capital is Berlin in any case, and what is more: Germany, thank God, will always remain Germany! Thus let no one allow himself to be deceived on one point: National Socialism has banished the Bolshevist world menace from within Germany. It has ensured that the scum of Jewish litterateurs alien to the Volk does not dictate over the proletariat, i.e. the German worker, but that instead the German Volk finally comprehends its own destiny and finds its own leadership. It has moreover made our Volk and the Reich immune against Bolshevist contamination.

Apart from this, it will not shrink from countering any repetition of former attacks from within on the sovereignty of our Volk with the most determined means available. We National Socialists grew up fighting this foe. It took us

more than fifteen years to destroy it in Germany spiritually, *weltanschaulich*, and in point of fact. Neither countless murders and other acts of violence it performed, nor the support it received from the Marxist rulers of the Reich at the time were able to halt our triumphal march. Today we are keeping a close and careful watch to ensure that such a menace will never again descend upon Germany. Yet should anyone have the audacity to bring this menace to or into Germany from without, may he bear in mind that the National Socialist state has also produced the weapon with which it can crush such an attempt in the speed of lightning.

The fact that we were good soldiers is something the world has certainly not yet forgotten. The fact that today we are even better soldiers is something they can take our word for. But the fact that the National Socialist state will stand up and fight for its existence with a different zeal than the bourgeois Reich of old is something no one should doubt!

The age when the German Volk suffered from parliamentary infirmity is over, to return no more. We all have one great desire, that Fate might give us the necessary peace and all the time to bring the inner regeneration and the work of our great inner reconstruction to a close, and that means bringing it to a close in a Europe that has once more come to its senses. It is not our intention to thrust our ideas or ideals on anyone else; but let no one attempt to force his opinion upon us. Above all, let the criminal Muscovite sovietism finally cease continuing to expand its barbarism and, if possible, make us unhappy as well. The age is over when one could unreasonably demand everything from a defenseless Volk.

The bombs that fell on our armored ship not only hit the vessel—called *Deutschland*—but also met with the response which, from now on, will be dealt out immediately in answer to any such attempt.

Although Hitler cloaked his words in anti-Bolshevist rhetoric, his true intention was unmistakable—to warn the Western Powers not to intervene militarily. To this end, he strove to intimidate them by alluding to the frightful military retaliation such a step would entail.

His tactics were thinly veiled, particularly considering that the Soviet Union had not imposed upon the defenseless German Volk. Furthermore, the Reichswehr and the Red Army had been cooperating, subsequent to the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo until the early 1930s, in the secret rearmament of Germany. The Western Powers, however, were completely unmoved by Hitler's tirade against the Bolsheviks in his final speech. Neither threats and entreaties nor gruesome stories of the revolting dangers Bolshevism posed to the entire world conjured the reaction Hitler had intended. His endless harangues, the immense efforts he expended in his speeches—all had once again been for naught. Western Europe showed no inclination to subordinate itself to Hitler simply to ward off the Bolshevist bogey.

Hitler concluded his speech with a review of the events of the Party Congress. He then proceeded to proclaim the birth of a “Germanic Empire of the German Nation.”¹⁸⁶

Today it is so easy to admire the overall outcome, but so difficult to sense how much work, sacrifice, industry, and initiative was required to reap these results. What are a mere 100,000 men! They stood here group after group, standard after standard, company after company, battalion after battalion, and regiment after regiment. Behind them stand just as many millions of comrades and soldiers, and all of this has been called to life and come to be in the space of a few years, in part from out of nothing, from out of turmoil, and from out of decay.

This tremendous demonstration alone is the result of immeasurable labors. Now do you understand, why, my Party Comrades, in the face of such brilliant products of human ability and industry, we have given this celebration the name “Party Congress of Labor”? [—]

In a few short hours, the trains with their hundreds of thousands of participants will roll back out into the German Gaus. The peasants and their sons will return to their villages; workers, employees and civil servants will return to their plants and their offices; the soldiers will report to the barracks; youth will go to school—but all of them will think back with throbbing hearts on this further great demonstration of the National Socialist Party and the National Socialist State.

And they will take with them the proud feeling of having again been witnesses of the internal and external uprising of their Volk. Yet may they be conscious that therein a hope of millenniums and the prayer of many generations, the confidence and faith of innumerable great men of our Volk have finally achieved their historic realization. The German nation has been given its Germanic Empire after all.

4

On September 19, Hitler reviewed Wehrmacht maneuvers in Mecklenburg. These exercises were the dress rehearsal for the demonstration of military might which he intended to stage a week later for Mussolini, who doubtless would stand in awe of him. At the same time, Hitler named Foreign Minister von Neurath as an "Honorary SS Gruppenführer" so that the latter, too, would have a uniform to wear when this important guest arrived.¹⁸⁷

A special decree¹⁸⁸ was promulgated, declaring September 25 in Munich and September 28 in Berlin to be a state holiday in honor of the "Royal Italian Head of Government, Benito Mussolini."

At 9:00 a.m. on September 25, the Duce arrived at the border station of Kiefersfelden. Reich Minister Frank, who spoke fluent Italian, and Rudolf Hess welcomed Mussolini to Germany in the name of the Führer. Both men accompanied Mussolini on his journey to Munich. Their special train arrived at the main station at 10:00 a.m. Mussolini was greeted at the gate by the Führer himself.

Immediately thereafter began the various military reviews, parades, and events in honor of the distinguished guest which characterized Mussolini's stay in Germany. Within the halls of the train station, an honorary contingent of the Party stood at attention when Mussolini stepped toward the exit. All branches of the Wehrmacht had posted guards of honor just outside the train station to pay their respects to the ruler of Italy. Thereafter, the dictators drove through the streets of Munich. The crowd on both sides of the road demonstrated a lack of enthusiasm which greatly displeased its head of state. Unlike other German cities, Munich had far too often witnessed Hitler's theatrics to be easily impressed by such pomp.¹⁸⁹

For the duration of his stay in the Bavarian capital, Mussolini resided at the Prince Carl Palace in the upper part of the Prinz-

regentenstrasse. This was not far from Hitler's private quarters at 16 Prinzregentenplatz, where Mussolini called on Hitler at 11:30 a.m.

On this occasion, the Italian dictator presented Hitler with a document naming him "Honorary Corporal in the Fascist Militia."¹⁹⁰ While this indeed was the highest distinction bestowed by the Fascist Party of Italy, it irritated Hitler in two ways. First, as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, the title of Honorary Corporal had a belittling ring to it, especially since it had been years since Hitler had been a mere corporal in the First World War. Moreover, Hitler's particular dislike of militia units was widely known.¹⁹¹

In all likelihood, Mussolini did not become aware of the pejorative implications of this "honor," for Hitler knew how to betray his feelings. Indeed, he gave such deference to Mussolini that he actually wore the insignia hearing this title¹⁹² during his visit to Italy the next year. He also sported the dagger which clearly marked him as an Honorary Corporal. In Germany on the other hand, Hitler never wore such symbols of the positions he held within Party, State, and Military.

Mussolini remained with Hitler at the latter's Munich apartment for little over an hour. The Duce's itinerary, bristling with social engagements, left no time for more extensive private consultations between the two statesmen. At noon, they laid wreaths at the pantheon honoring the dead. An official brunch at the newly completed Führerbau at the "Königlicher Platz" was followed by a reception in the banquet hall which numerous renowned German and Italian figures attended upon invitation. For an entire hour Party formations goosestepped past the Führerbau as Hitler and Mussolini looked on from its balcony. At 5:30 p.m., Hitler returned Mussolini's morning call with a visit to the Prince Carl Palace. Here the Führer presented Mussolini with a replica of the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle,¹⁹³ as well as with the golden sovereign symbol of the Party which hitherto was reserved for Hitler himself.

Afterwards, the dictators proceeded to an art exhibition through which Hitler ushered Mussolini. This excursion was followed by a social function at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, a meeting with numerous artists, businessmen, and scholars. At 7:00 p.m., the statesmen returned to the main train station, where they again were met by guards of honor.

Shortly thereafter, they left Munich in two separate special trains. The DNB reported: "Thus ended the greatest day in the history of the Capital of the Movement."¹⁹⁴

On September 26, Hitler and Mussolini were present at Wehrmacht maneuvers in Mecklenburg, near the villages of Belitz, Stielow, Tolzin, and Wustrow.¹⁹⁵ In the morning of the next day, Mussolini submitted himself to a tour through the "Reich's Armory," the Krupp factory in Essen. Alfried Krupp himself led the dictators through the industrial complex. In Hanover that afternoon, the recently developed new synthetic product Buna¹⁹⁶ was displayed to Mussolini.

The two special trains left Hanover and headed for Berlin, traveling along parallel rails at precisely the same speed. They arrived at the Heerstrasse station in the capital at 5:40 p.m. The reception was nearly perfect. Once again, the statesmen stepped by a guard of honor awaiting their arrival. They drove up Wilhelmstrasse, passing through a corridor of applauding people. Mussolini resided for the duration of his stay in Berlin at the House of the Reich President.

Later that night, Hitler held a banquet at his official residence (Reichskanzlerhaus) "in the honor of the Italian Head of Government and Leader of Fascism, Benito Mussolini." Among the guests at the banquet were numerous Italian ministers including Starace, Alfieri, and Ciano. Also present were the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico; all the members of the Reich Cabinet; the leading men of the Party, State, and Wehrmacht; and representatives of the sciences, arts and business. In front of his two hundred guests, Hitler toasted his guest of honor:¹⁹⁷

Your Excellency!

As Führer and Chancellor of the German Volk, today it is an honor to me and my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Your Excellency in the Capital of the Reich. The German nation joins me in this solemn hour to hail you as the brilliant creator of Fascist Italy, the founder of a new empire (*Imperium*).

On your journey through Germany, Your Excellency will have concluded from the great enthusiasm with which all the classes of the German Volk greeted you that your visit means more to us than a mere diplomatic event and hence a purely conventional meeting.

In an age in which the world is full of tensions and uneasy confusion, in which the most dangerous elements are attempting to attack and destroy the old culture of Europe, Italy and Germany have joined in sincere friendship and mutual political cooperation.

This cooperation is supported not only by the same indestructible will for life and self-assertion common to the Italian and the German peoples, but, moreover, by strongly affiliated political ideals as well, which in our opinion constitute a foundation for the internal strength and solidity of our nations. The fact that these shared basic political views act as a sturdy bond linking our two peoples is further complemented by the fact that, as regards the real vital interests of Italy and Germany, there are no elements dividing the two,

but only those which supplement and join. The talks Your Excellency and I have had these past days have served to verify this anew.

We are confident, in this context, that our political work of safeguarding the peace and the full flower of European culture cannot be interpreted as the formation of a block directed against other European states. On the contrary: we are of the conviction that, by virtue of our joint efforts, we are best serving the interests of our two countries and, furthermore, the goal so close to our hearts—that of a general international understanding.

It is in this spirit that Italy and Germany, side by side, will weigh and approach the coming political tasks, in order to thereby counter any and all attempts to divide these two nations or to play them off against each other.

I may raise my glass and drink to the health of His Majesty, the King of Italy, the Emperor of Ethiopia, your esteemed sovereign, and the personal well-being of Your Excellency himself, and to the glory and prosperity of the Fascist Italian nation.

Excerpts of Mussolini's reply are reproduced below:

In the person of the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich, I greet the combatant who has restituted consciousness of its greatness to the German Volk. In his person, I greet the man who has refashioned a nation which shares such manifold bonds of common spirit and shared work with Fascist Italy. The Fascist Revolution and the National Socialist Revolution have been, and always will be, creative revolutions. On their soil, Germany and Italy have erected great monuments testifying to cultural achievement and progress. New, and by no means inferior, feats will be accomplished in the future.

The German-Italian solidarity is a lively and active one. It has not come about as a product of political opportunism or diplomatic engineering, but rather is the expression and result of an inherent feeling of solidarity and mutual interest. It is not and never will be a reclusive or exclusive alliance which fearfully and suspiciously hides itself away from the rest of the world. Italy and Germany are willing to work together with all other peoples, provided they demonstrate their good will. All both our nations seek is respect and understanding of our needs and justified demands. All we ask in return for our friendship to all nations is that no one seek to question the principles upon which our glorious European culture is based.

My talks with Your Excellency have reinforced the friendship between our nations and thereby have made it immune to attempts to undermine it and to efforts to drive a wedge between us, no matter what their origin.

As I return to Italy, I take with me memories of your powerful troops, your mass rallies and the great feat the German Volk has accomplished under its Führer, both with regard to spiritual and technical aspects of the reconstruction of your homeland.

On September 28, the day which had been designated a public holiday because of the occasion, Mussolini saw the Berlin Zeughaus (armory) and then admired the sights of Potsdam. In addition, he

delivered a short address before the *Fascio*, an organization formed by Italian Fascists living in the German capital.

On the Tempelhofer Feld, a mass rally began at 7:00 p.m. that night. The official news release called it the “people’s demonstration of the 115 million.”¹⁹⁸ Goebbels greeted the crowd in his capacity as the Gauleiter of Berlin. Hitler followed Goebbels’ opening words with the statement below:¹⁹⁹

Men and Women!

At present we are witnesses of a historic event which is unprecedented in this form and in such magnitude! More than one million people have gathered here for a rally in which 115 million members of two races are participating with fervent emotion, and which hundreds of millions of people in the rest of the world are following as more or less interested listeners! What moves us all first and foremost at this moment is the great joy we share in the knowledge of having as a guest in our midst one of those rare men of the ages whom history does not put to the test, but who themselves make history!

Secondly, we sense that this rally is not merely another of the assemblies that are always taking place elsewhere; instead, it is expressing a pledge to shared ideals and shared interests. A pledge being made by two men which a million people are hearing here, but which 115 million are anticipating and affirming with hearts aglow! And hence this evening is no longer a public assembly, but instead a rally of the nations.

The most profound purpose of this rally of the nations lies in the sincere desire to guarantee for our countries the peace which is not the reward for the cowardice of resignation, but rather the result of having responsibly secured our *volklich*, spiritual and physical—as well as our cultural—characteristics and values.

Here, too, we believe that we are best able to serve those interests which, above and beyond our two peoples, should truly be the interests of all of Europe.

The fact that we are in a position today to hold this rally is something which enables us to gauge how the times lying behind us have changed. No Volk can yearn more for peace than the German Volk, but neither has any other Volk come to know the terrible consequences of feeble credulity more than ours has! For behind us, prior to the National Socialist accession to power, there lies a period of fifteen years which comprised a single succession of suppression, of extortion, of rights denied, and hence of unspeakable spiritual and material distress.

In our country, the ideals of Liberalism and Democracy have not rescued the German nation from the worst violations conceivable in history. Therefore, National Socialism has had to establish a new and more effective ideal in order to restore to our Volk those basic human rights which had been denied it for one-and-a-half decades. In that time of bitterest trials—this is something I must state this evening before the German Volk and the entire world—Italy,

and especially Fascist Italy, had no part in the humiliation of our people. During those years, it proved itself capable of showing understanding for a great nation's demands for equal rights, for the bare necessities of life, and not least of all for its honor as a Volk.

Thus it filled us with genuine satisfaction that the hour came in which we were able to remember this—and, I believe, we have remembered it!²⁰⁰ From the mutuality of the Fascist and National Socialist Revolutions, there has developed today a mutuality not only of views, but of actions as well. This is fortunate in an age and a world in which the currents of destruction and deformation are visible at every turn. Fascist Italy has become a new imperium by virtue of the brilliant, creative work of a constructive man.

You, Benito Mussolini, will have ascertained one thing about the National Socialist State after having seen it with your own eyes, namely, that Germany, too, by virtue of its *völkisch* attitude and its military strength, has become a world power once again. The force of these two empires today constitutes the strongest guarantor of the preservation of a Europe which still possesses a sense of its cultural mission and is not prepared to succumb to the decay caused by destructive elements!

For all of you who are gathered here in this hour or are listening in the world must acknowledge that here two autocratic national regimes have found their way to one another and are standing by one another, in a time in which the ideas of a democratic and Marxist International have nothing to show but demonstrations of hatred and hence of disunion.

Every attempt to break apart or dissolve such a community of peoples by playing one against the other, by raising suspicions or by imputing false aims will likewise be defeated by the desire of those 115 million who, in this hour, comprise this rally of community, and above all by the will of the two men who are standing here before you and speaking to you!

After Hitler had finished, Mussolini delivered a lengthy address in German. Before he managed to close, however, torrential rain began pouring down. To Hitler, this should have appeared as a bad omen for the newly created Italo-German friendship. Mussolini emphasized that he was speaking primarily in his capacity as “leader of a national revolution” and declared:

As stated before, there are no ulterior motives for my visit to Germany. No web of intrigue has been woven to widen the gap between the already sufficiently divided nations of Europe. The ceremonious reaffirmation of the Rome-Berlin Axis is not directed against other states.

All of us, National Socialists and Fascists, desire peace and are always willing to work for peace, for a viable and fertile peace. We endeavor to resolve—and not tacitly to ignore—the problems that naturally come about when so many nations live together. In response to the world that is fixing its worried eyes upon Berlin to see whether war or peace will be the result of our meeting, the Führer and I can turn to and confidently declare: It will be peace! [—]

Without economic autonomy, the political independence of a nation cannot be guaranteed, and even a people of great military strength can be victimized by an economic blockade. We have come into direct contact with the effects of such a situation, when we had to face the criminal economic sanctions upon which the fifty-two states assembled in Geneva had decided. The latter saw to the strict and unrelenting implementation of these measures, which, however, completely failed them in the pursuit of their goal. Indeed, their only result was to give Fascist Italy the opportunity to prove to the world its power of resistance. In spite of international pressure, Germany did not heed the call to impose economic sanctions upon Italy. We will never forget this.²⁰¹

Precisely at this point, the compatibility—yes, indeed, the need—for National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy to stand together became apparent for the very first time. What has come to be known throughout the world as the Rome-Berlin Axis was developed in the autumn of 1935. In the course of the last two years, it has led to an increasing rapprochement between our two peoples, and thus it has greatly strengthened the efforts to ensure peace in Europe on an ever larger scale.

Fascism has its own ethical principles to which it strives to remain true, and these ethics are mirrored in my own personal morals: to speak clearly and frankly. And when you have a friend, to march alongside him till the end!

Indeed, Mussolini did remain true to his maxim, He did so until he was ruined by the aftereffects of this exercise.

In his speech, the Duce concluded explanations of the terms dictatorship, democracy, and Bolshevism with the statement:

When words no longer suffice and circumstances necessitate it, one must take up arms! This was the case in Spain, where thousands of Italian Fascist volunteers died in defense of European culture.

Then he closed with the words:

It has been for twenty years now that your great Führer has hurled at the masses the uplifting cry that was to become the battle cry of the entire German Volk: *Deutschland erwache!* Germany has awoken. The Third Reich is here.

I do not know if and when Europe will awaken. This has been a bone of contention at the Party Congress in Nuremberg. Though well known to us, there are secret forces at work, striving to turn a civil war into a worldwide sea of flames. What is important is that our two great nations—which today comprise the enormous sum of 115 million people, a figure that is constantly on the rise—stand together as one in our single unshakeable determination. Today's gigantic rally serves as proof to the entire world of our ambition.

As is apparent from these excerpts, Mussolini had already assumed a role subservient to Hitler. The loquacious Italian had met his master. Times had changed since their first encounter in 1934. Mussolini had come to realize that in the future it would be Hitler's word that counted.

Nothing made a greater impression on the Duce than displays of military power. As if uncertain whether the abundance of such displays in the last few days were sufficient to impress Mussolini, Hitler led him from the rally on the Tempelhofer Feld to the nearby stadium, where the tattoo ending the day reinforced its military theme.

The next day at 10:00 a.m., the military festivities resumed in Berlin. The first took place on the new Paradeplatz in front of the Technical University. General von Witzleben²⁰² began as usual with an inventory of the parade participants: 591 officers, 13,095 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men, etc. It was 1:00 p.m. when the various branches of the service had passed in front of the Führer. After the parade, Hitler hosted Mussolini for a late breakfast at the Chancellery. At 3:51 p.m., Hitler finally bade his guest farewell at the Lehrte station in Berlin.

Without question the goose step had made the greatest impression on Mussolini during his stay in Germany. His disgust at any expression of liberalism and his efforts to turn Italy into a sort of Latin Prussia²⁰³ were further reasons why, immediately after his return, he introduced the goose step as the “Passo Romano” to all military contingents.

After Mussolini’s departure, Hitler delivered an address at the Kroll banquet hall to the one thousand German workers who had built the German exhibit at the Paris World’s Fair of 1937.²⁰⁴

On October 2, Hitler went to see an exhibition in Düsseldorf, entitled *Schaffendes Volk* (Creative People).

A day later, the *Erntedankfest* was celebrated on the Bückeberg near Hamelin. No one, least of all Hitler himself, had any premonition that their celebration was to be the last harvest festival to take place in the history of the Third Reich.²⁰⁵

Hitler’s speech revealed a lingering engrossment with Mussolini’s visit. It would be wrong to assume that Mussolini was the only one to leave this meeting of dictators profoundly affected, Hitler was exuberant as well. In spite of initial difficulties, he had succeeded in bringing about an alliance between Germany and Italy. For him this was the final shred of evidence that his conduct of foreign policy was beyond reproach. He was confident that a similar alliance with Great Britain was feasible as well, and that the conquest and establishment of colonies in Eastern Europe were merely a matter of time.

In the course of his “party narrative,” Hitler once again stressed that only one man could command the nation, naturally himself:

Hence there is no such thing as freedom for the individual, just as there is no freedom for a class. What does that mean, my dear peasants, freedom for the individual? You yourselves know how very strongly you are forced by Nature and by the requirements of your profession to perform certain tasks, whether you want to or not. In good weather or bad! Nature continually compels man to perform tasks he does not relish and work he does not always find pleasant. Yet perhaps life would not be good at all if everything went the way the individual happens to want it to at the moment. On the contrary: overcoming obstacles is the supreme triumph of life. [—]

Where would even the smallest farm end up if no one wanted to bear the responsibility? The community of the Volk is no different from a family: one person must have an overall perspective, one person is responsible not only for the organization of production, but for coordinating consumption, too!

Next he turned to the topic of German colonies:

If we say today that our Lebensraum is too small and that, therefore, it is essential for us to supplement it by way of colonies, some wiseacre will appear from somewhere in the world and say, "Why do you need colonies? Colonies would do you no good at all! You have purchasing power!" Frankly, we ourselves are smart enough to buy what we can when we have money. But one should not have cleaned us out for fifteen years first—then we could buy things today!

There are rich people who say, "Wealth is a very heavy burden to bear! Let no one wish that he, too, might be encumbered by this burden!" Now one might think that, if wealth is such a heavy burden, they would be glad to give some of it away. That, however, is something they do not want to do, either. And there are foreign statesmen who say, "Colonies are a heavy burden." Yet they do not want to give away any part of this burden! They say, "Colonies have no value at all!" Yet under no circumstances are they willing to restore this "worthless" possession to its rightful owner! And when I talk about "rightful owners," it is in a time and in a world pervaded by the ideals of morality and modesty laid down by the League of Nations. And it was in accordance with these ideals that we Germans once acquired our colonies, but in accordance with different principles—such as, from the moral perspective of the League of Nations, would deserve to be utterly condemned—that we lost them.

Then Hitler addressed military questions:

There is a reason why, at every *Erntedankfest*, I have the Wehrmacht perform exercises for you. You shall all be reminded that we would not be standing here if sword and shield were not standing guard over us. Yes indeed, we have peace only because the new German weapon is being held over it. That gives us peace, that gives us security, and that gives us the prerequisites for doing our job. [—]

The prerequisite for every success, however, is that the will of he who represents the will is also respected. As long as every rank of the German

October 3, 1937

nation remains subject to one will, any problem can be solved! We have solved them in the past, have we not? But I was only able to solve them because the German Volk was standing behind me! Only because you were marching after me was I able to march ahead!

When I gave the order to occupy the Rhineland last year, the important thing was not that the soldiers were marching, but that the German Volk went along, that the entire nation was backing me. To it you owe the success!

In the course of the speech, Hitler further maintained that he had never made the German Volk a promise he could not keep:

It is so easy to promise people something, but so infinitely difficult to keep one's word. I might well say of myself that I have never promised the German Volk anything I was not able to really deliver. I even think I have delivered more in these five years than I once promised! But if so, only because I succeeded in teaching the German Volk to be reasonable and go along with me!

Had Hitler restricted the scope of his pretentious assertions to issues of domestic policy, one might have disregarded them. However, since he did not desist from making these assertions in the realm of foreign policy, his capability of fulfilling them became an important question. The German people were soon to catch the brunt of the ramifications of Hitler's grandiose assertions. Hitler's summons of the Almighty, who assuredly would not desert him in the end, proved of little use in the face of the harsh realities to come. The closing words of Hitler's final address on the Bückeberg made clear the extent to which he had already succumbed to these delusions:

If we adhere to this path, decent, industrious, and honest, if we do our duty so bravely and loyally, it is my belief that the Lord will help us again and again in the future as well. He does not abandon decent people for any length of time! While He may sometimes put them to the test or send them trials, in the long run He will always allow His sun to shine upon them and ultimately give them His blessing. [—]

If we all stick together in the city and the country, if each and every person decently does his duty in the place he occupies and thinks not only of himself but of his fellow humans as well, then you can trust that there is nothing which could break us asunder. We shall prevail! In the year to come, and in the decades to come!

We have a magnificent sun today. A year ago, we had pouring rain. What next year will bring is something I do not know. But that we will be standing here over and over again, that is something I do know, no matter what the weather! When we meet here again after a year has passed, we will once more be able to pledge anew: the year is over, and once again everything has gone well. Everything has become even more splendid. And we are fortunate to be allowed to live in Germany.

To Our German Reich and our German Volk—*Sieg Heil!*

October 5, 1937

A year later, Hitler no longer stood on the Bückeberg, but led the march of his troops into the Sudetenland. This precluded an *Erntedankfest* celebration in 1938. The war, which was planned to have begun on October 2, 1938, broke out in 1939, making further harvest festivals impossible.

On the occasion of the opening of the new Winterhilfswerk on October 5, Hitler addressed the following appeal to the German Volk:²⁰⁶

Berlin, October 5, 1937

In 1933, the government of the new Germany, confronted with an army of unemployed far exceeding the six-million mark, turned for the first time to the nation in order to help the victims of the vanquished system survive the worst trials of winter. At that time, the German Volk laid the cornerstone for the Winterhilfswerk, the greatest social achievement of all time. In total, the contribution made by the Winterhilfswerk since 1933/34 has amounted to RM 1,490,760,834.

The winter battles of the past years constitute glorious chapters in our Volksgemeinschaft, irrefutable testimony to the success of the National Socialist work of education. The goal in the winter of 1937/38 is to surpass our results to date. German Volk, help me!

The Führer and Reich Chancellor and the entire Reich Government

That night in the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin, the annual drive for the Winterhilfswerk was launched as the “greatest social aid society of all time.” Goebbels spoke first before the 20,000 involved in the effort, reading a report on the foundation’s accomplishments during the past year. Goebbels appeased Hitler’s absurd penchant for lists of figures by presenting a seemingly endless itinerary of items distributed by the organization including such details as: the quintals of potatoes (5,487,019) and coals (21,271,790) distributed; the fact that the Winterhilfswerk had bought up 3,734,752 movie and theater tickets; RM 124,080,304.02 worth of foodstuff and consumer goods, ... [etc., etc.] Once Goebbels had finished his account, Hitler himself took the floor and stated the following right at the beginning of his speech:²⁰⁷

German Volksgenossen!

You have just been given an idea of last year’s accomplishments of the greatest social aid society of all time. It is gigantic in its scope and enormous in the depth of its effects. I believe that the reward for all who are working in this society lies in the success of the work itself.

Further, Hitler declared that the volunteers laboring for the WHW were the only true Christians of action:

October 5, 1937

Sometimes when I see shabbily dressed girls, shivering with cold themselves, collecting with infinite patience for others who are cold, then I have the feeling that they are all apostles of a certain Christianity! This is a Christianity which can claim for itself as no other can: this is the Christianity of a sincere profession of faith, because behind it stands not the word, but the deed!

With the aid of this tremendous society, countless people are being relieved of the feeling of social abandonment and isolation. Many are thus regaining the firm belief that they are not completely lost and alone in this world, but sheltered in their *Volksgemeinschaft*; that they, too, are being cared for, that they, too, are being thought of and remembered. And beyond that: there is a difference between the theoretical knowledge of socialism and the practical life of socialism. People are not born socialists, but must first be taught how to become them.

Now one statement followed that Hitler had already voiced repeatedly,²⁰⁸ that the contributions made to the *Winterhilfswerk* represented an “insurance program against lack of political common sense.”

People in the bourgeois era before us insured themselves against everything: against fire, against theft, against hailstorms, against burglary, etc.—but they forgot one kind of insurance, insurance against lack of political madness, insurance against lack of political common sense, that first tears a *Volk* asunder and then allows it to become powerless to fulfill its lifetasks. And this one omission made all the other types of insurance pointless.

We, however, place at the fore of all types of insurance the insurance of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*! It is for this we are paying our donation, and we know that it will be reimbursed a thousand times over! For as long as this *Volksgemeinschaft* remains inviolate, nothing can threaten us! Therein lies the guarantee for the future not only of the life of the nation, but hence of the existence of every individual as well.

Therefore, it is just to demand from each individual a premium corresponding to his income. Wanting to establish a general lump sum for this premium is a sign of an indecent cast of mind. The little old woman who sacrifices five or ten pfennigs in Moabit or somewhere out in the country casts in more than someone who puts in one hundred or one thousand or perhaps ten thousand marks.²⁰⁹ Had our so-called intellectual classes initiated these premium payments prior to the war, a certain amount of misfortune could later have been avoided.

Hitler closed his speech with the remark that there might be additional sacrifices—though of a different nature—that Fate might ask of the German *Volk* in the future.

May God forbid that Fate puts us to the utmost test once again. Yet even then—that is something we know—millions of Germans would be willing to

immediately and unconditionally make this last sacrifice to the nation, the eternal Volk. What is this sacrifice we are making today in comparison? Above all, do your duty in being mindful of those millions who once did their duty for all.

On October 15, Hitler delivered an address on the anniversary of the “Day of Coburg,” in which he explained:²¹⁰

At that time, our recipe was: if you do not want to let [us] talk of your own accord, we will use force to make you do it. [—]

That battle of the force of reason versus the democracy of force lasted for two days, and after two days this reason, supported by the will of a thousand German men, came away with the victory! It was thus that the battle for this city became a milestone in the evolution of our Movement. This was the recipe we used throughout the Reich to clear the way for the National Socialist idea and thus to conquer Germany. [—]

Loyalty and obedience, discipline and self-sacrifice: if the German Volk continues to devote itself to these ideals in the future as well, it will solve every problem and master every task!

Hitler concluded:

Back then, millions might still have been able to doubt; yet who can continue today to doubt his Volk, Germany and its future? We old fighters, we know that we have always reached our goal until now! And in the future, Germany will reach its life-goal, too, for our Movement is Germany, and Germany is the National Socialist Movement!

On October 20, Prince Aga Khan III, leader of the Indian Muslims and Imam of the Ishmaelite sect, called upon Hitler in Berchtesgaden. Despite derogatory comments on the traveling representatives of India in *Mein Kampf*,²¹¹ Hitler spoke to Aga Khan in a rather open manner about his future plans: close relations to Austria, settlement of the Sudeten German question, the Danzig problem and the Polish Corridor. “If England gives us a free hand on the continent, we will not meddle in its affairs overseas.”²¹² Hitler considered this proposal to Aga Khan a “most generous one.” Evidently, he hoped it would be relayed to London.

On October 22, Hitler received the Duke and the Duchess of Windsor at the Obersalzberg.²¹³ Prior to his abdication, the Duke had borne the title of Edward VIII, King of Great Britain and Ireland. Hitler was convinced that the Duke of Windsor was sympathetic to the National Socialist cause. However, Paul Schmidt, present at the meeting as interpreter, expressed his reservations regarding Hitler’s conviction in the following manner.²¹⁴

Based on my observations at the talk, it was difficult to discern whether the Duke of Windsor was truly as sympathetic to the National Socialist world view as Hitler fancied because of the apolitical nature of the conversation. In my opinion, there was no indication of such a conviction on the part of the Duke. He did not comment on any political topic, with the exception of expressing admiration for the measures implemented within Germany in the realm of social work.

At the Chancellery on October 28, Hitler received a call from the newly appointed Hungarian Minister Döme Sztójay. The latter presented him with a gift from Horthy, a china set.²¹⁵

That same day marked the fifteenth anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome. On this occasion, Hitler sent Mussolini the following telegram:²¹⁶

In grateful recollection of the days I was allowed to spend in Your Excellency's company in Germany, my thoughts today are specially focused upon the festivities in Fascist Italy.

The entire German Volk today remembers the magnificent march which you led on Rome fifteen years ago to date. This day marked a turning point in the history of Italy as well as the beginning of a new development in European history. To my congratulations, I would like to add my best wishes for your personal welfare, your work in the service of the Italian nation and our mutual endeavors to further culture and peace in Europe.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler dispatched Rudolf Hess to Rome at the head of the delegation representing Germany at the anniversary festivities. A few days later, he was followed by Julius Streicher, whose mission was most likely to update Mussolini on the Jewish question and to advise the Duce on several practical measures proposed by Berlin which aimed at resolving the issue in Italy.

On October 29, Hitler personally called on Goebbels in his Berlin apartment to congratulate him on his fortieth birthday.²¹⁷

October was a crucial month for Hitler. Mussolini's visit erased the last vestiges of doubt with regard to the timing and method he sought to employ in the implementation of his ambitious designs for the future. He had achieved nearly all his political and military goals within the borders of the Reich. In foreign affairs, he now determined to employ force in his drive to conquer "new Lebensraum."

5

It is no coincidence that in these days as well, Hitler decided to leave the remnants of his former private life behind and to sever all ties to the Catholic faith.

A number of Hitler's 'secret speeches' during this time, while not revealing all his inner thoughts, tell us a great deal. The majority of these speeches consisted of little more than hackneyed phrases and concepts Hitler had already presented in earlier speeches and in *Mein Kampf*. Nevertheless, on occasion Hitler dropped certain clues to the "secrets" he harbored, but only when facing the appropriately impressionable audience, such as the Political Leaders or, typically, a group of workers. The Führer reasoned that those in his audience would feel all the more obliged to remain loyal to him once given the honored role of keeper of his secrets.

However, Hitler kept the true "secrets" to himself. Speaking to his closest advisers, he never attempted to veil this fact. Whenever a conversation touched upon a topic he did not care to discuss, he would shroud himself in a cloak of mystery and end the conversation in a manner similar to Jesus Christ when he had said to his disciples: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."²¹⁸

Hitler still proceeded according to his old maxim. In 1932, he had explained it to Lüdecke in the following terms:²¹⁹

I have an old principle, only to say what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it.

A "Basic Directive" issued to the Wehrmacht in 1940²²⁰ articulated this even more pointedly:

No one, no office and no officer may gain knowledge of secret affairs, lest their duty absolutely necessitates this or be informed of either more or earlier than is absolutely necessary.

Late in October and early in November 1937, Hitler deemed it “absolutely necessary” to reveal to a small group his new religious convictions and his plans for a policy of aggression.²²¹ He did this in two ‘secret speeches,’ one in Berlin before the propaganda leaders of the Party, the other before an assembly of the Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht and in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister.²²²

While speaking before the propaganda leaders, Hitler’s topics included the following:²²³

1. He, Hitler, would not live much longer, at least as far as this was accessible to the human mind. In his family, men did not grow old. Also both his parents had died young.

2. It was hence necessary to face the problems which absolutely had to be resolved (Lebensraum) as quickly as possible—so that this would occur while he was still alive. Later generations were not capable of accomplishing this. His person alone was in a position to do this.

3. After long and bitter mental battles, he finally had divorced himself from the religious convictions that still existed from his childhood. “Now I feel as fresh as a colt in the pasture.”

Hitler had quite frankly discussed with Aga Khan on October 20 precisely the direction his foreign policy and military strategy would take him in the near future. He first intended to move into Austria, then enter Czechoslovakia, and from there he would proceed on toward Danzig and the Polish Corridor. A close look at the boundaries of the Third Reich at the time suffices to make clear that in order to pursue the military conquest of new Lebensraum in Eastern Europe (i.e. Poland and Russia), it was imperative to deal with Austria and Czechoslovakia beforehand. If these could not be annexed to Germany, it remained necessary nonetheless to integrate these states in some manner into the Reich’s system of defense.

As far as Austria was concerned, it looked as though it might be possible to annex this country to the Reich by peaceful means. At the very least, it would not be difficult to encourage a National Socialist takeover in Vienna, provided that Mussolini was not opposed to such a plan. As early as January that year, Hitler had sent Göring to Rome in an attempt to feel out how Mussolini would react to such an event.²²⁴ When Göring had broached the subject, Mussolini had violently shaken his head in dissent.²²⁵ Since then, however, relations between Germany and Italy had markedly improved, particularly in the wake of Mussolini’s visit to Germany. It appeared as though Italy had finally

given up on Austria. It was possible as well that Italy would no longer, as it had in July of 1934, threaten to forcibly resist such a venture on the part of Germany. The fact that Hitler still doubted Italy's stance is revealed by the exuberance with which he thanked Mussolini on March 13, 1938.²²⁶

On the other hand, Hitler was quite confident that he would be able to take Austria without bloodshed. He refrained from activating "Case Otto" and from issuing any concrete orders to the military.²²⁷ However, his preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia clearly envisioned a military invasion, as detailed in "Case Green." Later, in "Case White," he would proceed in a similar manner prior to preparing for the attack upon Poland. In Austria, Hitler was determined to resort to force only if a peaceful resolution eluded him. However, if the situation deteriorated and the circumstances necessitated a military intervention, Hitler knew he could rely upon his talent for improvisation.

However, because he remained a faithful believer in his thesis on the conquest of new Lebensraum, Hitler considered no option other than the use of brute force in the form of a military intervention, i.e. war. The type of life-and-death struggle he envisioned entailed bloodshed by its very nature. In *Mein Kampf*²²⁸ he already had expressed this theory unambiguously. The possibility that Czechoslovakia might voluntarily cede the Sudeten territories to Germany never entered his mind. The concept of the basic human right of all people to "self-determination," which he would invoke so frequently the next year, merely served as a means to an end. For him, the idea was a marvelous justification for a military intervention in Czechoslovakia. He did not believe that the League of Nations, or any other international body, was capable of enforcing the concept of "self-determination," a principle which he derided as the "soft" principle undermining the League's effectiveness.

Hitler's belief that war with Czechoslovakia was certain led him to foster the development of an international situation conducive to such an armed intervention. To this end, he considered the alliance with Italy—extended to a "world-encompassing triangle"²²⁹ Berlin-Rome-Tokyo—to be of primary importance. Further, the continued neutrality of Poland was essential. Indeed, Germany would maintain friendly relations with the Polish Government until it, too, became a victim of Hitler's expansionism.

Prior to revealing his true intentions to the generals, Hitler thought it necessary to further clarify relations with Poland and Italy. On

November 4, he sent Ribbentrop to Rome to add the finishing touches to an agreement bringing Italian membership in the Anti-Comintern Pact. In all likelihood this paper had been prepared during Mussolini's visit.²³⁰

A day later, Hitler signed a declaration pertaining to the treatment of the Polish minority in Germany.²³¹ This document mirrored the identical Polish Government's publication on the same day concerning the German minority in its country. On the occasion, Hitler received at the Chancellery representatives of the Polish Association in Germany, namely, Dr. Jan Kaczmarek, Stefan Szcepaniak, and Dr. Bruno von Openkowski. At this meeting Hitler explained the following in a short address:

The concurrent German-Polish declaration on the mutual protection of each country's foreign ethnic minorities which is being published today by both countries shall serve to improve and reinforce the friendly relations between the two peoples. The practical implementation of the guidelines this declaration contains can make a significant contribution toward achieving this goal.

The efforts of the Reich Government are aimed at creating a cohabitation of harmony and inner peace between the Polish ethnic minority and the German national populace.

I would like to point out that the intention of the Reich Government to provide bread and work for every citizen of the Reich also applies and has been put into practice as regards members of the Polish minority. In an age of grave unemployment and grave privations to which members of the German ethnic minorities in Europe are still exposed to a great extent, the Polish minority is profiting in every way from the economic recovery of the Reich; the same progress is being made in the cultural activity of the Polish minority, as is demonstrated in its many-faceted organizational institutions and most recently in the erection of a Polish secondary school in Germany. The Polish people in Germany must, however, constantly bear in mind that the granting of protective rights entails both loyally fulfilling the obligations to be performed for the State and abiding by the laws.

The protection of the German minority in Poland, above all securing its right to be given work and to remain on its ancestral soil, will also contribute toward safeguarding the Polish minority in Germany. The high objective of the pact I concluded earlier with the great Polish Chief of State, Marshal Józef Pilsudski, has come closer to becoming a reality by virtue of this mutual German-Polish declaration on the minorities question.

Thereafter, Hitler granted an interview to the Polish Ambassador Lipski in which he expressed his satisfaction with the finalized German-Polish Declaration on the Minorities Question. In the conversation with Lipski, the problem of Danzig again was brought up.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* commented:²³²

Right at the beginning, there was agreement that the Danzig question should not perturb German-Polish relations.

This was a rather nebulous rendition of Hitler's actual words. According to Lipski, Hitler twice declared: "Danzig is bound up with Poland."²³³ At this point, Hitler was only interested in assuring the Polish of his friendship and doubtlessly would have been willing to make even more far-reaching concessions. Indeed, why should he not, since he never felt obliged to keep his word.

Hitler had taken all the precautions he believed vital to his Czechoslovakian enterprise. With Italian membership in the Anti-Comintern Pact assured and the German-Polish Declaration on the Minorities Question signed, Hitler finally felt ready to ask the highest ranking generals of the Wehrmacht (Blomberg, Fritsch, Göring, Raeder) and Foreign Minister Neurath to a meeting at the Chancellery. On November 5, Hitler delivered an address to the generals in a closed session. It lasted from 4:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The only surviving record of the discussion are the notes taken at the meeting by Hitler's adjutant Friedrich Hossbach, who transcribed them on November 10, 1937.²³⁴ The "Hossbach minutes," discovered by the Allies at the end of the war, played a key role in the proceedings before the international Military Tribunal in Nuremberg.²³⁵

Of course, these notes only give a rough sketch of the thoughts the Führer entertained at the time. Naturally, at a conference of such length, Hitler preceded his actual talk with a "party narrative." This time it lasted nearly an hour, its duration serving the purpose of lowering the psychological resistance of the audience. As usual, Hitler gave a detailed account of his achievements prior and subsequent to his accession to power.

He then discussed at great length Germany's economic and demographic policies. The exigencies of the situation led Hitler to speak of the necessity of conquering new colonies to serve as Lebensraum for the German people. Here he drifted into a description of the weakness of Great Britain, asserting that the country was no longer capable of defending the far reaches of its empire.

Finally Hitler approached the heart of the matter and declared that the "German question" could be resolved only by the use of force. The only questions remaining were "where" and "when" this was to happen. He declared that it was his "inalterable decision" to resolve the

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matter of territorial acquisition at the very latest in the period 1943 through 1945. Hitler explained that he had cited this date because the present, modern German armament would then start to become obsolete (case 1). Moreover, the “secrecy of *‘special weapons’* (*Sonderwaffen*) could not be preserved forever.”

However, he stated that, should an opportune moment arise, it might become necessary to act at an earlier date. Such an opportunity might come about as a result of a civil war in France (case 2). Another advantageous situation might consist of an armed entanglement, in which an Anglo-French alliance opposed Italy. A similar conflict could develop as an outgrowth of the tensions in the Mediterranean (case 3).

Hitler thought the latter scenario to be the most likely, and predicted that if this were the case such a war would break out by the summer of 1938. For Germany, this would signal a magnificent opportunity to assault both Czechoslovakia and Austria.²³⁶

In any event, Hitler maintained that the attack on Czechoslovakia would have to proceed “with lightning speed” (*blitzartig schnell*). Military intervention need not be feared since Great Britain could not risk entanglement in armed conflict, and undoubtedly, the French would follow suit.

Hossbach’s minutes are reproduced verbatim below:

MEMORANDUM

Berlin, November 10, 1937

Minutes of the conference in the Reich Chancellery, Berlin,
November 5, 1937, from 4:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Present:

The Führer and Reich Chancellor,
Field Marshal von Blomberg, Minister of War,
Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, Commander in Chief, Army,
Admiral Dr. h.c. Raeder, Commander in Chief, Navy,
Colonel General Göring, Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe,
Freiherr von Neurath, Foreign Minister,
Colonel Hossbach.

The Führer began by stating that the subject of the present conference was of such importance that its discussion would, in other countries, certainly be a matter for a full Cabinet meeting, but he—the Führer—had rejected the idea of making it a subject of discussion before the wider circle of the Reich Cabinet just because of the importance of the matter. His exposition to follow was the fruit of thorough deliberation and the experiences of his 4 1/2 years of power. He wished to explain to the gentlemen present his basic ideas concerning the opportunities for the development of our position in the field of foreign affairs

and its requirements, and he asked, in the interests of a long-term German policy, that his exposition be regarded, in the event of his death, as his last will and testament.

The Führer then continued:

The aim of German policy was to make secure and to preserve the racial community (*Volksmasse*) and to enlarge it. It was therefore a question of space.

The German racial community comprised over 85 million people and, because of their number and the narrow limits of habitable space in Europe, constituted a tightly packed racial core such as was not to be met in any other country and such as implied the right to a greater living space than in the case of other peoples. If, territorially speaking, there existed no political result corresponding to this German racial core, that was a consequence of centuries of historical development, and in the continuance of these political conditions lay the greatest danger to the preservation of the German race at its present peak. To arrest the decline of Germanism (*Deutschtum*) in Austria and Czechoslovakia was as little possible as to maintain the present level in Germany itself. Instead of increase, sterility was setting in, and in its train disorders of a social character must arise in course of time, since political and ideological ideas remain effective only so long as they furnish the basis for the realization of the essential vital demands of a people. Germany's future was therefore wholly conditional upon the solving of the need for space, and such a solution could be sought, of course, only for a foreseeable period of about one to three generations.

Before turning to the question of solving the need for space, it had to be considered whether a solution holding promise for the future was to be reached by means of autarchy or by means of an increased participation in world economy.

Autarchy:

Achievement only possible under strict National Socialist leadership of the State, which is assumed; accepting its achievement as possible, the following could be stated as results:

A. In the field of raw materials only limited, not total, autarchy.

1) In regard to coal, so far as it could be considered as a source of raw materials, autarchy was possible.

2) But even as regards ores, the position was much more difficult. Iron requirements can be met from home resources and similarly with light metals, but with other raw materials—copper, tin—this was not the case.

3) Synthetic textile requirements can be met from home resources to the limit of timber supplies. A permanent solution impossible.

4) Edible fats—possible.

B. In the field of food the question of autarchy was to be answered by a flat "No."

With the general rise in the standard of living compared with that of 30 to 40 years ago, there has gone hand in hand an increased demand and an increased home consumption even on the part of the producers, the farmers.

The fruits of the increased agricultural production had all gone to meet the increased demand, and so did not represent an absolute production increase. A further increase in production by making greater demands on the soil, which already, in consequence of the use of artificial fertilizers, was showing signs of exhaustion, was hardly possible, and it was therefore certain that even with the maximum increase in production, participation in world trade was unavoidable. The not inconsiderable expenditure of foreign exchange to insure food supplies by imports, even when harvests were good, grew to catastrophic proportions with bad harvests. The possibility of a disaster grew in proportion to the increase in population, in which, too, the excess of births of 560,000 annually produced, as a consequence, an even further increase in bread consumption, since a child was a greater bread consumer than an adult.

It was not possible over the long run, in a continent enjoying a practically common standard of living, to meet the food supply difficulties by lowering that standard and by rationalization. Since, with the solving of the unemployment problem, the maximum consumption level had been reached, some minor modifications in our home agricultural production might still, no doubt, be possible, but no fundamental alteration was possible in our basic food position. Thus autarchy was untenable in regard both to food and to the economy as a whole.

Participation in world economy.

To this there were limitations which we were unable to remove. The establishment of Germany's position on a secure and sound foundation was obstructed by market fluctuations, and commercial treaties afforded no guarantee for actual execution. In particular it had to be remembered that since the World War, those very countries which had formerly been food exporters had become industrialized. We were living in an age of economic empires in which the primitive urge to colonization was again manifesting itself; in the cases of Japan and Italy economic motives underlay the urge for expansion, and with Germany, too, economic need would supply the stimulus. For countries outside the great economic empires, opportunities for economic expansion were severely impeded.

The boom in world economy caused by the economic effects of rearmament could never form the basis of a sound economy over a long period, and the latter was obstructed above all also by the economic disturbances resulting from Bolshevism. There was a pronounced military weakness in those states which depended for their existence on foreign trade. As our foreign trade was carried on over the sea routes dominated by Britain, it was more a question of security of transport than one of foreign exchange, which revealed, in time of war, the full weakness of our food situation. The only remedy, and one which might appear to us as visionary, lay in the acquisition of greater living space—a quest which has at all times been the origin of the formation of states and of the migration of peoples. That this quest met with no interest at Geneva or among the satiated nations was understandable. If, then, we accept the security of our food situation as the principal question, the space necessary to insure it can only be sought in

Europe, not, as in the liberal-capitalist view, in the exploitation of colonies. It is not a matter of acquiring population but of gaining space for agricultural use. Moreover, areas producing raw materials can be more usefully sought in Europe in immediate proximity to the Reich than overseas; the solution thus obtained must suffice for one or two generations. Whatever else might prove necessary later must be left to succeeding generations to deal with. The development of great world political constellations progressed but slowly after all, and the German people with its strong racial core would find the most favorable prerequisites for such achievement in the heart of the continent of Europe. The history of all ages—the Roman Empire and the British Empire—had proved that expansion could only be carried out by breaking down resistance and taking risks; setbacks were inevitable. There had never in former times been spaces without a master, and there were none today; the attacker always comes up against a possessor.

The question for Germany was simple: where could she achieve the greatest gain at the lowest cost?

German policy had to reckon with two hate-inspired antagonists, Britain and France, to whom a German colossus in the center of Europe was a thorn in the flesh, and both countries were opposed to any further strengthening of Germany's position either in Europe or overseas; in support of this opposition they were able to count on the agreement of all their political parties. Both countries saw in the establishment of German military bases overseas a threat to their own communications, a safeguarding of German commerce, and, as a consequence, a strengthening of Germany's position in Europe.

Because of opposition of the Dominions, Britain could not cede any of her colonial possessions to us. After England's loss of prestige through the passing of Abyssinia into Italian possession, the return of East Africa was not to be expected. British concessions could at best be expressed in an offer to satisfy our colonial demands by the appropriation of colonies which were not British possessions—e.g., Angola. French concessions would probably take a similar line.

Serious discussion of the question of the return of colonies to us could only be considered at a moment when Britain was in difficulties and the German Reich armed and strong. The Führer did not share the view that the Empire was unshakable. Opposition to the Empire was to be found less in the countries conquered than among her competitors. The British Empire and the Roman Empire could not be compared in respect of permanence; the latter was not confronted by any powerful political rival of significance after the Punic Wars. It was only the disintegrating effect of Christianity, and the symptoms of age which appear in every country, which caused ancient Rome to succumb to the onslaught of the Germans.

Beside the British Empire there existed today a number of states stronger than she. The British motherland was able to protect her colonial possessions not by her own power, but only in alliance with other states. How, for instance, could Britain alone defend Canada against attack by America, or her Far Eastern interests against attack by Japan!

The emphasis on the British Crown as the symbol of the unity of the Empire was already an admission that, in the long run, the Empire could not maintain its position by power politics. Significant indications of this were:

- (a) The struggle of Ireland for independence.
- (b) The constitutional struggles in India, where Britain's half-measures had given to the Indians the opportunity of using later on as a weapon against Britain, the half-fulfillment of her promises regarding a constitution.
- (c) The weakening by Japan of Britain's position in the Far East.
- (d) The rivalry in the Mediterranean with Italy who—under the spell of her history, driven by necessity and led by a genius—was expanding her power position, and thus was inevitably coming more and more into conflict with British interests. The outcome of the Abyssinian War was a loss of prestige for Britain which Italy was trying to accelerate by stirring up trouble in the Mohammedan world.

To sum up, it could be stated that, with 45 million Britons, in spite of its theoretical soundness, the position of the Empire could not in the long run be maintained by power politics. The ratio of the population of the Empire to that of the motherland of 9:1, was a warning to us not, in our territorial expansion, to allow the foundation constituted by the numerical strength of our own people to become too weak.

France's position was more favorable than that of Britain. The French Empire was better placed territorially; the inhabitants of her colonial possessions represented a supplement to her military strength. But France was going to be confronted with internal political difficulties. In a nation's life about 10 percent of its span is taken up by parliamentary forms of government and about 90 percent by authoritarian forms. Today, nonetheless, Britain, France, Russia, and the smaller states adjoining them, must be included as factors (*Machtfaktoren*) in our political calculations.

Germany's problem could only be solved by means of force and this was never without attendant risk. The campaigns of Frederick the Great for Silesia and Bismarck's wars against Austria and France had involved unheard-of risk, and the swiftness of the Prussian action in 1870 kept Austria from entering the war. If one accepts as the basis of the following exposition the resort to force with its attendant risks, then there remain still to be answered the questions "when" and "how." In this matter there were three cases (*Fälle*) to be dealt with:

Case 1: Period 1943-1945

After this date only a change for the worse, from our point of view, could be expected.

The equipment of the Army, Navy and Luftwaffe, as well as the formation of the officer corps, was nearly completed. Equipment and armament were modern; in further delay there lay the danger of their obsolescence. In particular, the secrecy of "special weapons" (*Sonderwaffen*) could not be preserved forever. The recruiting of reserves was limited to current age groups; further drafts from older untrained age groups were no longer available.

Our relative strength would decrease in relation to the rearmament which would by then have been carried out by the rest of the world. If we did not act by 1943-45, any year could, in consequence of a lack of reserves, produce the food crisis, to cope with which the necessary foreign exchange was not available, and this must be regarded as the "waning point of the regime." Besides, the world was expecting our attack and was increasing its counter-measures from year to year. It was while the rest of the world was still preparing its defenses (*sich abriegeln*) that we were obliged to take the offensive.

Nobody knew today what the situation would be in the years 1943-45. One thing only was certain, that we could not wait longer.

On the one hand there was the great Wehrmacht, and the necessity of maintaining it at its present level, the aging of the movement and its leaders; and on the other, the prospect of a lowering of the standard of living and of a limitation of the birth rate, which left no choice but to act. If the Führer was still living, it was his unalterable resolve to solve Germany's problem of space at the latest by 1943-45. The necessity for action before 1943-45 would arise in cases 2 and 3.

Case 2:

If internal strife in France should develop into such a domestic crisis as to absorb the French Army completely and render it incapable of use for war against Germany, then the time for action against the Czechs had come.

Case 3:

If France is so embroiled by a war with another state that she cannot "proceed" against Germany.

For the improvement of our politico-military position our first objective, in the event of our being embroiled in war, must be to overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria simultaneously in order to remove the threat to our flank in any possible operation against the West. In a conflict with France it was hardly to be regarded as likely that the Czechs would declare war on us on the very same day as France. The desire to join in the war would, however, increase among the Czechs in proportion to any weakening on our part and then her participation could clearly take the form of an attack toward Silesia, toward the north or toward the west.

If the Czechs were overthrown and a common German-Hungarian frontier achieved, a neutral attitude on the part of Poland could be the more certainly counted on in the event of a Franco-German conflict. Our agreements with Poland only retained their force as long as Germany's strength remained unshaken. In the event of German setbacks a Polish action against East Prussia, and possibly against Pomerania and Silesia as well, had to be reckoned with.

On the assumption of a development of the situation leading to action on our part as planned, in the years 1943-45, the attitude of France, Britain, Italy, Poland, and Russia could probably be estimated as follows:

Actually, the Führer believed that almost certainly Britain, and probably France as well, had already tacitly written off the Czechs and were reconciled

to the fact that this question would be cleared up in due course by Germany. Difficulties connected with the Empire, and the prospect of being once more entangled in a protracted European war, were decisive considerations for Britain against participation in a war against Germany. Britain's attitude would certainly not be without influence on that of France. An attack by France without British support, and with the prospect of the offensive being brought to a standstill on our western fortifications, was hardly probable. Nor was a French march through Belgium and Holland without British support to be expected; this also was a course not to be contemplated by us in the event of a conflict with France, because it would certainly entail the hostility of Britain. It would of course be necessary to maintain a strong defense (*eine Abriegelung*) on our western frontier during the prosecution of our attack on the Czechs and Austria. And in this connection it had to be remembered that the defense measures of the Czechs were growing in strength from year to year, and that the actual worth of the Austrian Army also was increasing in the course of time. Even though the populations concerned, especially of Czechoslovakia, were not sparse, the annexation of Czechoslovakia and Austria would mean an acquisition of foodstuffs for 5 to 6 million people, on the assumption that the compulsory emigration of 2 million people from Czechoslovakia and 1 million people from Austria was practicable. The incorporation of these two States with Germany meant, from the politico-military point of view, a substantial advantage because it would mean shorter and better frontiers, the freeing of forces for other purposes, and the possibility of creating new units up to a level of about 12 divisions, that is, 1 new division per million inhabitants.

Italy was not expected to object to the elimination of the Czechs, but it was impossible at the moment to estimate what her attitude on the Austrian question would be; that depended essentially upon whether the Duce were still alive.

The degree of surprise and the swiftness of our action were decisive factors for Poland's attitude. Poland—with Russia at her rear—will have little inclination to engage in war against a victorious Germany.

Military intervention by Russia must be countered by the swiftness of our operations; however, whether such an intervention was a practical contingency at all was, in view of Japan's attitude, more than doubtful.

Should case 2 arise—the crippling of France by civil war—the situation thus created by the elimination of the most dangerous opponent must be seized upon whenever it occurs for the blow against the Czechs.

The Führer saw case 3 coming definitely nearer; it might emerge from the present tensions in the Mediterranean, and he was resolved to take advantage of it whenever it happened, even as early as 1938.

In the light of past experiences, the Führer did not see any early end to the hostilities in Spain. If one considered the length of time which Franco's offensives had taken up till now, it was fully possible that the war would continue another 3 years. On the other hand, a 100 percent victory for Franco was not desirable either, from the German point of view; rather were we interested in a continuance of the war and in the keeping up of the tension

in the Mediterranean. Franco in undisputed possession of the Spanish Peninsula precluded the possibility of any further intervention on the part of the Italians or of their continued occupation of the Balearic Islands. As our interest lay more in the prolongation of the war in Spain, it must be the immediate aim of our policy to strengthen Italy's rear with a view to her remaining in the Balearics. But the permanent establishment of the Italians on the Balearics would be intolerable both to France and Britain, and might lead to a war of France and England against Italy—a war in which Spain, should she be entirely in the hands of the Whites, might make her appearance on the side of Italy's enemies. The probability of Italy's defeat in such a war was slight, for the road from Germany was open for the supplementing of her raw materials. The Führer pictured the military strategy for Italy thus: on her western frontier with France she would remain on the defensive, and carry on the war against France from Libya against the French North African colonial possessions.

As a landing by Franco-British troops on the coast of Italy could be discounted, and a French offensive over the Alps against northern Italy would be very difficult and would probably come to a halt before the strong Italian fortifications, the crucial point (*Schwerpunkt*) of the operations lay in North Africa. The threat to French lines of communication by the Italian Fleet would to a great extent cripple the transportation of forces from North Africa to France, so that France would have only home forces at her disposal on the frontiers with Italy and Germany.

If Germany made use of this war to settle the Czech and Austrian questions, it was to be assumed that Britain—herself at war with Italy—would decide not to act against Germany. Without British support, a warlike action by France against Germany was not to be expected.

The time for our attack on the Czechs and Austria must be made dependent on the course of the Anglo-French-Italian war and would not necessarily coincide with the commencement of military operations by these three States. Nor had the Führer in mind military agreements with Italy, but wanted, while retaining his own independence of action, to exploit this favorable situation, which would not occur again, to begin and carry through the campaign against the Czechs. This descent upon the Czechs would have to be carried out with "lightning speed."

Evidently, Hitler was convinced that his disclosure of these revelations meant that he was doing the German generals present a favor. Politically, he had suffered numerous disappointments at their hands in the past. The events of 1923 had forced upon him the realization that the generals would much rather bow to the despised legal government in place than cast their lot with a nationalist revolutionary. Moreover, Hitler greatly disliked the elitist attitude displayed by the officers' corps. Nevertheless, throughout, Hitler had retained his firm belief that the generals shared his convictions in their areas of expertise—at the least in military affairs. He could not fathom

that historic, ethical and religious factors played a role in their considerations. Rather, he saw them as “bloodhounds” just waiting to be unleashed to pounce upon the perceived or actual adversary.²³⁷

Up to this point, this understanding had been central to Hitler’s military policy formation. He had conspired in the 1934 murder of some of his closest friends within the SA, sacrificing them in an attempt to appease the generals. And what happened now? The generals failed to welcome his plan for the rape of Czechoslovakia with the proper enthusiasm! The Führer had not anticipated such a reaction. Moreover, he found himself faced by Blomberg and Fritsch, who rose to voice doubts concerning the military analysis presented by their Supreme Commander. Evidently, hours of exposition had not dulled their sense of perception. Neither of the two officers was persuaded by Hitler’s argument that France would remain neutral in the event of a German offensive against Czechoslovakia. Both military men voiced concern about a strategy based upon such a notion. Fritsch was so upset by Hitler’s exposition that he offered to delay his November 10 vacation. Hitler even had to reassure him by insisting that the entire issue was not so immediate!

Subsequently, Hitler continued to insist that neither France nor Great Britain would intervene in the event of a German move against Czechoslovakia. For his part, Neurath doubted the possibility of a war between Italy and a coalition of French-British forces at any time in the immediate future. Raeder made no contribution to the debate. Ever since 1932, Raeder had been a staunch National Socialist and thus knew only too well that he was expected to offer no opposition to Hitler’s position. On the other hand, Göring immediately carried Hitler’s thoughts further and suggested that Germany curtail its involvement in Spain. Hossbach described the discussion as follows:

In appraising the situation Field Marshal von Blomberg and Colonel General von Fritsch repeatedly emphasized the necessity that Britain and France must not become our enemies, and stated that the French Army would not be so committed by the war with Italy that France could not at the same time enter the field with forces superior to ours on our western frontier. General von Fritsch estimated the probable French forces available for use on the Alpine frontier at approximately twenty divisions, so that a strong French superiority would still remain on the western frontier, with the role, according to the German view, of invading the Rhineland. In this matter, moreover, the advanced state of French defense preparations (*Mobilimachung*) must be taken into particular account, and it must be remembered apart from the insignificant value of our present fortifications—on which Field Marshal

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von Blomberg laid special emphasis—that the four motorized divisions intended for the West were still more or less incapable of movement. In regard to our offensive toward the southeast, Field Marshal von Blomberg drew particular attention to the strength of the Czech fortifications, which had acquired by now a structure like a Maginot Line and which would gravely hamper our attack.

General von Fritsch mentioned that this was the very purpose of a study which he had ordered made this winter, namely, to examine the possibility of conducting operations against the Czechs with special reference to overcoming the Czech fortification system; the General further expressed his opinion that under existing circumstances he must give up his plan to go abroad on his leave, which was due to begin on November 10. The Führer dismissed this idea on the ground that the possibility of a conflict need not yet be regarded as so imminent. To the Foreign Minister's objection that an Anglo-French-Italian conflict was not yet within such a measurable distance as the Führer seemed to assume, the Führer put the summer of 1938 as the date which seemed to him possible for this. In reply to considerations offered by Field Marshal von Blomberg and General von Fritsch regarding the attitude of Britain and France, the Führer repeated his previous statements that he was convinced of Britain's non-participation, and therefore he did not believe in the probability of belligerent action by France against Germany. Should the Mediterranean conflict under discussion lead to a general mobilization in Europe, then we must immediately begin action against the Czechs. On the other hand, should the powers not engaged in the war declare themselves disinterested, then Germany would have to adopt a similar attitude to this for the time being.

Colonel General Göring thought that, in view of the Führer's statement, we should consider liquidating our military undertakings in Spain. The Führer agrees to this with the limitation that he thinks he should reserve a decision for a proper moment.

The second part of the conference was concerned with concrete questions of armament.

Hossbach
Certified correct: Colonel (General Staff)

Hitler was deeply disappointed in Blomberg and Fritsch for advocating such contrary views. No longer did he refer to them as "my dear Field Marshal" and "my dear Colonel General." He realized that, given their apprehensions, he could not rely on them for the implementation of his plans. He decided to rid himself of them at the next occasion. Neurath also incurred Hitler's displeasure for his attitude and the Führer decided to remove him from office as well. The ministers in Hitler's Government could voice objections to his policies, but only if they were willing to resign from their positions as a consequence. If they did not comply voluntarily, as had Hugenberg

and Eltz von Rügenach, then obviously they required a little assistance in the process.

There have been attempts to discredit the “Hossbach minutes.” These attempts are based on two facts. First, Hossbach did not write down his recollections of the meeting and the ensuing discussion until five days later. Furthermore, the minutes bear no signature by Hitler attesting to the validity of their content. However, the second criticism is weakened by the fact that Hitler’s signature on such documents was neither required nor part of any standard bureaucratic procedure.

Those who question the validity of the Hossbach minutes aim to undermine the evidence which implies that, as early as November 5, Hitler had already determined to use force in both Czechoslovakia and Austria. However, the further course of events lends credibility to Hossbach’s recollections. First of all, those members of Hitler’s military staff who had, as Hossbach detailed, opposed his radical approach at the conference were shortly thereafter dismissed from office.²³⁸ Secondly, the credibility of the Hossbach minutes is further reinforced by the fact that the later military build-up along Germany’s southeastern border reflects the policy aims expressed in the meeting. Finally, in the months immediately preceding the annexation of Austria, Hitler repeatedly articulated in public the aims listed in Hossbach’s notes.

According to public statements by the Gauleiter of Mainfranken, Otto Hellmuth, in Würzburg on March 4, 1938 (i.e. even prior to Schuschnigg’s Innsbruck appeal) Hitler had contemplated the following:²³⁹

He [Hellmuth] had just returned from a conference with Hitler in Berlin. The Führer had explained to him that for the time being the goals of the Reichskolonialbund (Reich Colonial League)—namely the conquest of colonies in Africa—were a dead issue. The resolution of the difficult situation faced in both Austria and Czechoslovakia had complete priority. Hitler was determined to resolve the matter “one way or another.”

Hellmuth added that he naturally could not expand upon these comments by Hitler. Nonetheless, with a sweeping gesture he reassured his audience that the problems would be resolved in either “one way” (by peaceful means) or “another.” It was obvious to every one of Hellmuth’s listeners that the second option meant war. The general public, however, was left in the dark regarding the Führer’s aspirations during the last two months of 1937. With the exception of an increase in the number of references to the question of Lebensraum in his speeches, there were no signs that Hitler had resolved for war.

On November 6, Italy acceded to the Anti-Comintern Pact thereby formally binding itself to Japan and Germany. On this occasion, Hitler sent Mussolini the following telegram:

On this day of Italy's accedence to the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, I warmly welcome the Fascist Government as a new member of this community of nations. It is with great joy that I welcome the fact that Italy now has formalized its stance with Germany and Japan in the mutual defense against the corrosive forces of world Bolshevism which imperils the inner security of each nation.

Adolf Hitler

That day Hitler also wired a telegram to Japan's Prime Minister, Prince Konoye. Its content is reproduced below:²⁴⁰

On this day of Italy's accedence to the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, I wish to express to Your Excellency the great joy that yet another member has been gained for the community of peoples united in their stance in the defense of their inner security against the corrosive forces of world Bolshevism which imperils each nation.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler did not claim to fear "world Bolshevism" himself. In his speech before the generals a day earlier, he had not mentioned any such danger, but spoken mostly of the "two hate-inspired antagonists" (*Hassgegner*) Britain and France. The Anti-Comintern Pact, in Hitler's eyes, actually aimed not at Bolshevism. He had pushed for the alliances with Italy and Japan as part of his "tactics of slaps in the face" to shock the British into a more "reasoned" approach, in other words, to become completely subservient to his will. Ribbentrop made no effort to disguise the anti-British nature of the Pact, stating to Mussolini that "the Pact will be interpreted as the alliance of the aggressive nations against the satisfied countries." According to Ciano, the Duce added that "American ill-humour will be increased by an agreement with Japan, which is considered, for no apparent reason, to be the United States' traditional and potential enemy."²⁴¹

On November 6, Hitler also toured the International Hunting Exhibition in Berlin.²⁴² Two days later, he traveled to Munich to honor with his presence the commemorative celebration of the 1923 Putsch. In the Bürgerbräukeller on the evening of November 8, he explained the following in an address to the Old Fighters:²⁴³

When I took over the leadership five years ago, Germany was the least respected state in the world—but today every German can travel abroad with

his head held high in pride; he no longer has to be ashamed of being a German!

Today Germany is no longer isolated! We all share the pleasant confidence that the isolation which surrounded us for more than fifteen years is now over. And not by virtue of some irrelevant participation in meaningless international committees, but by virtue of the significance which Germany has once more gained for itself.

For us, this significance gives rise to new relations which one might not view as compatible with the ideology of the League of Nations. In any case, they are compatible with us and with our interests! And they are compatible with the interests of the other peoples who have entered into these relations with us! The most dependable guarantor of the permanence of such relations lies not in some kind of slogans, but in the sober and clear knowledge of expediency. It was because of this expediency that three states have come together today. First a European axis, and now a great international political triangle! I am of the conviction that the attempts of our old adversary²⁴ to spread unrest throughout the world will be hampered to the very same extent to which this triangle becomes stabilized. For it is comprised not of three powerless structures, but of three states which are prepared and resolved to exercise their rights and look after their vital interests with determination.

The great extent to which the German Volk has granted its approval to this policy—in an inner sense as well—is something we experienced but a few weeks ago in Germany, when the great representative of a nation we call our friend paid a visit to Germany for the first time. There we witnessed that the peoples can indeed grant their warm approval when genuine interests are being supported. And just as we in Germany were enthusiastic and happy about this visit, the Italian people, too, was happy and enthusiastic about its course and its outcome.

Hitler continued to state that by striking four days prior to “the other side” on November 8, 1923, he had spared Germany a “certain catastrophe.” Asserting that this had been the correct manner in which to proceed at the time, Hitler proclaimed that it had been “the greatest good fortune in his life” that the Putsch of 1923 had failed in the end. This particular assertion complemented his September 13 declaration that Germany’s loss in the World War had been to its good fortune.

That the attempt failed after all back then was perhaps the greatest good fortune in my life and the greatest good fortune for the German nation! What happened then had to happen! In any case, the fragmentation of Germany had been prevented. For in order to come to terms with us, one needed the help of Northern Germany. This prevented the break. And they were not able to silence us then, and instead our ideas were hurled all over Germany as in an explosion. My decision was thus justified!

On November 9, the usual ceremonies took place: the march to the Feldherrnhalle and from there to the pantheons at the Königsplatz.

Blomberg certainly could not have known that this would be the last time he would march alongside Hitler, a man whose unforgiving wrath he had incurred only four days earlier. But Hitler's disappointment with Blomberg was compensated for by the successful exchange of telegrams with Ludendorff on that November 9.²⁴⁵ By sending him the telegram below to his home at Lake Starnberg, Hitler had finally managed to break through the General's usual reserve:

To His Excellency, retired infantry General Ludendorff, Tutzing
Your Excellency!

On the occasion of today's commemoration, my thoughts turn to you with great appreciation and reverence for your dedicated service in the elevation of the German nation.

With my heartfelt best wishes,

Adolf Hitler

Ludendorff's reply read:

I thank you for your thoughtfulness and your heartfelt wishes. My thoughts return fondly to our shared struggle as we sought together to foster Germany's uplifting. I send my best wishes for your activities in the elevation of our Volk.

Yours, Ludendorff

At midnight, Hitler spoke before recruits of the SS Verfügungstruppe²⁴⁶ in front of the Feldherrnhalle. Before they took their oath of loyalty, he reminded them of their duty to sacrifice.

You shall be the pillars of the honor and prestige of our Volk, and everywhere and at every hour shall you be mindful of this. Then all the sacrifices which our struggle has required until now will not have been for naught.

For from them has risen forth what innumerable German generations have yearned for in vain: one Volk, one Reich, one national honor, and a willingness to protect and defend this honor, if necessary, with one's life.

In Berchtesgaden on November 19, Hitler received the Lord President and future British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax and conferred with him at great length.²⁴⁷ Halifax had come to Germany to see the international Hunting Exhibition but had been asked by Prime Minister Chamberlain to sound out Hitler on several political issues as well. He did not submit any new British suggestions to Hitler for consideration. Chamberlain responded to Hitler's repeated calls for colonies with a desire to receive more concrete demands from Germany. However, Hitler had only used the demand for the return of Germany's overseas possessions as a tactical device. By no means

was he willing to substitute African soil for the coveted new Lebensraum in Eastern Europe. Therefore, Hitler did his utmost to avoid committing himself on the subject. He much preferred to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia and Austria instead and declared:

Again and again the Western Powers are placing obstacles in my way in Southeastern Europe, and ulterior political motives are being imputed to me that I do not have.

Halifax replied that Great Britain was willing to investigate any solution proposed, as long as this solution did not entail the use of force. This offer was also extended to the cases of Austria, the Polish Corridor, and Danzig.

As the interpreter Schmidt recalled later, Hitler put on a great show, self-confidently striving to reassure the Englishman that, no matter what the circumstances, Germany would not resort to force. Göring continued the talks at his private residence “Karinhall” the next day.

Actually, Hitler had little interest in a viable contractual agreement with Great Britain. This was particularly evident in the memorandum on Halifax’ visit.²⁴⁸ Here Hitler declared to be “a fanatic enemy of conferences which were doomed to failure from the start.” He believed his old recipe of confrontation and “slaps in the face” to be far more effective.

On November 20, Hitler embarked on a small tour through the Swabian region in Bavaria. In the evening, he attended the reopening of the rebuilt Theater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich, where he saw a performance of the Johann Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus*.²⁴⁹

The next day, Hitler delivered a speech in Augsburg at the fifteenth anniversary of the NSDAP Ortsgruppe.²⁵⁰ After concluding the obligatory “party narrative,” Hitler once again turned against his opponents within Germany, denying there a “right to criticism:”

We have criticisms, too, but here the superiors criticize the subordinates and not the subordinates their superiors!

After yet another recapitulation of the achievements of the past fifteen years (“The National Socialist German Worker’s Party is the greatest organization man has ever built up!”), he directed his attention to the new tasks faced and addressed the subject of the “too confined Lebensraum of the German Volk:”

I may say so myself, my old Party Comrades: our fight was worth it after all. Never before has a fight commenced with as much success as ours. In these

fifteen years, we have taken on a tremendous task. The task blessed our efforts. Our efforts were not in vain, for from them has ensued one of the greatest rebirths in history. Germany has overcome the great catastrophe and awakened from it to a better and new and strong life. That we can say at the end of these fifteen years. And there lies the reward for every single one of you, my old Party Comrades!

When I look back on my own life, I can certainly say that it has been an immeasurable joy to be able to work for our Volk in this great age. It is truly a wonderful thing after all when Fate chooses certain people who are allowed to devote themselves to their Volk.

Today we are facing new tasks. For the Lebensraum of our Volk is too confined. The world is attempting to disassociate itself from dealing with these problems and answering these questions. But it will not succeed! One day the world will be forced to take our demands into consideration.

I do not doubt for a second that we will procure for ourselves the same vital rights as other peoples outside the country in exactly the same way as we were able to lead it onwards within. I do not doubt that this vital right of the German Volk, too, will one day be understood by the whole world!

I am of the conviction that the most difficult preliminary work has already been accomplished. What is necessary now is that all National Socialists recall again and again the principles with which we grew up. If the whole Party and hence the whole nation stands united behind the leadership, then this same leadership, supported by the joined forces of a population of sixty-eight million, ultimately personified in its Wehrmacht, will be able to successfully defend the interests of the nation and also to successfully accomplish the tasks assigned to us!

When he delivered his speech in Augsburg, Hitler had already determined to apply force to the effort of resolving the problems faced by Germany in the future. In his address, he once again articulated the principles which had driven him onward ever since his accession to power on January 30, 1933 and which would continue to inspire him up to the last days of the Second World War:

I do not doubt for a second that we will procure our vital rights outside the country in exactly the same way as we were able to lead it onwards within.

In content this remark corresponded to a statement which Hitler would make later in the course of the War:²⁵¹

I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally!

This assumption that the analysis of problems and situations in the domestic realm could be superimposed upon international affairs, indeed, that both spheres were fundamentally equivalent, would slowly but surely precipitate the fall of Hitler and his regime.

On November 22, Hitler toured the Messerschmitt Flugzeugwerke in Augsburg,²⁵² unaware that it would, on May 10, 1941, be the point of take-off for his deputy Rudolf Hess' mysterious escape flight across the Channel.

The day subsequent to his tour of the Messerschmitt factory, Hitler attended the inauguration of the Ordensburg Sonthofen in the Allgäu, which was the third to open its gates. There, before all the Kreisleiters and Gauamtsleiters assembled, Hitler delivered a two-hour 'secret speech' on "the structure and organization of the leadership of the Volk" (*Volksführung*).²⁵³ The content of this address has been preserved for us.²⁵⁴

In the introduction, Hitler presented an overview of his version of German history over the last three hundred to four hundred years. He continuously attempted to substantiate his claims with numbers, carelessly juggling enormous figures (the majority of which were incorrect). Needless to say, he could not resist citing his favorite historical example, which claimed that of the 18.5 million Germans at the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War only 3.6 million survived. Further "historical observations" on his part culminated in a comparison of the relations between the people of Austria and Prussia and the similar bonds that existed between the English and the German people. He explained these ties in the following manner:

Since in international life there are only natural, sober interests, it should be based neither on gratitude nor on family connections. Family connections were as useless in preserving Prussia and Austria from war as they were for Germany and England.

In Europe, we have more difficult obstacles to overcome than those, for instance, which exist for England—which only [!] needed its naval supremacy to occupy large living spaces with relatively little loss of blood.

Nonetheless: we had Europe once before. We only lost it because our leadership lacked the initiative that would have been necessary to not only maintain our position, on a long-term basis, but also to expand it.

Then Hitler turned to the "Germanic Empire of the German Nation," the birth of which he himself had proclaimed at the Reich Party Congress of September 13.

Now he declared:

Today a new state is being established, the unique feature of which is that it sees its foundation not in Christianity and not in a concept of state; rather, it places its primary emphasis on the self-contained Volksgemeinschaft.

Hence it is significant that the "Germanic Empire of the German Nation" now puts this supremely capable concept of the future into practice, merciless

against all adversaries, against all religious fragmentation, against all fragmentation into parties.

This observation was followed by a mystical recollection of the German past:

If we regard our German history in a very extensive sense from our most dim and distant past up to today, we are the richest Volk in Europe. And if, with utmost tolerance, we allow our great German heroes to march by, all our great leaders of the past, all our great Germanic²⁵⁵ and German emperors—for they were great without exception—England would have to shrink before us.

However, Hitler soon returned to the present, that is, to his own claim to power, and remarked:

It is this unification of the German nation which gives us the moral justification to step before the world with vital demands. The fact is that ultimate justice resides in power. And power, in international life, resides in the self-containment of the nations themselves. Today the German nation has finally been given what it has lacked for centuries, namely, the organization of a leadership of the Volk. [—]

Today *we* are laying claim to the leadership of the Volk, i.e. we alone are authorized to lead the Volk as such—that means every man and every woman. The lifelong relationships between the sexes is something *we* will organize. *We* shall form the child!

In this context, Hitler also commented on questions of a religious nature which preoccupied him in particular this year. He addressed the Churches formally:

We are giving you unconditional freedom in your teachings and in your views on what God is. For we are well aware that we ourselves know nothing of these things.

Yet let one thing be quite clear: the Churches may determine the fate of the German being in the next world, but in this world the German nation, by way of its leaders, is determining the fate of the German being. Only if there is such a clear and clear-cut division can life be made bearable in a time of transition.

At the bottom of our hearts, we National Socialists are religious. For the space of many millenniums, a uniform concept of God did not exist. Yet it is the most brilliant and most sublime notion of mankind, that which distinguishes him most from animals, that he not only views a phenomenon from without, but always poses the question of why and how.

This entire world, a world so clear-cut in its external manifestation, is just as unclear to us in its purpose. And here mankind has bowed down in humility before the conviction that it is confronted by an incredible power, an Omnipotence, which is so incredible and so deep that we men are unable to fathom it. That is a good thing! For it can serve to comfort people in bad times;

it avoids that superficiality and sense of superiority that misleads man to believe that he—but a tiny bacillus on this earth, in this universe—rules the world, and that he lays down the laws of Nature which he can at best but study. It is, therefore, our desire that our Volk remains humble and truly believes in a God. Hence an immeasurably large scope is given for the Churches, and thus they should be tolerant of one another!

God did not create our Volk that it be torn apart by priests. This is why it is necessary to ensure its unity by a system of leadership. That is the task of the NSDAP. It is to comprise that order which, beyond the limits of time and man, is to guarantee the stability of the German development of opinion and hence of the political leadership.

It would have been most interesting to hear precisely what magic potion Hitler had in store and how he intended to secure this stability “beyond the limits of time and man.” It soon became all too apparent that this cure was none other than the one he always counseled, namely, blind obedience to the absolute authority Adolf Hitler.

The NSDAP is the largest organization the world has ever seen. All counted, it encompasses a total of twenty-five million people²⁵⁶ and has 300,000 functionaries. It is quite obvious that an organization that is only eighteen years beyond its founding cannot be the same as it would be after one hundred years. Yet the important thing is that we equip it with the law according to which it came to power and which it shall retain. Here we have established the basic rule of absolute obedience and absolute authority. Just as the Army—the weapon—cannot prevail without this law of the absolute authority of each and every superior to those below him and his absolute responsibility to those above, neither can the political leadership of this weapon prevail. For what is gained by the weapon is ultimately subject to political administration, and what the political administration wants, the weapon is to procure. The leadership of the Volk in former times, the Church, also recognized only this one law of life: blind obedience and absolute authority.

At the end of his ‘secret speech,’ Hitler expatiated upon the requirement of Political Leaders in addition to blind obedience: bravery.

Old Germany was overthrown because it did not possess this zealous blind will, did not have this confidence and this serenity. New Germany will be victorious because it integrates these virtues and at present has already integrated them in an extremely difficult struggle. I know quite well that this is independent of the individual. I know quite well that, were anything to happen to me today, the next one would take my place and continue in the same fashion, just as zealously; because that, too, is part of this Movement.

Just as it is not possible to instantly turn a political bourgeois association into a fighting group of heroes, it will be equally impossible to ever turn this

Movement, which was built up from the very beginning on courage and initiative, into a bourgeois association.

That is also the future task above all of these schools: to conduct this test of courage over and over again, to break with the opinion that only the soldier must be brave. Whoever is a political leader is always a soldier, too! And whoever lacks bravery cannot be a soldier. He must be prepared for action at all times. In the beginning, courage had to be the basic prerequisite for someone to find his way to the Party—and it really was, otherwise no one came.

Today we have to install artificial obstacles, artificial trenches over which the person has to jump. That is where he now has to prove whether he is brave. Because if he is not brave, he is of no use to us.

This truly was an “ingenious solution.” All that was asked of future Political Leaders was that they combine obedience with bravery in order to please Hitler. Mastery of these virtues could be proven simply by “jumping across artificial trenches.” Without doubt the somewhat corpulent Kreisleiters and Gauamtsleiters assembled were relieved that the Führer did not demand any such “tests of courage” in order to ascertain their valor.

On November 24, Hitler attended a reception in the Japanese Embassy, given by the Japanese Ambassador Mushakoji in Berlin on the anniversary of the Anti-Comintern Pact.²⁵⁷

At the Chancellery the next day, the Hungarian Minister-President Darányi and his Foreign Minister Kánya consulted Hitler at great length.²⁵⁸ There was no doubt that Hitler was trying to explore the Hungarian position toward Czechoslovakia. The communiqué on the meeting was phrased in most cordial terms and emphasized complete agreement on conceptual matters, close cooperation and mutual pursuit of peace. That night, Hitler held a reception for his Hungarian guests at the Chancellery.

On November 26, Hitler reshuffled responsibilities in his cabinet. Göring was assigned to take over Schacht's position for the next six weeks as head of the Reich Ministry of Economics. On January 15, 1938, he would name Funk to succeed Schacht officially, taking over Göring's temporary position. During his short tenure, this extraordinary arrangement enabled Göring to unite under his personal control all key positions in the economic realm. The once powerful office Funk entered had become an unimportant, powerless department. Schacht remained in the cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, continuing to serve as a member of the government mostly for appearances' sake.

Indeed, this procedure recurred many times as Hitler rid himself of his bourgeois ministers. The letter Hitler addressed to Schacht that day is reproduced below.²⁵⁹

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Berlin W8, November 26, 1937

Dear Herr Schacht,

On July 30, 1934, you declared yourself willing to assume responsibility for the conduct of the affairs of the Reich Ministry of Economics for the duration of the illness afflicting the then Reich Minister of Economics, Dr. Schmitt. Since that time, you have rendered me and the new German Reich extraordinary services in this position. This was the reason why I could not heed your request for resignation from the ministry, which you had placed before me repeatedly in the course of the last few years. Due to the recent merger with the Ministry of Economics, rendered necessary by the build-up of the apparatus for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan, I am now in a position to fully consider the motivation behind your renewed request for release from your post as Reich Minister of Economics. As I comply with your wishes, allow me to express my deep gratitude for your most excellent performance. Further, I am most content with the knowledge that you shall be at the disposal of the German Volk and myself for yet many years as you continue to serve us in your function as President of the Reichsbank Directorate. Thereby, in the future as well, we shall all benefit from your great knowledge, expertise, and untiring fervor. Greatly rejoiced that you wish to continue your service as my personal adviser, I appoint you Reich Minister as of this day.

With the German salute!

Your Adolf Hitler

The official report on the reshuffle of ministerial posts was issued on November 26.²⁶⁰

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has relieved the President of the Reichsbank Directorate, Dr. Schacht, of his duties in the conduct of affairs of the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics at his own request. Reich Minister Schacht remains in his position as President of the Reichsbank Directorate. In recognition of his extraordinary merits, the Führer has appointed him Reich Minister without Portfolio .

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the State Secretary to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Press Chief of the Reich Government, Walther Funk, to head the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics as of January 15, 1938. The Führer has entrusted the Commissioner for the Four-Year Plan, Minister-President of Prussia, Colonel General Göring, with the conduct of affairs in the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has further appointed the Ministerialdirektor to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Karl Hanke,²⁶¹ State Secretary in this Ministry. This provision shall go into effect on January 15, 1938.

November 26, 1937

On the same date, the Reich Press Chief of the NSDAP, Dr. Otto Dietrich, will assume office as State Secretary to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and Press Chief of the Reich Government. The Führer has decreed that the Chief of the Reich Chancellery now shall, in the place of his previous title as “State Secretary and Chief of the Reich Chancellery,” bear the title of “Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery.” As an immediate result of this decree, the Führer has appointed the Chief of the Reich Chancellery, State Secretary Dr. Lammers, Reich Minister.

What was remarkable about these complicated appointments was that the Reich Press Chief of the NSDAP had now become Press Chief of the Reich Government as well. Another step had been taken toward a complete *Gleichschaltung* of Party and State.

On November 27, Hitler laid the cornerstone to a new building which was to house the Faculty of Defense Technology at the Technical University in Berlin. On this occasion, Hitler proclaimed that the beginning of construction at this site marked a starting point in an effort to redesign the city in a manner that would define its character for the next one thousand years. Once again Hitler had arrived at an “inalterable decision.” He resolved to bestow upon Berlin the “streets, edifices, and public areas it needs to allow it to be fitting and worthy of being the capital city of the German Reich.” It is characteristic of Hitler that his attempt to reshape Berlin began with “a monument,” which he thought attested “to German culture,” but was fundamentally of a military nature. Furthermore, like many of his grandiose projects, it was curtailed by the outbreak of war. The verbatim content of Hitler’s speech is reproduced below.²⁶²

Today marks the beginning of a period of architectural renewal in Berlin which will radically change the image and—it is my belief—also the character of this city. The former residence of the Hohenzollern princes, kings, and emperors shall now become the eternal capital of the first German Reich of the Volk. In it, that plight will be banned for all future which led one great historian to make the astute observation that it had always been the misfortune of the Germans to in fact have capital cities, but never to have one true capital. For a truly lasting national formation of a *volklich* community only seems conceivable to us, in view of all our insights and all our historic experience, if the leadership of such a community also possesses an undisputed, leading center at a certain locality. It was for this reason that, as regards the great states of the past, their establishment was frequently bound up not only with the birth, but also with the very name of their capital cities.

The opinion that the downfall of these states was caused by the expansion of their dominant capital cities as organizational centers for every aspect of life, is based upon a false conclusion. For the states of antiquity in particular

did not perish because of their cities; the cities of antiquity perished because of a failure to recognize and respect the laws of blood which conditioned them and thus formed their foundation. Hence the Roman Empire did not decline because of Rome, for without Rome as a city, there never would have been a Roman Empire! The most natural course of the foundation of most of the great states almost always commences, in its initial stage, with a point at which the political and subsequently the cultural life crystallizes, which very often then lends the entire state its name as the capital city!

Yet because the German Reich is the belated product of an eventful struggle of various German tribes and states for a national-political unification of our Volk, it is for this reason above all that this long-awaited foundation of the state lacks the natural outstanding center of political power. For we intend, as regards the significance of such a capital city, to place less emphasis on the number of its inhabitants and more on the size and extent of its scope as a whole and hence its merit as a whole. In terms of inhabitants, with its four-and-a-half million people, Berlin is unquestionably the capital of the Reich. Yet, if we furthermore compare the importance of its cultural and monumental significance and structure to the similar merits of other German cities, it is not.

Therefore, it is my inalterable intention and decision to now bestow upon Berlin the streets, edifices, and public areas it needs to allow it to be fitting and worthy of being the capital city of the German Reich. The size of these facilities and works shall not be calculated to fit the needs of the years 1937, 1938, 1939, or 1940; rather, they shall be determined by the knowledge that it is our task to build a thousand-year city equal to a thousand-year Volk with a thousand years of historic and cultural past for the unforeseeable future lying before it. Hence an evaluation of the work which will be accomplished to this end for the next twenty years in Berlin is something we are consciously denying the present; we are submitting this work instead to the judgment of those generations which will one day come after us. No matter how this judgment turns out, one should not be able to deny us one justification: in accomplishing this work, we were not thinking of ourselves, but of those who will come after us.

In this sacred conviction I now lay the cornerstone for the Faculty of Defense Technology at the Technical University in Berlin as the first edifice which is being built in realization of these plans. It shall be a monument to German Culture, German knowledge and German strength.

On December 3, Hitler sent Franco a telegram congratulating him on his birthday²⁶³ On December 6, he wired his best wishes to Mackensen on the Field Marshal's eighty-eighth birthday.²⁶⁴ The next day, Hitler visited the gravely ill General Ludendorff in the Munich Josephinum hospital.²⁶⁵

On December 11, Italy announced its withdrawal from the League of Nations. In 1935, such a decision would have been a comprehensible reaction to the League's imposition of sanctions against Italy. In a similar manner, Japan had left the League of Nations in 1933, after the

League had condemned its attack upon China. However, the Italian decision to withdraw in 1937 merely reflected the extent to which Mussolini had succumbed to Hitler's influence. On December 12, Hitler issued an official statement which both assured Italy of Germany's sympathy for its cause and derided the League of Nations at great length. Among his accusations were the following:²⁶⁶

This [Italy's withdrawal] shall provide to the League of Nations its just reward for its political achievements. At no time during its existence has it proven itself capable of making a useful contribution toward settling the respectively relevant problems of world politics.²⁶⁷ On the contrary: it has constantly had only a harmful and indeed dangerous influence on the entire political development of postwar times. [—]

Today, the utter failure of the League of Nations is a fact which requires no further proof and no further discussion. The hopes which were placed in the League of Nations, above all by certain lesser states²⁶⁸ have progressively dwindled with the growing awareness that the Geneva policy of collective security has led, in reality, to a collective insecurity. Today, unlimited support of the ideals of Geneva can only be heard from Moscow. [—]

The attempts which are made here and there to ascribe the institution's downfall to its lack of universality constitute a quite obvious case of confusing cause and effect. The reasons which have forced first Japan, then Germany and now Italy to leave the League of Nations are quite evident proof of where the radical error in its construction lies and where the political currents are which rule it.²⁶⁹[—]

Whether or not the Great Powers remaining in Geneva are still willing to include the League of Nations as a serious factor in their policies is their affair. However, they no longer have the right to present the League of Nations as the appointed representative of the nations of the world and as the highest organ of international cooperation.

In any case, the Reich Government—in complete consensus with the Italian Government—will allow nothing to sway it in the conviction that the political system of Geneva has not only miscarried, but is, moreover, corrupt. Therefore, Germany's return to the League of Nations is out of the question for all time to come.

On December 17, Hitler spoke before an assembly of Autobahn workers who had come together for a celebration in the 'Theater des Volkes' in Berlin. He expressed the great pride he felt for the 2,000 kilometers of Autobahn they had built and proclaimed this feat to have been "the greatest enterprise worldwide to this day."²⁷⁰

That day as well, Hitler received sixty-five aspiring young SA leaders at the Chancellery.²⁷¹ In addition, he had an extensive private conversation with Georges Scapini, the president of the Franco-German committee "France-Allemagne."²⁷²

On December 18, Hitler attended a Christmas celebration for the staff members of the Chancellery.²⁷³

At the Josephinum hospital on December 20, the seventy-three-years-old General Ludendorff died of a circulatory debility. Hitler issued the following commemorative note:²⁷⁴

Germans!

With the death of General Ludendorff, an historic phenomenon has gone from us. His name will be bound up for all time to come with the greatest heroic battle of the German Volk.

Isolated in the midst of a both weak and rootless political environment, this man attempted, at the side of the Field Marshal in the Great War, to wrench the nation's power of resistance onward to unparalleled achievements with the aim of preserving the liberty of the Germans and their Reich.

After lack of character and deplorable weakness had brought about its downfall, Germany collapsed and plummeted to the ignominy of Versailles. In those years of the worst humiliation, Ludendorff, the commander of the World War, joined forces with the fighters to re-erect the nation both within and without. From then on, it was for this freedom that he struggled and fought in his own way.

These so great and exclusive goals were commensurate with the zealous devotion of this man. His love and his prayers belonged to our Volk; his hatred to his foes!

As is the case with all uncompromising fighters in this world, his personality will have a more conscious impression on posterity than on many modern contemporaries. With his phenomenal figure, the hall of fame of our history will gain yet another witness to the greatness of the German nation!

Adolf Hitler

He also addressed a telegram of condolence to the general's widow, Frau Dr. Mathilde Ludendorff:²⁷⁵

I extend to Your Excellency my heartfelt sympathy on the great loss you have suffered through the passing away of your husband. With the great soldier and Commander Ludendorff, the German Volk loses one of its best and most loyal sons, whose work was dedicated to Germany's welfare in times of war and peace. His name will live on forever in German history. I and the entire National Socialist Movement are forever indebted to him since it was he who, in a time of great need, at the risk of life and limb stood with those fighting for a better future for Germany.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler wished to have Ludendorff interred in a national monument, as he had for Hindenburg, thus giving him leave to "enter into Valhalla."²⁷⁶ However, Ludendorff's widow was opposed to Hitler's plans and interred her husband according to his wishes in Tutzing, the

family's last place of residence. Despite her opposition, Hitler would not desist from staging a magnificent state ceremony in front of the Feldherrnhalle in Munich on December 22.²⁷⁷ All dignitaries of Party, State, and Wehrmacht were instructed to attend the service. Field Marshal von Blomberg delivered the commemorative address. Hitler stepped up to the coffin, which had been placed on a bier. He stood at attention and called out in a stentorian voice: "General Ludendorff! In the name of the unified German Volk, I place this wreath before you in deep gratitude."

A nineteen-gun salute was fired after the wreath had been laid. The funeral procession then passed through the city, without Hitler.

On December 23, Hitler inspected the progress at the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg and spoke to construction workers. In the evening, Hitler attended a performance of Lehdr's *Die lustige Witwe* at the Nuremberg Opera House.²⁷⁸

On December 24, as was his custom, Hitler delivered a onehour speech to the Old Fighters, who had assembled in the great hall of the Löwenbräukeller in Munich.²⁷⁹ The next day, Hitler wired birthday congratulations to the commander of the former frontier guard in Silesia, retired Lieutenant General Hoefler.²⁸⁰ Hitler's last official deed in 1937 was the issuing of a short appeal to the Wehrmacht:²⁸¹

Berlin, December 31, 1937

Soldiers!

I express to you my gratitude and appreciation for your dutiful, dedicated and selfless performance this past year. In the knowledge that the Wehrmacht shall perform its duty in the future as well, I extend to all of you my best wishes for the New Year.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

THE YEAR 1938

Major Events in Summary

Hitler had set his mind to making 1938 a year of activity and advancement once again. The months of restraint and caution had ended. With the singular exception of the bombing of Almería, 1937 conspicuously lacked any great event, both within Germany and abroad. There had not even been one plebiscite. Nothing at all had happened that Hitler would have deemed worthy of such “great times” as these. Now he felt himself obliged to make up for the lack of excitement in 1937. The “period of so-called surprises,” that he pronounced dead on January 30, 1937, had come again.

First Hitler sought to consolidate his domestic support to give himself freedom to maneuver in foreign affairs. Thus he turned upon the only remaining opposition still functioning within Germany: the reactionary generals. On February 4, after elaborate intrigues had been staged in preparation, Hitler relieved both the Minister of War, Field Marshal von Blomberg, and the Commander in Chief of the Army, Freiherr von Fritsch, of their duties. Hitler himself assumed control of the Wehrmacht. Göring, still his “best man,”¹ was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. This made Göring the highest ranking officer in the Wehrmacht. In addition, Hitler had the remaining generals “move”—in a literal sense. No less than sixty of them were either assigned new responsibilities or completely removed from active duty through forced early retirement.

In order not to push his luck, Hitler decided to refrain from destroying the Soldatenbund, the group which aimed to transform the Third Reich into a pure military dictatorship.² However, in only six weeks an opportunity to dissolve the Soldatenbund arose. Within a week following March 10, this organization ceased to exist.

On February 4, Hitler also got rid of Foreign Minister von Neurath, whose unreliability had displeased him. Hitler named the German Ambassador in London, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to fill the vacancy created by von Neurath’s dismissal. The appointment of a man so obviously subservient to his Führer signaled that in the realm of foreign affairs Hitler also intended to take personal control.

To make matters perfectly clear, Hitler simultaneously recalled the Ambassadors Hassel from Rome, Dirksen from Tokyo, and von Papen from Vienna. In particular, von Papen's removal from office left little doubt as to Hitler's intent to treat Austria more severely. Schuschnigg immediately grasped the foreboding significance of von Papen's dismissal. He declared himself willing to see Hitler at the Obersalzberg to make a plea for the maintenance of good relations between the two states.

On February 12, Hitler seized upon the occasion of Schuschnigg's visit to admonish the Austrian for his "un-German" (*undeutsch*) behavior. After hours of reproof, Hitler handed Schuschnigg a three-day ultimatum. The document demanded that the Austrian Federal Chancellor release all Austrian National Socialists, be they in prison or in *Anhaltelagers*. Further, it instructed him to appoint a second National Socialist minister to his cabinet and to restore legality to the National Socialist Movement in his country. Schuschnigg had no choice but to agree to comply. In the event that he failed to do so Hitler threatened to invade Austria. This threat was all the more significant since Mussolini could no longer be relied upon for support.

Nonetheless, behind the scenes Schuschnigg actively searched for a way out of this dilemma. Misjudging the possibilities that lay before him and underestimating the support an Anschluss enjoyed within the Austrian populace, he decided to call for a plebiscite on March 13, a fateful step as time would prove. He announced this in Innsbruck on March 9. The plebiscite was to rally Austrians in the defense of a free, independent, and Christian Austria. However, this undertaking backfired completely on Schuschnigg, as Mussolini had aptly predicted.

After Schuschnigg's attempt to step out of line, Hitler decided to go ahead with the military intervention. As early as March 12, the entire Vaterländische Front had collapsed in Vienna. The Austrian National Socialists assumed power for one day, awaiting the arrival of Hitler and the German troops to take over.

By the next day, the annexation of Austria to the German Reich was a fait accompli. At the same time, Hitler called for a new election to the Reichstag. All went according to plan and the election on April 10 was a complete success, with the Austrian annexation providing Hitler with a great deal of popular support.

Still, Hitler did not allow himself to rest on his laurels. He quickly focused his energies on staging his masterstroke of 1938: the war against Czechoslovakia. As early as April 21, he instructed the military to prepare for an assault upon the country. Returning from a visit to

Italy in May and perceiving an escalation in the Sudetenland crisis, Hitler resolved to do away with this unloved neighbor once and for all, before winter set in. A line of fortification to the West was to ensure that no foreign power intervened in his Czechoslovakian enterprise. Yet events proved to be not quite as simple as Hitler had envisioned.

To anyone aware of the true power structures at the time, it was clear that if indeed Hitler set out to do battle he would end up fighting both Great Britain and France. This Hitler refused to acknowledge. To him, the senility of the British was a self-evident truth, that could be shaken by no considerations. In his eyes, events at the height of the crisis only proved the validity of his hypothesis.

The British had resolved to comply with Hitler's demands with regard to Czechoslovakia, on the condition that this was by some stretch of the imagination congruent to the principles of international law and provided that Hitler would agree to abide by contractual obligations. Though nearly seventy years old at the time, the British Prime Minister Sir Neville Chamberlain repeatedly flew to Germany to discuss the issue of the Sudetenland. The British statesman offered Hitler his services in an effort to resolve the Sudeten German question by means of negotiation.

Again and again in his speeches, Hitler had clamored for a resolution of the issue at hand, justifying the Reich's claims by referring to the principles of international law. As he later admitted, Hitler himself had never seriously considered a scenario in which his demands would actually be met.³ Indeed, from the outset Chamberlain's behavior reinforced his beliefs in the decrepitude of British statesmanship, to an extent Hitler himself had not thought possible. As a result, he treated Chamberlain—"that little worm"⁴—with even less respect than he had the German Nationalists in the early 1930s.

Pressured by Mussolini, Hitler finally agreed to a conference in Munich. However, he remained convinced that agreement on the promised territorial cessions was not possible. If indeed he was correct in his assessment, then at least the failure of negotiations could serve as a pretense for him to rush to the rescue of the suppressed Germans in the region. In the process, his march to Prague would transform all of Czechoslovakia into a sea of flames. Yet his appraisal of the situation turned out to be a faulty one. Both the British and the French statesmen yielded to every single one of his demands with regard to the Sudetenland. In the end, Hitler found himself cornered and grudgingly signed the treaty.

The entire world held its breath and stood in awe of what it considered to be Hitler's most astounding victory yet. Without firing a single shot, he had brought three and a half million Germans of Czechoslovakian citizenship "home to the Reich." Moreover, he had gained valuable territory upon which stood the entire fortification system of the Czechoslovakian state.

However, there was still one man who was not at all content with the situation—Hitler. Quite to the contrary, he was furious. He felt himself outwitted, if not to say outright duped. In his eyes, the Sudeten German territories were of little use if he was precluded from laying his hands on the entirety of the Czechoslovakian territory as he had planned.

After all, the country played a pivotal part in the most decisive of his envisioned future conquests. He had intended to launch these campaigns from its territory in his drive towards the east. He was incensed by what he considered to be a great embarrassment for him: he had not been allowed to conquer the territories in question himself. Instead, he had only an international forum to thank for them. The agreement in Munich appeared to be an accurate re-enactment of what had infuriated Hitler so much in the case of the Saarland, where international bodies ceded territories to him without according him the opportunity to act independently prior to the transfer of property.

Hitler did have a point—given his perception of the developments at the time. It was true that he had stumbled into a trap at Munich. For the first time, he had been maneuvered into voluntarily signing an international agreement. In 1936, he had solemnly vowed to abide by all contractual obligations which he had signed. He had claimed that, after all, his signature carried with it the weight of sixty-eight million people. As long as one of these men and women remained alive, he or she would uphold the treaty. Furthermore, Hitler had repeatedly pledged never to place his signature beneath a treaty if he was not completely certain that Germany was capable of complying with its exigencies.⁵ However, by signing the agreement of September 29, he had subjected himself to the manipulation of foreigners. The treaty not only ran contrary to his schemes, it also made their realization impossible.

Yet Fate had still other "rainy" days in store for Hitler. In Munich on the next day, Chamberlain called at the Führer's private apartment at the Prinzregentenplatz. The interpreter Schmidt immediately noticed Hitler's disconcerted demeanor.⁶ In a rotten mood and absent-

minded, he passively submitted to the civilities of the British Prime Minister. Then Chamberlain procured a piece of paper, which proved to be an already polished statement by Great Britain and Germany ascertaining consultation between the two states. The draft amounted to a non-aggression pact. In this instance as well, Hitler uncharacteristically yielded to Chamberlain's urging and signed the document.

Reading the newspapers the next morning, Hitler must truly have felt as though he had been duped once again. In particular, the manner in which Chamberlain had been received back in London and the Prime Minister's comments on the British-German declaration helped foster this impression. In Hitler's opinion, the British had just demonstrated at Munich that they neither desired nor were able to wage a war against him. To this end, no separate declaration would have been necessary since the farthest thing from Hitler's mind was to become entangled in an armed conflict with England. Nonetheless, not only had Chamberlain dared to propose mutual consultations on all topics that pertained to both states, but Hitler had even agreed to this proposal. This occurred despite the fact that as a matter of principle, Hitler never discussed his decisions with anyone. He did not consult even the most intimate of his co-workers; and he did not ask his friend Mussolini's opinion. Least of all would he stoop to ask the advice of a decrepit old Englishman.

However, far worse to Hitler was the fact that the British now held in hand two documents bearing his signature to which they most certainly would point accusingly the minute he undertook any step of an aggressive nature. Nevertheless, he was determined to show these British and the world Jewry standing behind them who was the master at this game! Just how incensed Hitler was by the manner in which Chamberlain, "*dieser Kerl*,"⁷ had gotten the better of him in Munich was apparent again and again in many of his speeches and actions during the latter months of 1938.

On October 9, barely two weeks after the Munich Agreement, Hitler vented his anger at the British in a speech at Saarbrücken, furiously raging, "We will no longer tolerate any schoolmarm patronizing us!"⁸ To lend credence to his statement with regard to the military, Hitler announced the construction of a new line of fortification to the west. Clearly, Hitler had reverted to his tactics of "slaps in the face." On October 21, Hitler issued an ordinance to the Wehrmacht to prepare for the military liquidation of the "remainder of Czechoslovakia" (*Rest-Tschechei*).

Again in the Bürgerbräukeller on November 8, Hitler expressed his genuine displeasure with the British and cried out: "We will not stand for being supervised as if by a schoolmaster!"⁹

The night of November 9, 1938, ushered in the Jewish Pogrom in Germany. A young Jew of German origin, Herschel Grynszpan, had assassinated the German legation counsellor in Paris, Ernst vom Rath. This time Hitler reacted in a completely different manner than he had in the markedly similar case of Wilhelm Gustloff over two years earlier.¹⁰ In the Gustloff case, Hitler had been forced by tactical considerations to content himself with a funeral oration protesting the incident. However, in the case of vom Rath, he resorted to far more drastic measures. On the one hand, he wanted to teach the Jews a lesson for the glee with which they had followed the unfolding of the Sudetenland crisis. More important was Hitler's desire to spread terror among the members of the supposed secret Jewish world government. He wanted them to have good reason to pressure the Anglo-Saxon Powers to embrace a more lenient stance toward him, for the sake of the German Jew.

On November 10, Hitler advised the representatives of the German press in a 'secret speech' to prepare the German people for war. They were to instill the masses with a fervent belief in the final victory. The journalists were no longer to advocate concerns for peace.

As 1938 drew to an end, Hitler resolved to make up for the "setback" suffered at Munich the next year. Never again should the British keep him from claiming hold of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Neither would they prevent him from waging his war to the east in the struggle for new Lebensraum.

The year 1938 was to be the last year of Hitler's great speeches. One last time, the year 1938 afforded him the opportunity to pour forth monstrous speeches at the Party Congress and in the course of his speech-making campaigns. Early that year, the Austrian Anschluss and the spring Reichstag election had provided opportunities for speeches. Later in the year, Hitler again spoke publicly in the aftermath of the occupation of the Sudetenland and the retroactive Reichstag election conducted there in autumn.

These were to be his last great speaking appearances at mass rallies. Especially in Austria and the Sudetenland, there still existed large population groups that would flock to his speeches and would submit themselves without reservation to Hitler's verbose oratory. They had not yet learned to differentiate between Hitler's words and actions.

After five years of his rule, most people living in the old Reich territory had grown increasingly skeptical. At speaking engagements, Hitler was beginning to feel that the tide had turned against him. Therefore, he chose to speak only at carefully orchestrated and staged mass rallies in the Old Reich. Nevertheless, in the newly annexed regions he eagerly took advantage of spontaneously appearing before genuinely enthusiastic crowds. As in his earlier days, he would literally become intoxicated at the opportunity to apply his rhetorical prowess. Once again, he basked in the exalting thunderous applause, relishing the enraptured expression on the faces of his audience.

With the year 1938, Hitler's series of successes came to a close. From 1939 onward, the German train of Government, whose wheel the Führer had sworn never to abandon,¹¹ set out on a journey to destruction.

Report and Commentary

1

In 1938, Hitler's "New Year's Proclamation to the National Socialists and Party Comrades" was delivered in Munich.¹² Hitler added a new dimension to the customary overview of the past achievements in the existence of the Movement by changing his attribute of Germany from "great power" to "world power."

Today we can counter the sum of all our opponents' prophecies with the proud fact that the order of the German Volk is now healthier, its culture richer and its standard of living higher.

This change is most evident, however, in the Reich's position in the world today as compared to 1933. Then a nation trampled upon, despised, and without rights; today a proud Volk and a strong state, protected by a great Wehrmacht at its service. By allying itself with strong friends, this new German world power has helped to create an international element of self-confident order in contrast to the meanderings of those dark powers which Mommsen once described as the enzyme of decomposition for all peoples and all states. It is this new framework of true cooperation between the peoples which will ultimately be the downfall of the Jewish-Bolshevist world revolt!

This astonishing re-erection of the German nation and the Reich was achieved—and this fills us all with a special pride—exclusively by the efforts of our Volk itself. Neither foreign love nor foreign aid have made us great once more, but the National Socialist will, our insight, and our work.

In his appeal, it was remarkable how little attention Hitler accorded to the Wehrmacht and how much emphasis he put on the Party. In reference to the Party he stated:

The eternal, immortal achievement of the National Socialist Party is that it was capable not only of mobilizing this mass of millions, but also of instilling in it a common way of thinking, and of positioning its tremendous unified bulk behind the leadership of state. Hence in the coming centuries, being the highest politically authorized leadership of the German nation, it shall act as the guarantor of the great future of our Volk. To serve this future and prepare for it is the aim of our work in the coming year as well.

January 1, 1938

Let the motto be to strengthen the nation in every area of its life! In terms of domestic politics, this means reinforcing National Socialist education and strengthening the National Socialist organization! In terms of economic policy: increased implementation of the Four-Year Plan!

As regards foreign policy, this will entail the expansion of the German Wehrmacht. For we believe that it is only as a strong state that we will be able, in such an age of unrest, to further preserve for our Volk in the future that possession which, to us, is the dearest of all—peace. For the re-erection of the German nation has been brought about without launching a single attack beyond our borders, but instead solely by virtue of our Volk's accomplishments within them. May the rest of the world, knowing this, finally do their part in making a contribution to peacefully solving those problems whose objective and moral justification lies anchored both in reason and in the basic concept of what is right.

No matter how great the accomplishments of mankind may be, man will never be able to boast of having achieved final victory if Providence does not bless his actions. May it be our uttermost request that the mercy of the Lord God accompany our German Volk in the coming year on its fateful path.

Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our German Volk and Reich!

Munich, January 1, 1938

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini received the telegram reproduced below from Hitler, wishing him well on New Year's Day.¹³

May Your Excellency accept my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and the continued success of your historically so significant work at the beginning of this New Year.

The following official note was published, concerning the customary exchange of telegrams with various heads of state:¹⁴

In the customary manner, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has wired New Year's greetings to a number of foreign statesmen on this New Year's Day. Such an exchange of telegrams took place with the royal houses of Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Norway, Romania, Sweden; and with the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia; the Regent of the Hungarian Kingdom; the President of Guatemala; the Austrian Federal Chancellor; the President of Czechoslovakia; and with General Franco, the Chief of the Spanish National Government.

Similarly, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has extended in his name and that of the Reich Government best wishes for the New Year to the Pope. The Pope thanked him and reciprocated with New Year's wishes for the Führer, the Reich Government, and the German Volk.

Furthermore, the Führer and Reich Chancellor received New Year's greetings from the King of Afghanistan and the Shah of Iran, for which he thanked them by wire. Moreover, the Führer has returned the best wishes extended by the Minister-Presidents of Canada and Hungary.

January 7, 1938

On January 7, the itinerary for Hitler's visit to Italy in the spring was published. His travels would lead him to Rome, Naples and Florence.¹⁵ Hitler spent the first days of January 1938 at the Obersalzberg and in Munich. It is probably correct to assume that three concerns dominated Hitler's mind during those days. First was the issue of the removal of Blomberg and Fritsch. Second, in a general sense the outstanding controversy involving the reactionary forces within the Wehrmacht had yet to be resolved. Finally, Hitler no doubt pondered how best to go about destroying the Soldatenbund.

He spent the time not dedicated to the resolution of these three problems at various theater performances in Munich. On January 7 at the Theater am Gärtnerplatz, Hitler once again saw the ballet *Tanz um die Welt*, a guest performance of the German Opera House of Berlin-Charlottenburg. At the Munich National Theater the next day, Hitler attended a rendition of *Aida*.¹⁶

On January 11, there was a well-attended open house at the Chancellery in Berlin. The first guest to be received by Hitler was the newly appointed Japanese Ambassador, Shigenori Togo, who had come to present his credentials. Hitler addressed the topic of Japanese-German friendship in his speech welcoming the diplomat and declared:¹⁷

I warmly welcome the fact that Your Excellency regards it as your personal mission to further expand upon the good relations between our countries by taking advantage of your position of prominence in order to add profundity to the warm friendship that so fortunately ties together Japan and Germany. I am certain that, given the fact that Your Excellency in your previous position was instrumental in bringing about the German-Japanese Agreement directed against the Communist International, Your Excellency is as pervaded by the spirit of this pact as I am myself.

Please rest assured, Your Excellency, that your striving to expand upon this foundation of Japanese-German friendship will always have my full support.

That same day, the official annual New Year's reception took place at the House of the Reich President.¹⁸

At 11:00 a.m., Blomberg and the respective Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht came to extend their best wishes to Hitler. It was to be the last time these gentlemen would appear before Hitler in this particular configuration. Subsequently, Hitler received the Mayor and President of the City of Berlin, Dr. Lippert, and the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, Himmler.

At 12:15 p.m., the reception of the diplomatic corps began. The Apostolic Nuncio Orsenigo spoke in French, expressing the corps' best wishes for the new year. Attired in a tailcoat, Hitler responded:

Your Excellency!

May I express my very best thanks to Your Excellency—and to the Diplomatic Corps on behalf of which you are speaking—for the New Year's wishes you have extended to the German Volk and myself on behalf of the Heads of State you represent here.

The peace Your Excellency wishes for the individual peoples at home and for the world as a whole on this threshold of the new year is likewise the goal of my own efforts and those of the Reich Government. As you gentlemen have certainly all been able to see for yourselves, Germany is seeking with all its might, by bringing into a balance all the ostensibly opposing social and societal interests that threaten to disrupt the inner unity of the peoples, to provide for the German Volk the good fortune of a fraternally-bound community; to strengthen the low-income class by gladly-given aid; and to promote all of the healthy and positive impulses in order to improve both the material and spiritual welfare of the Volk as a whole.

It is with this same attitude which determines our actions at home that we wish to settle our relations with foreign countries. We believe that the tasks which Providence has assigned in respect to the cohabitation of this world by the various peoples must be solved in the same spirit; for this reason we are prepared to undertake earnest and trusting cooperation with all those nations and all those states who share this view, and also to put these ideals into practice. Hence, from the bottom of its heart, the German Volk prefers the genuinely constructive work of peace toward the goal of general progress to any and all battles serving only to destroy the peoples.

May this yearning lead to a truly mutual consideration and hence to a real peace of justice and trust. And may these desires fill not only the peoples in the year 1938, but also be vividly expressed in the actions and deeds of their governments. The German leadership of Volk and State is confidently looking forward to this type of sincere international understanding.

It is in this spirit that I may cordially extend to you, Your Excellency, and to you gentlemen as well as to the Heads of State, Governments, and peoples you represent, my own and the German Volk's warmest wishes for the New Year.

On January 12, the forty-fifth birthday of both Göring and Rosenberg, Hitler visited them in their respective apartments in Berlin to extend his best wishes.¹⁹

That same day the campaign against Blomberg and Fritsch was launched. The goal pursued was a rather simple one—their removal from office. As mentioned earlier, both military men had begun to offer opposition to Hitler at the November 5 meeting. The fate that Hitler had in store for them was precisely that which he always employed when

confronted with signals of similar insubordination on the part of an Unterführer. He simply dismissed the man in question, and—insofar as the deposed man's position was a powerful one—named himself as successor. He had proceeded in the 1930 case of the SA according to this blueprint. After he had summarily dealt with his predecessor as OSAF, Captain Pfeffer von Salomon, Hitler himself had taken control of the SA. Another example of Hitler's tactics was the 1932 removal of Strasser from his position as head of the Political Organization. As Hitler had taken over Strasser's position and duties, so he planned to proceed in the case of the Wehrmacht leaders.

However, at first there was no plausible rationale in sight to serve as a pretext for the dismissal of Blomberg. Since 1933, this man had dedicated himself to serving Hitler and to molding the Wehrmacht into a body completely loyal to the Führer. This utter subservience had prompted both his fellow officers and the public to nickname him "Hitler Youth Quex."²⁰ Nonetheless, Blomberg had made it plain that he was not willing to second Hitler's war plans. Hence he had to be removed from office.

It was Blomberg's naivety that led him straight up to the scaffold. Hitler had contrived a trap that was itself a small marvel of intrigue. The Field Marshal had long been friendly with a certain lady by the name of Erna Gruhn whose "past" was well documented in police files. Blomberg was actually contemplating marrying the former demimondaine. He was well aware that such a step would entail difficulties for him because of the strict code of conduct governing the lives of German officers. If nothing else, he had to obtain his superior's permission prior to the marriage. In this case that meant he had to procure Hitler's blessing. On this matter, Blomberg sought advice from Göring, whom he trusted. Göring encouraged Blomberg's marriage plans, and Himmler had safely secured the police file "Erna Gruhn" for Göring in time.

It would be a mistake to presume²¹ that Göring had acted on his own in advocating Blomberg's marriage with the aim of compromising the War Minister and being named Blomberg's successor. Neither Himmler nor Göring would have dared to do any such thing without Hitler's implied consent. A like enterprise could well have cost them their own heads.

Neither is it likely that Hitler had not been the very first to know of the police file in question. After all, Hitler accorded great attention to even the most minute details regarding the private lives of his

exposed subordinates. It was one of the main tasks of Himmler, and of Hitler's adjutant, SS Gruppenführer Schaub, to keep him informed on these matters.²² Without doubt, Hitler also vividly recalled the decisive role the private life of Groener had played in the latter's 1932 purge from his post as Minister of Defense.²³ At the time, Hindenburg had been scandalized by the fact that General Groener's first child had been born rather too quickly after the Minister's wedding. In any event, Hitler was only too ready to allow Blomberg's envisioned marriage. He was well aware that such a step by a military man in the position of Minister of War would make it easy to remove Blomberg from office. To push matters even further, Hitler himself "magnanimously" offered to act as witness to the Blomberg wedding, in concert with Göring.

A day after the marriage in Berlin, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following official account of the memorable occasion:²⁴

On Wednesday, January 12, the Minister of War Field Marshal von Blomberg wed Fräulein Gruhn. The Führer and Reich Chancellor, and Colonel General Göring served as witnesses to the ceremony.

Field Marshal von Blomberg may rest assured that the entire German Volk extends its heartfelt, best wishes to him and his wife.

Above all, it was Hitler who congratulated himself on the event. Within three weeks time, this "bomb" would detonate. No doubt it would then cause an avalanche of measures in domestic policy that would considerably reinforce Hitler's position in power.

However, for the time being, various visits by foreign dignitaries captured the attention of the German public. On January 14, Hitler had a lengthy conversation in the Chancellery with Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, at which the Polish Ambassador Lipski and Minister von Neurath were also present.²⁵ Hitler was most congenial at the meeting, striving to keep the Polish in good spirits for 1938.

On January 15, the Yugoslavian Prime Minister Milan Stojadinovic and his wife arrived in Berlin for a visit of several days. Hitler's attractiveness to politicians in the Balkans had increased greatly. Yugoslavia was also eager to jump on the band wagon while there still was time. On the occasion of the state visit, the newspapers in Belgrade and in Zagreb emphasized that Yugoslavia had, "as one of the first countries, realized the true significance of the greatness of the new Germany."²⁶

After visits to Neurath and Göring, Stojadinovic was received by Hitler at the Chancellery on January 17.²⁷ The official press release spoke of "extensive talks that took place in an atmosphere of trust and

genuine friendship.” Subsequently, Hitler greeted the representatives of the Yugoslavian press, who were in Germany to cover the Stojadinovic visit. That evening, Hitler gave a magnificent dinner in honor of his Yugoslavian guests. Exalted commentaries in the Yugoslavian media celebrated the meeting of the two statesmen.

Like Mussolini before him, Stojadinovic had to subject himself to a most thorough tour of the Krupp factory in Essen. In its halls, surrounded by great cannons, the Yugoslavian Premier would be certain to fully appreciate the true greatness of the Third Reich. On January 22, Hitler met with his Yugoslavian guests in Munich where the German Architecture and industrial Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst was being inaugurated. The exhibition was dedicated exclusively to models of envisioned monumental construction projects. In addition, furniture was displayed that one day would be housed within the buildings. Hitler was overjoyed at the opportunity to demonstrate the extent of the magnificence of Germany as mirrored in these pieces of art. For once, he was hosting foreign guests who truly admired him, and his opening speech²⁸ resounded of the pride he felt at the occasion:

The merits of every great age are ultimately expressed in its architecture. When peoples internally experience great times, they also lend these times an external manifestation. Their word is then more convincing than the spoken word: it is the word of stone!

As a rule, the environment’s understanding of great works of creativity more often than not fails to keep pace with the evolution of these works. It may often be that centuries pass before the magnitude of an age is understood from the visible documentation its architecture provides. One good example is this city.

It did not understand the king who once created its greatest edifices, nor did it understand the edifices which were the product of his spirit. Today this is assessed differently. We have reason to hope that we, too, will one day be able to count on such a merciful retrospective assessment. What makes this exhibition appear so remarkable is the following:

1. This is the first time ever that an exhibition of such scope is being shown to mankind!

2. This exhibition marks a turning point in time. It documents the beginning of a new era.

3. Since the construction of our cathedrals, we see here for the first time a truly great architecture on display, an architecture which does not consume itself in the service of petty, day-to-day orders and needs, but is instead an architecture that far surpasses the scope of daily life and its requirements. It has a right to assert that it will withstand the critical appraisal of millenniums and remain, for millenniums, the pride of the Volk which created these works.

4. For this reason there are no projects being exhibited here; instead you see here plans, some of which are already being turned into reality, some of which are soon to be commenced. Everything, however, is destined to become reality—and will become reality!

5. What you see here is not the product of a few weeks' or a few months' work, but the product, in part, of years of effort, albeit which took place secluded from the public eye. For it is a National Socialist principle not to approach the public with difficult problems to allow it to debate them, but to first allow such plans to fully ripen, and then to present them to the Volk. There are things which cannot be subject to debate. Among these are all the eternal values. Who would presume to be able to apply his own limited, commonplace intelligence to the work of really great characters endowed by God? The great artists and master builders have a right to be removed from the critical examination of small-minded contemporaries. Their work will be given its final appraisal and assessment by the centuries, not by the limited understanding of short-lived apparitions.

Hence all these works did not come to be yesterday or the day before; the artistic talent of architects both young and old has been trying itself on them for years now. Furthermore, this exhibition is remarkable first and foremost because, in it, a series of new names are being disclosed to the nation for the first time. Here, too, the new state has been fortunate in finding fresh personifications of its artistic will, and believe me, these names which today are still unknown to many Germans will one day number among the cultural riches of the German nation!

And finally, do not forget: the curtain is being opened this very hour—for the first time before the eyes of a large audience—to reveal works which are destined to leave their mark not on decades, but on centuries! At this very moment they shall undergo the consecration so splendidly expressed in the *Meistersinger*: "Ein Kind ward hier geboren" (here a child was born). These are architectural achievements of intrinsic eternal value and ones which will stand forever according to human standards, firm and unshakeable, immortal in their beauty and in their harmonious proportions!

This exhibition does not, however, show the great picture of the evolution of the Capital of the Reich and the Capital of the Movement. Neither Berlin nor Munich are exhibiting the great plans designed to enhance these cities. They will not be unveiled before the public until their basic planning can be deemed finished. This exhibition shows more of Nuremberg and a great work in Hamburg. I cannot cite the names of all the architects here. They were headed by the master of our time, Professor Troost. A second deceased is represented here with an eternal work: Professor Ruff from Nuremberg. Then come Gall, Speer, Brinkmann, Haerter, Giessler, Kreis, Sagebiel, Klotz, and many more.

Of the works exhibited here, the edifices of Nuremberg are, in our opinion, even now works for eternity: the stadium, the congress hall, the Märzfeld, and the Zeppelinfeld which has already been completed. From Hamburg, you now see here for the first time the bridge spanning the Elbe which, in an overall assessment, can be called the most tremendous bridge

complex in the world. From Berlin, there is essentially only one great new work, the airport. The new Munich airport as well is already part of the exhibition. KdF and Labor Front are exhibiting the seaside resort on the island of Rügen and the new KdF steamers. From Weimar you see the model of an enormous restructuring of this city and, from the same architect, a great Ordensburg on display. The Wehrmacht is demonstrating that today its edifices no longer have anything in common with the type of structure which, in various bad examples from the past, had earned the name "barracks architecture." The Luftwaffe, the Army, and the Navy are also expressing their attitude toward the new state as embodied in their architecture.

It is a special pleasure for us to see how the German youth movement is integrating itself artistically in the new state. The Capital of the Movement and the City of German Art is represented almost exclusively in works which already exist, and with very few lesser works which are only in the planning stage. I hope, however, that the coming great works can be exhibited to the public next year. Arts and crafts have joined these achievements as a fitting partner.

When I now ask you to view this exhibition, I am at the same time expressing the hope that you will be followed by hundreds of thousands of German Volksgenossen who will here take note of what is being planned and accomplished in Germany. May they thus be able to gauge the greatness of an age which they are fortunate enough to be able to witness. In this spirit, I hereby open today's exhibition to the public.

Subsequently, Hitler himself explained each and every piece exhibited to his guests. After additional festivities in their honor, Stojadinovic and his wife departed Munich on January 23, most content with their visit to Germany.

In the interim, the bomb planted at the Blomberg wedding exploded in Berlin. When apprised, the Wehrmacht generals were incensed at this most scandalous match. The Commander in Chief of the Army, Freiherr von Fritsch, appeared at Hitler's office demanding the dismissal of the Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht. Obviously, Fritsch was ignorant of the fact that his name was the next one on Hitler's list. His own removal had been decided upon for a long time already, and together with Blomberg he would be forced to sink into oblivion.

On January 26, in the course of a briefing of Colonel General von Fritsch, Hitler disclosed to him that he was being accused of being homosexual.²⁹ Regardless of whether the claim was justified or not, such an accusation being voiced by Hitler carried with it a special weigh. As a pretext, it even could be tantamount to a death sentence being passed upon the perpetrator, a fact that clearly stood out in light of the Röhm Purge.

January 26, 1938

It was obvious that for Hitler, Fritsch was a far more formidable opponent than Blomberg had ever been. His appearance alone personified Germany's feudal upper class, not only because he wore a monocle and bore the noble title of baron, but also because Fritsch's intellectual stance presented a true challenge to Hitler. It was well known that the baron had resigned himself to Hitler's rule only through the necessity of circumstance and because the Führer's policies had been advantageous for the Officers' Corps.

Since Schleicher, Hitler had not been faced with such a distinguished challenger from the ranks of the generals. There is little doubt that had the opportunity arisen, Hitler would have dealt with Fritsch in precisely the same manner he had employed in Schleicher's case.³⁰ However, the conference with Fritsch on January 26 did not produce any results, despite the fact that Hitler confronted Fritsch with a "witness" procured by the Gestapo. This "witness" was Hans Schmidt, a man who had supposedly had observed Fritsch engaging in homosexual activities.³¹

On January 28, Colonel Hossbach, Hitler's adjutant with the Wehrmacht, was removed from his post. Evidently, Hitler no longer deemed him worthy of his confidence.³²

That same day, the German race car driver Bernd Rosemeyer died in a crash at Langen-Mörfelden on the Darmstadt-Frankfurt Autobahn during an attempt on the record. His Auto-Union racing car had been swept off the road by a gust of wind. Hitler sent Rosemeyer's widow, the aviator Elly Beinhorn-Rosemeyer, the following telegram expressing his sorrow at her loss:³³

I have been profoundly shaken by the news of your husband's tragic fate. I extend to you my sincere condolences. May the thought soothe your great sorrow that he died in a sortie for the German cause.

Adolf Hitler

One outcome of the Wehrmacht crisis was that the commemoration day of January 30 passed rather quietly. Given the circumstances, the Reichstag did not convene that day.

Later Hitler would attempt to explain the rescheduling of the session by arguing that it had been his intention to implement the changes in personnel after January 30 rather than earlier. He claimed that a delay had become indispensable because he had first wished to clear up matters with regard to foreign policy. What he evidently had in mind here was Austria.³⁴

At 10:00 on the morning of January 30, Hitler stood in an open Mercedes SSK, reviewing his *SS Leibstandarte* as they marched past the Chancellery, wearing their full-dress uniforms with white leather straps and belts. An hour later inside the building, Hitler honored the first recipients of the German National Award for the Arts and Sciences, an award he had established the previous year as a counterbalance for the Nobel Prize:³⁵ Frau Professor Troost; Alfred Rosenberg; the Asia expert and explorer, Dr. Wilhelm Filchner; the surgeon, Professor Ferdinand Sauerbruch; and Professor August Bier. The names of the award's recipients had already been published at the Culture Convention of the Party Congress of Work in 1937. Now Hitler presented to each beneficiary the Golden Medal of Honor.³⁶

On the same day, Hitler donated yet another award, the "Loyal Service Medal" (*Treudienst-Ehrenzeichen*), which was distributed among deserving members of the administration, civil service employees, workers, members of the *SS Verfügungstruppe*, the police, the fire department, and the air-raid protection.³⁷ In addition, Hitler awarded the titles "Professor," "State Actor" and "General Music Director" to numerous artists and scientists. That evening, a formation of the Party marched past the Chancellery, drawing the day of commemoration to a fitting end.

On January 31, Hitler received the senior general, Gerd von Rundstedt,³⁸ and the Chief of the General Staff, General Ludwig Beck.³⁹ Both generals wished to protest the disrespectful manner in which Fritsch had been treated. However, in seeking remedy of his case, they had come to the wrong man. Hitler repudiated their petition by stressing that even generals were soldiers, and as such they were obliged to unquestioningly obey their superior.

On February 2, Hitler called upon the Swedish King Gustav V at the Swedish Legation, where the latter had stopped over for a short visit in Berlin.⁴⁰ That same day, the Reich Foreign Minister von Neurath celebrated both his sixty-fifth birthday and the fortieth anniversary of his service with the Diplomatic Corps. Hitler congratulated him in person and bestowed upon him the recently established gold medal for loyal service.⁴¹

It is possible that on this occasion von Neurath may have remarked upon the fact that he was now nearing retirement age. Even if indeed he had done so, he certainly would have been surprised at how speedily Hitler heeded his request. Within two days of his birthday, von Neurath was placed on the retirement list.

February 4, 1938

On February 4, Hitler had the personnel changes which he had effected made public. The news created great turmoil in Germany. Even small newspapers ran special editions. In the media, Hitler's take-over of the supreme command of the entire Wehrmacht and the Ministry of War was described as the "greatest accumulation of political, military and economic power in the hands of the Supreme Führer." Hitler issued one decree, ordinance, promotion and open letter after the other on that day, listed below according to the sequence in which they were issued.

A decree concerning the leadership of the Wehrmacht ("Erlass über die Führung der Wehrmacht") marked the beginning:⁴²

I shall personally assume immediate command of the entire Wehrmacht henceforth, The present Wehrmacht Office in the Reich Ministry of War shall assume its responsibilities as the "High Command of the Wehrmacht" (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW). As my military staff it shall be placed under my immediate control.

The present chief of the Wehrmacht Office shall head the staff of the High Command of the Wehrmacht as "Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht." His rank shall be equivalent to that of a Reich Minister.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht simultaneously shall resume the business of the Reich Ministry of War. On my behalf, the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht shall be granted the authority previously accorded to the Reich Minister of War.

In peacetime, the High Command of the Wehrmacht shall ensure the coordinated preparation for defense of the Reich in all fields, in accordance with my instructions.

Berlin, February 4, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Keitel

According to the official rendition, Field Marshal von Blomberg and Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch had requested not to be considered for re-assignment because of "ill health." In addition, letters from Hitler addressed to Blomberg and Fritsch were published. The only discrepancy in comparison with earlier correspondence was that the heading of the letters no longer read "My dear Field Marshal" or "My dear Colonel General." Furthermore, the published contents of this correspondence did not contain the respective last paragraphs of the letters. The letter to Blomberg read verbatim:⁴³

Ever since the restitution of Germany's full military and territorial sovereignty carried through in 1936, you have repeatedly asked me to relieve

February 4, 1938

you of your duties which pose a great strain on your health. Now that the fifth year subsequent to the restoration of the German Volk and the German Wehrmacht has drawn to a close, I will heed this desire which you have once again expressed. May you be restored to health in this time of repose that lies before you, and which, far more than any other man, you so richly deserve.

Standing before me on January 30, 1933, you, the Field Marshal, were the first officer of the new Reich to take the oath of loyalty to the National Socialist State leadership. Undaunted, you have upheld it for five years. In this time period occurred the most significant reorganization of the military in all of German history. Your name shall remain connected to this project for all time in the annals of history.

In this hour, let me once again assure you of the deep gratitude of the German Volk and myself.

Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch received the following correspondence:⁴⁴

In consideration of your feeble health, you have seen yourself forced to ask me to relieve of your duties. Now that a recent sojourn to the South has not brought about the desired recovery, I have determined to heed your request. On the occasion of your departure from active duty, I would like to express deep gratitude and appreciation for your excellent performance in the service of the rebuilding of the Army. The reconstruction and strengthening of the German Army in the time period March 1935 to February 1938 shall remain connected to your name for all time in the annals of history.

In addition, a series of military appointments went into effect:⁴⁵

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has bestowed the baton of a field marshal upon the present Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, Colonel General Göring.

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the Artillery General von Brauchitsch,⁴⁶ at present Commander in Chief of Army Group IV, as the new Commander in Chief of the Army, while simultaneously promoting him to the rank of Colonel General.

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the former Chief of the Wehrmacht Office, Artillery General Keitel,⁴⁷ as "Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht."

These were not the only personnel changes that Hitler saw to that day. As would become evident in due course, he literally moved the generals around by assigning forty-six of the Wehrmacht's leading men to new command posts. Fourteen other generals found themselves forced into an early retirement. The fact that on March 1 Hitler sent each

of them an autographed photograph of their Führer was probably of little consolation to them.⁴⁸

Hitler showed restraint solely with regard to the Soldatenbund. As soon as another event had captured the attention of the German public, Hitler would quietly eliminate the organization as if in passing. He proceeded with tactics similar to those he employed in the earlier case of the Stahlhelm.

Additional announcements issued that day pertained to the Foreign Office. They read:⁴⁹

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Chancellor has relieved the Reich Minister Freiherr von Neurath of his duties as Foreign Minister, while simultaneously providing that Freiherr von Neurath remain "Reich Minister." The Führer has named him president of the newly formed Cabinet Privy Council.

On this occasion, the Führer and Chancellor has ordered that all remaining Reich Ministers who previously were not administering a specific ministry and who—according to earlier statutes—had been titled Reich Minister "without Portfolio," are to discard this classification and in the future be addressed as "Reich Ministers."⁵⁰ In the Führer's opinion, the specification of the title as "without Portfolio" is impossible and does not render justice to them. These Reich Ministers fulfill certain important tasks within the Reich Government in their capacity as advisers to the Führer and Chancellor. In particular this is true in the case of the Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess.

With von Neurath, Hitler proceeded in precisely the same manner he had tried to apply—though unsuccessfully—to Hugenberg.⁵¹ Notwithstanding, this mode had served him well in the Schacht case.⁵² For appearances' sake, Neurath would be allowed to remain in the cabinet—but only after being deprived of all influence. There was no doubt as to Hitler's intent, and the deletion of the epitaph "without Portfolio" could not veil this fact. Neither could von Neurath's appointment to the position of president of a "Cabinet Privy Council" conceal Hitler's true designs. As was to be expected, this council never convened.⁵³ The verbatim content of the decree establishing the Council follows:⁵⁴

I establish a Cabinet Privy Council to advise me on the conduct of foreign affairs. I appoint Reich Minister Freiherr von Neurath president of the Cabinet Privy Council.

I assign the following men as members of the Cabinet Privy Council:

Joachim von Ribbentrop, Reich Foreign Minister;

Field Marshal Hermann Göring, Prussian Minister-President and Reich Minister of Air and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe;

February 4, 1938

Reich Minister Rudolf Hess, the Führer's Deputy;
Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda;

Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery;

Colonel General Walter von Brauchitsch, Commander in Chief of the Army;

Rear General Erich Raeder, Commander in Chief of the Navy;

Artillery General Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command;

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery conducts the current affairs of the Cabinet Privy Council.

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

To Neurath himself, Hitler sent a carefully composed letter, the content of which was the following:⁵⁵

On the occasion of the completion of the first half of a decade of National Socialist State leadership, you have once again requested a release into the retirement you covet. In consideration of your indispensable assistance, I cannot accede to this even with due regard to your recent sixty-fifth birthday and fortieth service anniversary.

Your advice and opinion have become indispensable to me in the five years of our association. Therefore, it is in order to preserve for myself an adviser in the future that I appoint you the president of the Cabinet Privy Council while relieving you of the conduct of daily affairs in the Reich Foreign Ministry. You are an adviser who has stood loyally by my side through the most difficult past five years. Today I feel compelled to thank you for this with all my heart.

A further decree by Hitler that day concerned both the appointment of Ribbentrop as Foreign Minister and the recall of Germany's ambassadors from Rome, Tokyo, and Vienna. The official announcement had the following verbatim content:⁵⁶

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has recalled the Ambassador in London, von Ribbentrop, from his present post and has appointed him Foreign Minister. Simultaneously, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has recalled the ambassadors von Hassel from Rome, von Dirksen from Tokyo and von Papen from Vienna, and has placed them at his disposal.

By issuing this decree, Hitler made it perfectly clear that in the future he himself would preside over the conduct of Germany's foreign affairs. Like Keitel, Ribbentrop was little more than a secretary to Hitler.⁵⁷ He eagerly listened to Hitler's every word, and in "blind

obedience” followed through on his Führer’s instructions, even if he himself did not concur with the latter’s opinion.

Hitler was always anxious to avoid speaking at mass rallies whenever he found himself confronted by a difficult situation or when he was enacting less than universally accepted measures. In the Röhm Affair it had taken him nearly two weeks before he could make a public appearance and explain his actions. In the present instance as well, he postponed taking a stance in the Reichstag for nearly fourteen days. For the time being, he had the following official announcement issued:⁵⁸

Berlin, February 4

The German Reichstag is called upon to convene in Berlin on Sunday, February 20. On the agenda is a declaration to be delivered by the Reich Government.

By this date Hitler counted on having sufficient successes to his credit, in particular his victory in Austria, to facilitate suppressing any resentments that may have persisted over the measures enacted on February 4.

Once he had taken care of matters for the immediate future, Hitler delivered an address to clarify his views before the Reich Cabinet on the evening of February 5 in which he took a stand on the latest events. The official note published on the occasion was the following:⁵⁹

Berlin, February 6

The Reich Cabinet was in session Saturday night. The Cabinet accepted a report on the political situation by the Führer and Reich Chancellor. The Reich Cabinet expressed its great satisfaction with the results of the Führer’s recent decisions, namely, with the concentration and strengthening of the political, military, and economic powers of the Reich.

The first reaction abroad to the events in Germany arrived in the form of a congratulatory telegram from Mussolini on February 5:

Both in my capacity as Minister of the Italian Armed Forces and personally, I would like to express the joy I felt, as did all the Italian people, upon learning of Your Excellency’s assumption of direct and supreme command over the entire Wehrmacht of the Reich. I regard this event as conducive to the reinforcement of the solidarity between both our armed forces and our regimes.

With the most friendly regards,

Mussolini

That same day, Hitler replied to the Italian chief of government’s message in the telegram below:⁶⁰

February 5, 1938

With all my heart, I thank Your Excellency for the thoughtfulness accorded to me in the telegram sent on the occasion of my assumption of supreme command over the Wehrmacht of the Reich. I shall regard it as my task, in the future as well, to further strengthen the political and *weltanschaulich* bonds which already exist between Italy and Germany, in order to serve the maintenance of peace and culture in the world.

In returning your greetings in the most sincere friendship, I remain Your Excellency's faithful,

Adolf Hitler

On February 6, Franco also sent a note congratulating Hitler:

I warmly congratulate Your Excellency on the assumption of the supreme command over the Wehrmacht in Germany in the conviction that Your Excellency herewith has further contributed to strengthening the cordial relationship that forms a bond between Spain and your great country.

Hitler thanked Franco in the following wired reply:⁶¹

I thank Your Excellency for the warm wishes extended to me by wire on the occasion of my assumption of supreme command of the German Wehrmacht.

I return your greetings with my heartfelt best wishes for the prosperity of Nationalist Spain.

Adolf Hitler

When on February 4 and February 5 respectively, the measures taken were made public in Germany, the news spawned an indignant public outburst. Not since the days of the Röhm Purge had an event caused a similar sensation. The public grasped immediately that Hitler had struck out at the generals.

Needless to say, without doubt the SA men were the most content with this development. They remembered only too well the events of 1934 from which the generals had greatly benefited. "What happened to us on June 30, 1934 has now happened to the generals," the SA Gruppenführer Berchtold, leader of the *Stosstrupp Hitler* in the 1923 Putsch, declared in Munich.⁶² Strikingly similar in both cases was the behavior Hitler displayed in their aftermath. Following the pattern he had set in the Röhm Purge, Hitler again immediately embarked upon his mission against Austria in order to detract public attention.⁶³

2

The fact that there was no prior notice given in the recall of the Ambassador Extraordinary von Papen from Vienna on February 4—even to the Ambassador himself—betrayed Hitler’s determination to employ more pointed means in his dealings with Austria. If necessary, he had resolved to employ force to execute the Anschluss. Needless to say, the measure was directed primarily against Schuschnigg, who immediately grasped the true nature of the game. The dismissal of the moderate and affable von Papen could mean only one thing: a change of strategy on the part of Hitler. This in turn might result in the deployment in Vienna of a representative completely loyal to Hitler, such as the National Socialist expert on Austrian affairs, Wilhelm Keppler.⁶⁴

Schuschnigg had a bit of a guilty conscience because of the lax implementation of the German-Austrian Agreement of July 11, 1936. He feared that the German Chancellor would increase the pressure on Austria by stepping up measures directed against Austria. In an attempt to save what was left of German good will, he agreed to a meeting with Hitler on February 12 on the Obersalzberg.

Accompanied by Ambassador Extraordinary von Papen and the Austrian State Secretary Guido Schmidt, Schuschnigg left Salzburg for the Berghof in a clandestine manner. Hitler had been busily preparing an impressive scenario for the arrival of the Austrian Chancellor. He had ordered a number of generals, whose comportment was of a particularly martial nature,⁶⁵ to the Obersalzberg to function as extras on the setting.

Early in the discussion,⁶⁶ Hitler met Schuschnigg with an angry tirade that took the Austrian’s breath, and left him so unnerved that he was unable to state his case persuasively. Hitler raged on, insisting that Austria’s entire history was one of continued treason to the detriment

of the German Volk. The present situation reaffirmed this beyond doubt.

“And one thing I can tell you, Herr Schuschnigg,” Hitler screamed, “I am firmly resolved to put an end to all that. The German Reich is a major power, and no one can or will try to interfere when it puts things in order at its borders.”

A two-hour monologue followed, in which Hitler gave detailed consideration to the remarkable life he had led, to his accomplishments and his successes. He paid particular attention to his ability to achieve any feat, once he had set his mind to it. Sentimental flash-backs gave way to angry attacks on Schuschnigg, whom he accused of entertaining “anti-German” machinations and of supposedly having ordered precautionary military steps against Germany. Finally, Hitler categorically declared that if not all of his demands were met immediately, he would resolve the issue by the use of force.

During a break for lunch, Hitler slipped back into his role as the amiable host, agreeably entertaining his guest at dinner. Nevertheless, he could not pass up the opportunity of surrounding Schuschnigg with his fearsome generals at the dinner table.

That afternoon, Hitler left the task of continuing deliberations with Schuschnigg and Schmidt to Ribbentrop and Papen. In the meantime, Hitler conferred with Keppler and other National Socialists. Then he returned to the conference room where he resumed his talks with Schuschnigg. Suddenly, he interrupted himself, threw open the doors and cried out for General Keitel. Obviously, he intended to create the impression that he was on the verge of giving last minute instructions for a pending foray into Austria.

In retrospect, one may wonder if these theatrics were truly necessary. They appear not in the least appropriate to the situation at hand, especially if one keeps in mind the further course of events. Austria was but a tiny country, strongly dependent upon Germany. Its military was most certainly not in a position to put up a fight. Either Austria would have to accede voluntarily, or indeed the dictator would resort to force. Such a step against his *Brudervolk*, was something, however, he wished to avoid if at all possible. Besides, preparations to that end would take time, and he was in a hurry to arrive at a settlement of the Austrian affair.

After all, it was already February 12, and by the time he had to justify his actions before the Reichstag on February 20, he needed tangible results in hand.

Hitler had envisioned Schuschnigg playing a role similar to that of von Papen in the years 1932-33. Schuschnigg was to open the doors for a National Socialist cabinet in Austria, while at first staying on as federal chancellor of the country. Later on, he would quietly step down to become vice-chancellor, a position he would hold for appearances' sake only.

In the aftermath of the Anschluss of Austria, as he spoke before the Reichstag on March 18, 1938, Hitler would explain the goals that he had pursued in this February 12 meeting with Schuschnigg in the following terms:⁶⁷

I asked him to spare German-Austria, the German Reich, and himself a situation that sooner or later would necessarily lead to very serious disputes. In this context, I suggested a path to him which could lead to a gradual reconciliation not only between the people within Austria, but also between the two German states.

In a speech in Königsberg on March 25, 1938, Hitler added the following explanation regarding the conference with the Austrian Federal Chancellor:⁶⁸

In the course of this winter, there were many signs which have led me to believe that, in the long run, this situation had become untenable and that there were only two possibilities: either a structured settlement or an unstructured outbreak of revolution. I wanted to avoid the latter, and I invited this man to come to see me in spite of the fact that, toward me, he had no mandate whatsoever to represent this territory. I bade him to come to me, and in all earnestness I confronted him with the inevitable consequence of continuing to maintain this tyranny [in Austria].

I said to him, "Herr Schuschnigg, you are oppressing a country! You have no right to do so! This country is my homeland, too, just as much as it is yours! Who do you think you are to keep violating this country? I am prepared, in concert with you, to submit to a referendum of the people. The two of us shall stand as candidates.⁶⁹ The Volk shall decide." He found this would not be possible on constitutional grounds. However, I warned him to seek a peaceful way of lessening the tension, because otherwise no one could guarantee that the tortured soul of the people would not cry out. And there was one thing about which I could leave no doubt: no more shots will be fired against German Volksgenossen at the German borders!⁷⁰

On the afternoon of February 12, Ribbentrop and von Papen detailed to Schuschnigg precisely which "peaceful way of lessening the tension" he was to pursue. Hitler's demands can be summarized as follows: legalization of the National Socialist Movement in Austria within the framework of the Vaterländische Front; amnesty for all detained National Socialists; acceptance of a second National Socialist as

member of the Austrian Cabinet, Arthur Seyss-Inquart,⁷¹ who was also to be named Minister of the interior; and, finally, the maintenance of close economic and military ties with Germany.

Schuschnigg was to accept these conditions as a base for future good neighborly relations between the two states. He was not permitted to take exception to any one of them, and was instructed to at once place his signature beneath them. In the course of the subsequently renewed talks with Hitler, Schuschnigg declared that—even if he had wanted to—he could not sign into law the proposed agreement on the spot because of the exigencies of the Austrian Constitution. Instantly, Hitler thought out the Federal Chancellor’s argument. The Führer realized that a continued insistence upon an immediate signature might jeopardize the action legally and hence might disagreeably prolong matters beyond February 20. Thus, he assumed a more congenial demeanor, magnanimously according Schuschnigg three days’ time to settle matters. Impassioned, he declared:

For the first time in my life, I have decided to revise a decision I once made. Listen here! I am repeating it for you: it is absolutely the last attempt. I expect the execution within three days’ time!

On the ride back to Salzburg, Schuschnigg and his aide Schmidt sat in silence, while von Papen tried to console them by saying: “Yes, the Führer can be like that, as you’ve just seen for yourselves. However, the next time you come, you’ll be far more at ease speaking with him. The Führer can be remarkably charming.”

In reference to the meeting of Hitler and Schuschnigg, the following communiqué was released:⁷²

On Saturday, the Austrian Federal Chancellor Dr. von Schuschnigg paid a visit to the Führer and Reich Chancellor, who had invited him to the Obersalzberg. Dr. Schuschnigg journeyed there, accompanied by the Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Guido Schmidt, and the German Ambassador von Papen. They met in the presence of the German Reich Foreign Minister Ribbentrop. This unofficial encounter fulfilled a mutual desire to discuss frankly all matters concerning the relationship between the German Reich and Austria.

Even though the information contained in this publication was meager, it attracted great attention in Germany. Many people were confounded by the statement that the two men, who had openly fought each other up to this point, had agreed to meet for an “unofficial encounter.”

Involuntarily, people were reminded of a press release published on January 4, 1933 that had announced the meeting of the two declared enemies von Papen and Hitler. Hitler would have been well pleased had the meeting of February 12, 1938, entailed consequences similar to the earlier one.

One man, who also derived his sole knowledge of the event from the note, was the Italian head of state. The Führer had chosen not to inform his friend Mussolini of this action in advance. The Italian probably had mixed feelings with regard to the announcement. Obviously, Hitler was not given to consult anyone in these matters, and the Duce realized that he, too, would simply have to resign himself to being informed of Germany's planned actions no earlier than a few hours prior to their implementation—usually in the middle of the night.

Hitler was not inactive during the three days allotted to the Austrian Federal Chancellor to secure his government's approval of the proposed agreement. Hitler took great care to foster the fear of an imminent German military intervention in Austria. Displays of military might were followed by the recall of German military attaches from Vienna, the concentration of troops along the border, special regulations restricting railroad traffic, and similar measures.⁷³

On February 16 at 2:30 a.m., the new composition of the Viennese cabinet was made public. It satisfied all of Hitler's requests:⁷⁴

Federal Chancellor: Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg; Vice-Chancellor: retired Field Marshal Ludwig Hülgerth; Foreign Minister: Dr. Guido Schmidt; Minister of Finance: Dr. Rudolf Neumayer; Minister of Commerce: Engineer Julius Raab; Minister of Social Services: Dr. Josef Resch; Minister of the Interior and Security: Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart; Minister for Agriculture: Peter Mandorfer; Minister of Education: Dr. Hans Pernter; Minister of Justice: Dr. Ludwig Adamovich; Federal Ministers without Portfolio: Guido Zernatto, Dr. h.c. Glaise-Horstenau, Hans Rott; State Secretary for Military Affairs: Infantry General Wilhelm Zehner; of Security: Dr. Michael Skubl; of Labor and Employee Protection: Adolf Watzek; and for Industrial Affairs: retired Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig Stepsky-Doliva.

The German Reich Government published the following statement on the German-Austrian Agreement:⁷⁵

Berlin, February 16, 1938

The discussion between the Führer and Reich Chancellor and the Federal Chancellor Dr. Schuschnigg, which took place on the Obersalzberg on February 12, dealt in a most thorough manner with all questions pertaining to the relationship of the German Reich to Austria. It was the goal of this exchange of views to resolve the difficulties that have arisen due to the

implementation of the agreement of July 11. Both parties concurred in their determination to hold fast to the principles embodied in this document. Further, both states regard it as a base for a satisfactory development of their mutual relations.

It was with this in mind that both parties to the discussion on February 12 have resolved to see to the immediate implementation of measures which guarantee the establishment of such close and friendly relations between both states as provided for by the history and the self-interest of the German Volk. The statesmen share the conviction that the measures decided upon also represent an important contribution to the peaceful development of the situation in Europe.

The Austrian Government has issued a proclamation of similar content.

Simultaneously, the Government in Vienna announced a total amnesty for all politically motivated crimes that had been perpetrated prior to February 15, 1938. Hitler's success in Austria appeared to have been complete.

Already on February 17, Wilhelm Keppler greeted the new Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior and of Security Seyss-Inquart upon his arrival in Berlin. Thereafter, he ushered the Austrian politician to the Chancellery to pay Hitler "a short visit." Only a small note and a photograph were published on the topic of the consultation with Hitler, which generally was interpreted as a summons of the Austrian by Hitler. However, given the subservient demeanor of Seyss-Inquart, this photograph betrayed more than words could possibly have.⁷⁶

On February 18, Hitler delivered an address at the opening of the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin.⁷⁷ In the course of a most detailed "party narrative," Hitler repeated his arguments of previous years in favor of the Volkswagen, which in essence was "to make the automobile accessible to millions of new buyers from the lower income ranks." Further, he stated:

Let us therefore ensure that, by providing a tremendous number of inexpensive German Volkswagens in the future, the wishes of those will be satisfied who are willing, out of their love for and pleasure in automobiles, to invest a part of their income for that purpose. This will above all result in the fact that the automobile will no longer be the symbol of a certain class of those with higher incomes; it will instead increasingly become the general means of transportation for everyone in Germany.

And then all this tremendous propaganda work we are accomplishing toward the motorization of our Volk in a both material and non-material sense will not have been in vain. In a material sense, by virtue of building the best roads in the world; and in a non-material sense, by virtue of a sporting activity which has regained for our German production of engines, automobiles, and motorcycles its good reputation throughout the world. It is painful for us to

know that the young life of one of the absolute best and most courageous of these pioneers in establishing world renown for German engine and automobile production, Bernd Rosemeyer, was so recently put to an end.

Yet he and all the men who sit at the steering wheels of our cars and on our motorcycles in this tough race are also joining in the fight to win bread for the German worker and provide for him a wage and earnings which can then be exchanged for other things of value.

Thereafter, Hitler announced the foundation of a "German Motor Sports Badge" and predicted that within a short time period, Germany would produce not only "the best, but also the most inexpensive cars in the world."

This is the reason why I have decided to create the "German Motor Sports Badge" as an external symbol of my tribute and that of the whole German Volk, which is to be awarded for the extraordinary achievements and self-sacrificing dedication of the men who perform German motor sports and who fight year for year for Germany's reputation and Germany's recognition, whether it be on the world's racetracks, in challenging records, in long-distance and endurance races, or in cross-country motor sports. Above all, this most prestigious award shall be an incentive for German youth interested in motor sports. Corps Leader Hühnlein, the head of automobile sports, will issue the conditions governing the conferral of the award. As ever, I am filled this time, too, with sincere gratitude to all those whose work we will once more be able to admire in a few minutes' time.

There is no doubt: we owe the best cars in the world to our directors, engineers, foremen, workers, and merchants. Today I am certain: within a short time, we will also produce the most inexpensive car. Yet at the same time I believe that it is the duty of every single German to profess his faith in the work of his Volksgenossen. With this request, I hereby declare the 1938 International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin to be open.

After delivering his speech, Hitler went on a three-hour tour of the exhibition halls.

At 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 20, the time had come for Hitler's great speech before the Reichstag. The session was not only broadcast on the radio, but also for the first time transmitted live to the greater cinemas of Berlin, an unprecedented event. Also for the very first time, the Austrian radio stations aired a speech by Hitler. The Reichstag deputies and the general public had eagerly awaited this particular speech. They hoped for more detailed information on both the events of February 4 and the meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg. At first, it seemed as though Hitler intended to be merciful and relate early in his speech what everyone was waiting for. Perhaps the audience would not be kept in suspense for too long. He began:⁷⁸

My Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

I know that you, and with you the German Volk, expected to be called together for a commemoration of the fifth anniversary of our take-over that you, as the duly elected representatives of the Reich, might commemorate with me that so memory-laden beginning of a new historic departure of our Volk. The decision to convene the Reichstag today instead was made for two reasons:

1. I held it to be fitting to make a number of personnel changes not prior to, but after January 30; and
2. I felt it was necessary to bring about beforehand an urgently required clarification regarding a certain aspect of our foreign relations.

For you all have good reason to expect that such a day will provide not only a retrospective on the past, but also a glimpse into the future. Both of these shall be the objective and the content of my speech to you today.

However, the next sentence already revealed that Hitler had no intention of doing without his “party narrative,” not even on an occasion such as this one.

When, at noon of January 30 five years ago, Reich President and Field Marshal von Hindenburg entrusted to me the chancellorship and hence the leadership of the Reich, we National Socialists perceived this to constitute a turning point for the fate of Germany.

This particular “party narrative” was extraordinarily lengthy and culminated in the observation:

The day I entered the building on the Wilhelmsplatz⁷⁹ as the head of the largest opposition party and emerged as the Führer and Chancellor of the nation was a turning point in the history of our Volk, then, now, and for all time to come.

As the “party narrative” appeared to be nearing its end, and one had hope that Hitler might finally get to the point in the central part of his speech, Hitler read off a monstrous list of figures, the like of which the audience had never heard. This indeed was the lengthiest and most detailed account he would ever deliver, never to be surpassed at a later date. This time Hitler had set out to put his audience through the worst, so that by the time he would explain the Wehrmacht crisis and his stance on foreign policy, he would be facing a completely exhausted audience, no longer capable of judgment.

Hitler commenced this part of his speech with the following introductory statements:

When in a country hundreds of thousands of peasants are faced with the loss of their buildings and land—when hundreds of thousands of industrial workers lose their daily bread—when tens of thousands of companies are

forced to close their gates, and their staff and workers are dismissed—when an army of more than six million unemployed, which is steadily increasing, weighs ever heavier on the finances of the Reich, the Länder and the communities, and in spite of this support can scarcely afford the bare necessities of life—when a spiritual proletariat evolves for which the education they have enjoyed turns out to be more a curse than a blessing when old, flourishing industrial cities decay, and large sectors virtually begin to become extinct for lack of markets for their products—when in others, the children do not have teeth at three or four years old as a result of horrendous poverty and its ensuing undernourishment—when neither bread nor milk can be procured for them—when the remark of a hard-hearted foe⁸⁰ to the effect that twenty million people too many are living in our German Volk is nearly proven true by the horrors of reality, then such a Volk will not cry out for journalistic scribes or parliamentary gabblers; it will not cry out for investigation committees, for international debates, for ridiculous referenda, or for the shallow clichés of foreign and domestic so-called “statesmen!” No! It cries out for the action that will bring salvation, beyond talk and stupid newspaper articles. It has no interest in the literary treatises of drawing-room-Bolshevist international correspondents; its interest lies solely in the help which will jerk it back from the outermost edge!

And above all: he who feels himself called upon to take on the task of leading a Volk in such an hour is not responsible to the laws of parliamentary procedure, nor is he under obligation to a certain democratic standpoint; he is bound exclusively to the mission assigned to him. And he who interferes with this mission is an enemy of the people—regardless of whether he attempts to interfere as a Bolshevik, a democrat, a revolutionary terrorist, or a reactionary dreamer.

In such a time of crisis, he who lazily meanders across the land quoting the Bible and spending the live-long day either doing nothing or criticizing the actions of others, is not acting in the name of God; instead, it is he who lends his prayer the most sacred form which connects a man to his God: labor! And when today I account for myself before the German Volk, I can proudly and openly face all those hundreds of thousands and millions who are forced to work themselves to earn their daily bread in the city and the country.

In these past five years, I too have been a worker. Yet my personal concerns were multiplied by the concern for the existence and the future of sixty-eight million others. And just as these others rightly refuse to tolerate that their work is disrupted by good-for-nothings or layabouts, I too refused to tolerate that my work be obstructed by good-for-nothings, n'er-do-wells, or malicious or lazy elements.

I had a right here to turn against anyone who, instead of doing his part, regarded his mission as consisting solely in the critical observation and appraisal of our work. Neither does faith relieve one of the obligation to fall into line with the work of those who are accomplishing the salvation of a nation. The fact that I had a right to protect my work and the work of all of us from such public troublemakers is something I would now like to docu-

ment in the fruits of this work. They are undisputed, yet above all: they are all the more remarkable because, in most cases, I did not have the models of past achievements to rely upon as examples; I had only my own sound common sense and the earnest desire to never capitulate before obstacles, but instead to spite them with courage and bravery.

At this time I would also like to make another observation: if today Germany has in fact been rescued economically, the German Volk owes this solely to its own leadership and its own effort. Foreign countries have had no part in this at all. With the exception of hate-filled rejection or a stupid know-all manner, we are aware of nothing which could even be seen as a positive interest for Germany, not to mention help. [—]

Allow me now to give you a short excerpt from our economic life which proves in plain figures whether and to what extent National Socialism has solved these problems.

It took Hitler an entire hour to deliver this “short excerpt” (!). He read off rows of figures and statistical calculations, without stopping to catch his breath even once. This time he spoke not only of the usual thousands and millions but of billions as well.

He started off with a description of the national income situation in the Reich. While in 1932 it had amounted to 45.2 billion marks, it had risen to 46.6 billion in 1933, and to 68 billion in 1937. Figures pertaining to the standard of living followed. These in turn were superseded by the value of factory production in the above sequence of years: 37.8 billion first, then 39.9 billion and finally 75 billion. This had led to an increase in turnover from 9.5 billion to 10.1 billion and then to 22 billion. Thereupon followed an account of retail trade (21.8 billion etc.) and of agricultural production (8.7 billion etc.). Then Hitler turned to a detailed description of the “gigantic increase” in industrial production, beginning with the production of paper, and proceeding on the topics of diesel fuel, mineral coal, fuel oil, crude oil, artificial silk, kerosene, steel, lubricating oil, gasoline, aluminium, and so on. The millions of tons produced in the years 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937, tumbled onto the audience. Hitler even deemed precise data on magnesite, fluorite, arsenic ore, iron pyrites, and other specific substances, as “worthy of public attention.”

Thereupon, he placed before the German Volk the “results in other specific fields.” These figures showed an increase in the number of automobiles, of the millions of tons of goods traded on the high seas as well as on the waterways inland, of the millions of ton kilometers in the railway system, of the 6.4 billion letters handled by the Reichspost, of money deposited on postal checking accounts, of airmail

consignments, of transportation by postal motorbus services, and finally of the increased annual service of airmail traffic, etc.

These figures were followed by the millions of cubic meters of earth moved in road construction, the millions of newly constructed apartments, the total of theater tickets sold, the KdF trips on land and on sea, etc. There was nothing too minute or too insignificant to be listed by Hitler that day. The only true importance in each figure listed was that it took up speaking time to allay his listeners and satisfied his fetish for numbers. The series of accounts culminated in figures detailing the surplus of children who had been conceived since 1933:

And when I now round out this picture of the upswing of German life which I wish to show you, using only very few proofs and figures taken from the huge number available, I can find no closing more splendid than the one illustrated in our increasing number of births! In the year 1932, 970,000 children were born. This figure was increasing annually and reached the mark of 1,270,000 in 1937. All told, since National Socialism took power, approximately 1,160,000 more children have been bestowed upon the German Volk! Not only are they a reason for us to be proud of our German women; they are also a reason to be grateful to our Providence. To enable the nation to accomplish its incomparable work in peace, 1,160,000 young new Volksgenossen were bestowed upon it in the space of five years, living proof of the tremendous work of the National Socialist uplifting of our Volk and the blessing of our Lord God.

My Deputies! Men of the Reichstag! In this very brief excerpt, I have attempted, by presenting stark and plain figures, to lay before you and the German Volk documentary evidence for the work of construction, a work which is unique in terms both of its dimensions and its effect. My entire staff and I myself—and with us the entire German Volk—can be proud of five years in which such gigantic achievements were accomplished in every area of our economic life. How ridiculous, in comparison, is the criticism of all those who have nothing to offer in the face of the National Socialist work of reconstruction other than the mumbling (*Gestammel*) of their stupidity or their spitefulness!

Then Hitler launched a few attacks upon foreign journalists. At this point, Hitler finally at least alluded to the central issue of the day—which he was supposed to be discussing in the first place—namely, the present crisis within the Wehrmacht:

In the past few weeks, you have been hearing certain foreign journalists with their, for us, simply incomprehensible talk, in which they claim—in 1938—that the influence of National Socialism has just spread to the Foreign Office, or that at present there is a struggle going on between the Reichswehr—the fact that, in the meantime, there is a German Wehrmacht is something these miserable wretches (*armselige Tröpfe*) have apparently missed out on—

and the Party, or that the National Socialist “wing” is about to draw the economy into its sphere of influence, and more of the same nonsense. How little they understand the essence of our National Socialist Revolution!

Now, one might have expected Hitler to expand upon these statements. No such luck! After these initial tidbits, he started off on yet another “party narrative,” the second one of the day: “When I took power five years ago, I already was the leader of by far the strongest party,” etc. Once again, the audience had to listen to how Hitler had “hated and therefore eliminated all those institutions” that had “helped foster in the German Volk a petty manner of thinking.” Hitler then summed up the net result of this undertaking in one sentence:

Thus within the space of but a few years, National Socialism has compensated for what centuries before it had omitted, and put right what countless generations before it had done wrong.

Thereafter, he finally came to speak of the events of February 4, and expressed his disgust with “military dictatorship,” by referring to it in the same breath as to the despised “parliamentary democracy.”

One of these accomplishments [of National Socialism] is above all the formation of a leadership of the Volk and State that is as far removed from parliamentary democracy as it is from a military dictatorship. In National Socialism, the Volk has been given the leadership which, as a party, has not only mobilized but also organized the nation, and organized it such that the supremely natural principle of selection would appear to indicate that the continued existence of a secure political leadership is guaranteed. And this is perhaps one of the proudest chapters in the history of the past five years. Contrary to what a small international scribe perhaps believes, National Socialism did not conquer the Foreign Ministry in Germany on February 4; it has possessed Germany in its entirety since that day I emerged from the building on the Wilhelmsplatz five years ago as Reich is Chancellor, and possessed it totally and without exception. There is not a single institution in this state which is not National Socialist. [—]

In terms of leadership, the greatest safeguard of the National Socialist Revolution at home and abroad lies in the fact that the National Socialist Party encompasses, in a comprehensive sense, the Reich and all its facilities and institutions. The Reich’s protection against the world, on the other hand, lies in the new National Socialist Wehrmacht.

Now the time had come for Hitler to be more direct in his choice of words in order to demonstrate the extent of his power and to demand of the Wehrmacht “blind faith and blind obedience.” At the same time, he openly admitted that the recent measures had served “to achieve within the shortest space of time that reinforcement of our

military instrument of power which the general circumstances of our time indicate to be advisable today.”

Party Comrades!

At this time eighteen years ago I first announced the program of the Party. Back then, in the time of utter German humiliation, of the greatest impotence and unimaginable misery, I proclaimed the goal of the National Socialist Party as being, among other things, the elimination of the mercenary army forced upon us by the Treaty of Versailles, and the formation of a great, strong German *Volksheer*.

It was as an unknown German soldier at the front that I put together this bold program, fighting for it for fourteen years in opposition to a world of domestic foes and foreign haters, and in the space of five years I have now turned it into reality! I do not need to go into detail on this, the greatest accomplishment of the new Reich. I only want to announce the following: The German peace army has been assembled! A tremendous German Luftwaffe is protecting our homeland! A new power at sea is protecting our shores! In the midst of a gigantic increase in our general production, it has been possible to build up an armament beyond compare!⁸¹

If it serves as an inner comfort to the wise men abroad, then as far as we are concerned, let them believe that there are God knows how many disputes between the Wehrmacht and National Socialism in Germany. We would be the last to deprive them of this type of inner self-satisfaction. Yet if they should ever come to other conclusions beyond these, let them be told the following: In Germany there is no such thing as the problem of the National Socialist State and the National Socialist Party, nor of the National Socialist Party and the National Socialist Wehrmacht. In this Reich, everyone who holds any type of responsible position is a National Socialist!

Every man wears the sovereign symbol of National Socialism on his brow.⁸² Every institution in the Reich is under the command of the supreme political leadership, and all the institutions of this Reich are sworn to and united in the will and the resolve to represent this National Socialist Germany and, if necessary, to defend it to their last breath. May you not be persuaded to believe otherwise by those elements who have already revealed themselves in Germany to be the worst prophets. The Party is leading the Reich politically and the Wehrmacht is defending this Reich militarily. Every institution in this Reich has its appointed task, and there is no one in any responsible position in this state who has any doubt that I am the authorized leader of this Reich and that the nation has given me a mandate, by virtue of its trust, to represent it at all times and at all places.

Just as the German Wehrmacht is dedicated to this National Socialist State in blind faith and blind obedience, this National Socialist State and its leading Party are likewise proud of and pleased with our Wehrmacht. In it we see the crowning glory of a National Socialist education which captivates the German man from youth onwards. What he learns in the political organizations and in his political and spiritual attitude is supplemented here by the training and education to become a soldier. In this hour I cannot help paying tribute to

those men who, as trustees of the Wehrmacht, the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe, have helped me to shape this magnificent instrument.

I was forced to respect the wish of Field Marshal von Blomberg that, upon the completion of the first great phase of formation, his weakened health [!] be spared, now that there have been so many aggravations in his private life. However, at this time I would like to express my thanks and the thanks of the German Volk for the so infinitely faithful and loyal work this soldier has accomplished for the new Reich and its Wehrmacht. In history, this work will never again be able to be divorced as such from the history of the founding of this Reich. The same applies to the work and outstanding achievements of Colonel General Fritsch. And of all those who, in an utterly noble spirit, placed their positions at the disposal of younger political and military personnel within the scope of the rejuvenation of our political and military leadership corps.

We know what the 100,000-man army of the former Reichswehr accomplished in the way of prerequisites for the so very swift rearmament of the German Wehrmacht. Yet we also know that, to accomplish the new and tremendous tasks, an ever-replenished stream of young men is required. And above all we know that the tasks of the future will necessitate a stronger consolidation of the political and military power of the Reich than was perhaps requisite in the past. Therefore my decision, following Field Marshal von Blomberg's retirement, to exercise my power of command over the three branches of the Wehrmacht first-hand and put the Wehrmacht Office, as the Highest Command of the Wehrmacht, under my personal control, is one which I hope will enable us to achieve within the shortest space of time that reinforcement of our military instrument of power which the general circumstances of our time indicate to be advisable today.

There is one promise I would like to make before the German Volk today as its elected Führer: as much as we are attached to peace, we are just as attached to our honor and the inalienable rights of our Volk. As much as I advocate peace, I will just as strongly ensure that never again will that instrument of our Volk be weakened or much less taken away which, in my opinion, is the only means which can most safely and successfully preserve the peace in these so troubled times!

And as much as I can convey to the world the promise of the German Volk's sincere and deep love for peace, I am just as determined not to leave any doubt that this love of peace has nothing to do with either limp surrender or dishonorable cowardice.

Addressing the world at large with these assurances, Hitler added a threat of lightning action that would ensue if any foreign powers deigned to intervene. Curiously, despite the presence of foreign correspondents, Hitler defended the German officers' corps and their reactionary activities.

However, he did so in a somewhat disrespectful terminology. He proclaimed that there existed only "one type of German officer."

If ever the international smear campaign and well-poisoning should attempt to disrupt the peace of our Reich, steel and iron shall stand up for the German Volk and the German homeland. And then the world will instantly (*blitzschnell*) see how very much this Reich—Volk, Party, and Wehrmacht—is filled with one spirit and zealously fanaticized in one will. In other respects, it is not my intention to take a special stand for the honorable German Officers' Corps against the slander of a certain international journalism. Moreover, there is no reason to do so. For journalists happen to be divided into two different types of people: those who love the truth, and on the other hand hypocritical, inferior swindlers, traitors to the peoples, and warmongers. But there is only *one* type of German officer!

Now that he felt he had sufficiently dealt with the crisis of the Wehrmacht, Hitler paused for a while, i.e. he went on to deliver yet another “party narrative,” the third one that day. In a verbose narration he told the story of the economic measures he had implemented in the years since 1933. He spoke of his elimination of unemployment, and the policies he had pursued to solve the currency problem. This returned him to other favorite subjects—the call for colonies, the Peace Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. He made the latter the butt of his ridicule, declaring:

Our reason for not being in the League of Nations lies in our belief that it is not an institution of justice, but more an institution for the defense of the injustice of Versailles. [—]

Were the League of Nations to last for one hundred years, this would lead—because it is obviously incapable of grasping historic or economic necessities and of meeting the resultant demands; and conversely because the interests of the peoples, as far as concerns their existence or non-existence, are ultimately stronger than formal considerations—to a strange situation in the world.

For in the year 2036, new nations might very easily have been established or others become things of the past without Geneva having been capable of registering this new state of affairs.

Germany was once forced, by virtue of its membership in the League of Nations, to take part in one such unreasonable action. In what threatened to become the second such case, it was able, as a result of its withdrawal from the League—thanks and praise be to God—to act in accordance with reason and fairness. However, gentlemen, today I wish to inform you that I have now resolved to make the necessary correction dictated by history in the first case as well. Germany will recognize Manchukuo. I have decided to take this step in order to here, too, draw the final line between a policy of the fantastically inconceivable and one of sober respect for the facts of reality.

Hence, in Summary I would like to declare once more that Germany—and above all following Italy's withdrawal from the League of Nations—has no further intention whatsoever to ever return to this institution.

After having extensively dealt with the League of Nations, Hitler once again brought up the topic of Bolshevism, the horrors of which he intended to spare Europe. Directed to the ignorant British, he went on:

We perceive Bolshevism, even more than in the past, as the incarnation of the human drive for destruction. [—]

Since Great Britain quite frequently proclaims through the mouthpieces of its responsible statesmen that it is interested in maintaining the status quo in the world, then this should also apply there.

Every Bolshevization of a European country constitutes a change in this status quo. For these Bolshevized territories are then no longer autocratic states with a national life of their own, but sections in the Muscovite Center of Revolution. I am aware that Mr. Eden does not share this view. Mr. Stalin shares it, and openly admits it, and in my opinion, at present Mr. Stalin is personally a more reliable expert on and interpreter of Bolshevist ideas and intentions than a British minister!

After additional remarks on the Bolshevist threat, Hitler celebrated the friendships with Japan and Italy, and declared that in any event, he intended to side with the Japanese in East Asia.⁸³

No matter when and no matter how the events in the Far East come to their ultimate conclusion, in its position of defense against Communism, Germany will always regard and value Japan as a safeguarding factor—namely, in safeguarding human civilization. [—]

The friendship between Germany and Italy has gradually evolved for certain reasons to become a factor serving to stabilize European peace. The relations of both states to Japan comprises the largest obstacle by far to a further penetration of Russian Bolshevist violence.

In the following sarcastic remarks Hitler revealed how annoyed he was with the manner in which the British press had reported on the Wehrmacht crisis:

Therefore, I am also no longer prepared to sit idle and tolerate that unrestrained method of constantly denigrating and insulting our country and our Volk. From now on we will respond, and respond with National Socialist thoroughness. What has been strewn about only these past few weeks in the way of altogether crazy, stupid and reckless allegations about Germany is simply outrageous. What can one possibly say, when Reuters invents attacks on my life, and English newspapers talk about huge waves of arrests in Germany, about the closing of the German borders to Switzerland, Belgium, France, etc.; when yet other newspapers report that the Crown Prince has fled Germany, or that a military putsch has taken place in Germany; that German generals have been taken prisoner, and on the other hand that German generals have stationed themselves with their regiments in front of the Reich Chancellery; that a quarrel has broken out between Himmler and Göring on

the Jewish question, and as a result I am in a difficult predicament; that a German general has established contact with Daladier via intermediaries; that a regiment has mutinied in Stolp; that 2,000 officers have been dismissed from the army; that the entire German industrial sector has just received orders to mobilize for war; that there are extremely strong differences between the Government and private industry; that twenty German officers and three generals have fled to Salzburg; that fourteen generals have fled to Prague with Ludendorff's corpse; and that I have completely lost my voice, and the resourceful Dr. Goebbels is presently on the lookout for a man capable of imitating my voice to allow me to speak from gramophone records from now on. I take it that tomorrow this journalistic zealot of truth will either contest that I am really here today or claim that I had only made gestures, while behind me the Reich Minister of Propaganda ran the gramophone.

In a recent speech, Mr. Eden waxed eloquently on the various liberties in his country. However, one particular liberty was left out: the liberty of journalists to insult and slander other peoples, their institutions, men and governments without reprimand or restriction! One thing which increased—if this is even possible—our liking for Italy is the fact that there, the leadership of state and the policies of the press go hand in hand, instead of letting the leadership of state talk about understanding while the press is launching a smear campaign in the other direction! This chapter on the disruption of international relations should also include the audacity to write letters to a foreign head of state with the request for information on court judgments.⁸⁴ I recommend that the deputies of the British House of Commons concern themselves with the verdicts of British courts-martial in Jerusalem instead of with the judgments of German people's courts. While we might be able to understand an interest in German traitors, it does not help to improve the relations between England and Germany.

Furthermore, let no one delude himself that he might be able to influence German courts or the German penal system by such tactless meddling. In any case, I will not allow deputies of the German Reichstag to worry themselves with the affairs of British justice. The interests of the British world empire are certainly quite extensive, and we recognize them as such. But as regards the concerns of the German Volk and Reich, the German Reichstag and I myself as the delegate of the Reichstag decide, and not a delegation of English letter-writers. I think it would be a commendable deed were one able to internationally outlaw not only the dropping of toxic, incendiary, and explosive bombs on the civilian population, but above all to ban the distribution of newspapers which have a worse effect on the relations between the states than toxic or incendiary bombs could ever have.

Since this international smear campaign of the press must naturally be interpreted not as a reconciling element, but as one presenting a threat to international peace, I have resolved to undertake the reinforcements of the German Wehrmacht which will lend us the certainty that this wild threat of war against Germany will not one day be transformed into a bloody reality. These measures have been in progress since February 4 of this year and will be continued with speed and determination.

Hitler blamed the responsibility for the military measures and preparations for war that he had been forced to take, on the “international smear campaign of the press.” On the one hand, these accusations could be disregarded as just one of the numerous attempts on the part of Hitler to find a scapegoat for his actions. On the other hand, it does appear as though Hitler indeed greatly overestimated the importance of the press, as he did propaganda in general. Hitler’s interpreter Schmidt recalled that whenever Hitler received an Englishman, the Führer complained of the stance espoused by the British press. Hitler would be particularly piqued when his guest replied by referring him to the principle of the freedom of the press. Later, as Hitler moved against Czechoslovakia and Poland, he accorded the German press a significance far beyond its capabilities.

After hours of expounding mostly peripheral topics, Hitler believed he had wearied his audience sufficiently to come to the second major point in the speech: the measures taken against Austria and Czechoslovakia. He quite openly spoke of the “ten million Germans” who were closed in by the two states bordering their territory. One really did not need any extraordinary powers of foresight to perceive that Hitler’s words revealed that he was contemplating annexation. However, one must here recall that the Anschluss was a very popular concept in Germany at the time. This was due largely to the repressive measures that the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime had imposed upon the German minority living in Austria.

By contrast, there was little enthusiasm for an annexation of the Sudetenland at this point. Very few Germans thought it worth the risk nor a necessary step by any means. The “ten million Germans” of whom Hitler spoke, meant little to the German public at the time. Many did not even know what the Führer was talking about and assumed the reference was to Danzig and the Polish Corridor. At this point, however, Hitler was not interested in the latter subject since he was making an all-out effort to court the friendship of Poland, a friendship crucial to his designs upon Czechoslovakia. Therefore, he endeavored to play down the Danzig issue and to portray the situation in a most favorable light.

Hitler also spoke fondly of Schuschnigg that day. He hoped to thereby remind the Austrian of his duties to the nation, that he was to serve the German people and to abide by the terms of the recently reached agreement. Up to this point, Schuschnigg had failed to display enthusiasm similar to that of von Papen in 1933.

The verbatim content of the second major part of the speech that day is reproduced below.

The strong yearning for true neutrality which we have been able to observe in a number of European states fills us with deep and sincere satisfaction. We believe that we can interpret this as a sign of increasing reconciliation and hence increasing security. Yet on the other hand, we are also aware of the painful consequences of the confusion introduced to the European map and the economic and political constellation of the peoples by the insane act of Versailles. Two of the states at our borders alone encompass a mass of over ten million Germans. Until 1866, they were still united with the German race as a whole in a political federation. Until 1918, they fought shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of the German Empire in the Great War. Against their own free will, they were prevented from uniting with the Reich by virtue of the peace treaties. This is painful enough in and of itself. Yet let there be no doubt in our minds about one thing. The separation from the Reich under public law must not lead to a situation in which the races are deprived of rights; in other words, the general rights of *völkisch* self-determination—which, incidentally, were solemnly guaranteed to us in Wilson's Fourteen Points as a prerequisite for the Armistice—cannot simply be ignored because this is a case concerning Germans! In the long run, it is unbearable for a world power to know that there are Volksgenossen at its side being constantly subjected to the most severe suffering because of their sympathy or affiliation with their race, its fate, and its world view!

We well know that it is scarcely possible to establish borders in Europe which will satisfy everyone. Hence it would be all the more important to avoid unnecessarily tormenting national minorities in order not to add to the pain of political separation the further pain of persecution for belonging to a certain Volkstum. The fact that it is possible, given good intentions, to find ways to achieve a balance or lessen the tension, has been proven.

Yet he who wields force in attempting to prevent a balance from being achieved in Europe in that the tensions are lessened⁸⁵ will at some point inevitably call violence into play between the peoples. It cannot be denied that, as long as Germany was powerless and defenseless, it had no choice but to tolerate this unremitting prosecution of German beings at its borders. However, just as England looks after its interests in every corner of the earth, modern Germany, too, shall know how to look after and protect its—albeit much more limited—interests. And these interests of the German Reich include protecting those German Volksgenossen who are not, of their own power, in a position to secure for themselves on our borders the right to general human, political, and *weltatnschaulich* freedom!

In the fifth year following the first great foreign policy agreement of the Reich, it fills us with true satisfaction to be able to say that, particularly as regards our relations with the state with which we would perhaps have the greatest differences, not only have tensions lessened; moreover, in the course of these past years, an ever friendlier rapprochement has come about. I well know that this was due first and foremost to the fact that, at the time, Warsaw

did not have a Western parliamentarianism but a Polish Marshal who, being an outstanding figure, sensed how very significant a lessening of German-Polish tensions was for Europe. The work of that time, which many questioned, has proven itself in the interim; and I may well say that, when the League of Nations finally abandoned its unremitting attempts to cause disruption in Danzig and furthermore appointed a new commissioner⁸⁶ who was a man of personal stature, this very spot that presented the greatest threat to European peace lost its dangerous significance.

The Polish nation respects the national conditions in this state, and this city and Germany both respect Polish rights. Hence it was possible to pave the way for an understanding which, starting with Danzig, has been capable of completely removing the poison from the relationship between Germany and Poland, transforming it into one of truly friendly cooperation—despite the attempts of troublemakers here and there.

I am pleased to be able to tell you, gentlemen, that within the past few days a further settlement has been reached with the country with which we have a special affinity for various reasons. Not only is it the same Volk; it also has a long, kindred history and a shared culture which link the Reich and German-Austria.

The difficulties arising in connection with the execution of the July 11 agreement necessitated that the attempt be made to do away with misunderstandings and obstacles to a final reconciliation. For it was obvious that a situation that had become intolerable in and of itself would one day, with or without premeditation, be capable of evolving into a very grave catastrophe. It is usually no longer within the power of human beings to bring the wheels of fortune to a halt once they have been put in motion by neglect or lack of circumspection!

I am happy to be able to note that these ideas also coincided with the views of the Austrian Chancellor, whom I had invited to see me. The idea and intention were to bring about a lessening of the tensions in our relations by granting to that part of the German-Austrian Volk which is National Socialist in terms of its views and Weltanschauung those rights within the limits of the law which are the same as those to which other citizens are entitled.

In this context, a great pacification shall come about in the form of a general amnesty and a better understanding between the two states, prompted by closer amicable relations in the various sectors of political, personal and concrete economic cooperation—all of which is a supplement to the agreement of July 11. At this time, I would like to express before the German Volk my sincere gratitude to the Austrian Chancellor for the great consideration and warm-hearted readiness with which he accepted my invitation and endeavored, with me, to find a solution doing equal justice to the interests of both countries and the interests of the German race as a whole, that German race whose sons we all are, no matter where the cradle of our homeland stood. I believe that we have thereby also made a contribution to European peace. The most conclusive proof for the accuracy of this assertion lies in the outraged anger of those democratic world citizens who, although they are always talking about peace, never miss an opportunity to agitate for

war. They are infuriated and incensed by this act of reconciliation. Hence one has every reason to assume that it is good and right.

Perhaps this example may serve to bring about a gradual lessening of tension in Europe on a larger scale. Germany in any case, supported by its friendships, will do everything to preserve that possession which constitutes the prerequisite for the tasks we envision for the future: peace.

My Party Comrades, I may assure you here once more that our relations with the other European and non-European states are either good and normal or very friendly. I need only draw attention to our altogether warm friendship with, for instance, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and many other states. Our foreign trade balance has given you a vivid picture of the magnitude of our economic cooperation with other peoples. The main emphasis lies on our cooperation with the two major powers⁸⁷ which, like Germany, have recognized Bolshevism to be a world menace and are thus resolved to counter the Comintern movement with a united defense. It is my utmost desire that this cooperation with Italy and Japan may grow ever more intense. In other respects, we gladly welcome any lessening of tension that can be brought about in the general political situation.

For no matter how great the achievements of our Volk, we have no doubt that the positive effects for the well-being of all might be increased if international cooperation could be intensified. With every shred of its being, the German Volk is not a warlike, but a soldierly Volk; i.e. it does not desire war, yet it does not fear it, either. It loves peace, but it equally cherishes its honor and its liberty. Fifteen terrible years which lie behind us are both a warning and a lesson which, in my opinion, the German nation will forever heed and never again forget.

Hitler concluded his marathon speech with a series of selfless and pious assurances and admitted—for a change—that even his own creations were but of a transitory nature.

My Party Comrades! Deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

It is to you who once established for me the foundation for my work by ratifying the Enabling Act,⁸⁸ that I have accounted for five historic years in the life of the German Volk. I cannot conclude without having assured you of how great my confidence is in the future of the Volk and Reich we all so dearly love. What once moved me as an unknown soldier to take up the battle for the German resurrection was, at the very bottom, faith in the German Volk. A faith not in its institutions, nor in its societal order and social classes, in its parties, in its governmental or political power, but a faith in the eternal inner values of this Volk. And above all, a faith in those millions of individual men and women who—just as I was in the past—are merely nameless pillars upon which rests the community of our life and Volk. It was for it, too, that I endeavored to build up this new Reich. For this Reich shall belong neither to a certain class, nor to a certain rank: it shall be the sole property of the German Volk. The Reich shall help it to more easily find its life-path on this earth and enable it to make its existence more pleasant. What I summoned

to life during this time does not claim to be an end in itself. Nothing is or ever will be immortal. What remains for us is the body of flesh and blood called the German Volk. The Party, the State, the Wehrmacht, and the economy are all institutions and functions which are valuable only as being a means to an end. In the eyes of history, they will be judged on the basis of the services they performed toward this goal.

Yet their goal is always the Volk. They are short-lived phenomena compared to those which alone are everlasting. To serve these latter with all my might has been and continues to be my life's good fortune. To me, it is a pleasurable duty to thank the many outstanding members of my staff without whom this work could never have been accomplished. In this hour I would like only to ask the Lord God that, in the years to come as well, He might bestow His blessings upon our work and our actions, our insight and our resolve; that He might allow us to find the straight and narrow path which He, in His wisdom, has assigned to the German Volk; and that He might always grant us the courage to do what is right and never to falter or retreat from any form of force or danger.

Long live the National Socialist Movement, long live the National Socialist Army, long live our German Reich!

On February 21 came the resignation of the British Foreign Secretary Eden, the very British statesman Hitler had relentlessly attacked the day before in his address to the Reichstag. By replacing Eden with Lord Halifax, the English wished to signal that they were also willing to accommodate Hitler in questions of personnel if only he refrained from starting a war. This same intent had also been evident in the earlier replacement of the British ambassador in Germany, and was reflected in the stance personified in the new Prime Minister Chamberlain. The previous year, the latter had succeeded Baldwin, whom Hitler had disliked. Precisely the same reasons had been the cause of a change in the personnel of the Foreign Office. This may have led Hitler to believe that merely a word on his part would suffice to have the British Foreign Secretary "fired."

On February 24, the traditional festivities in Munich celebrated the anniversary of the foundation of the Party. Hitler's address on this year's occasion was quite a meager one. He had exhausted himself in the speech before the Reichstag four days earlier. Only the "international," i.e. the British "smear campaign"—with regard to the Austrian Legion⁸⁹ in this case—had to bear the brunt of his wrath that day. The *Völkischer Beobachter* reproduced the following excerpt from Hitler's speech:⁹⁰

In the course of his exposition, the Führer once again spoke of the smear campaign in the international press. The latter had not even had the decency to let eight days pass after his speech of February 20, to renew its campaign

of lies and slander against Germany. For instance, the *News Chronicle* was not ashamed to report that, in spite of the Berchtesgaden agreement, Germany was concentrating 40,000 men of the Austrian Legion along the border to Austria.

Supposedly exhibited at the Legion's headquarters, as the *News Chronicle* maintains, certain maps revealed that an advance upon Austria was to be launched from three different sides. The columns were to converge outside of Vienna and then to march on the Austrian capital together. An additional unit of 10,000 men stood ready to invade Czechoslovakia. All these military formations had supposedly been put together recently, after February 4.

Against a background of thunderous applause, the Führer branded these renewed brazen accusations by the *News Chronicle* as filthy lies from beginning to end. They once again revealed how the Jewish international poisoners fabricated and spread their lies.

"We can learn a lesson from this. We shall move against the Jewish agitators in Germany unrelentingly. We know that they are representatives of an International, and we shall treat them all accordingly. They can but lie, defame, and slander, while we know very well that not one of these Jewish agitators would ever join the fight in a war, even though they are the only ones to profit from these wars!"

In Munich on February 25, Hitler signed into law a decree concerning the position of General Brauchitsch:⁹¹

The Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, holds a rank equal to that of a Reich Minister, such as the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral General Raeder, does already. In accordance with my instructions, the Commanders in Chief of both Army and Navy shall participate in meetings of the Reich Cabinet.

The following day, Hitler gave an evening reception for the Party and delivered a short address at the new Führerhaus at the Königsplatz in Munich.⁹² Details on Hitler's planned eight-day visit to Italy in May were published on March 1.

That same day, Hitler received Göring at the Chancellery, where he presented him with the Marshal's Baton.⁹³ As mentioned earlier, Hitler simultaneously expressed his gratitude for services rendered in letters sent to the deposed generals of February 4, in which he enclosed an autographed photograph of himself.

On March 2, Hitler issued an appeal to the Party and the State, pertaining to the establishment of Hitler Youth Centers.⁹⁴ He also sent a telegram to Mussolini, in which he conveyed his condolences upon the death of the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio.⁹⁵ One day later, Hitler received the newly appointed Ambassador of the United States of America, Hugh. R Wilson, at the House of the Reich President.

In reply to Wilson's address, Hitler observed:⁹⁶

It is a most fortunate circumstance that you are not in Germany for the first time and that, due to your previous diplomatic service here, you have become well acquainted with the German Volk. This will greatly facilitate the pursuit of your goal to further greater understanding among both peoples. Let me assure Your Excellency that I and the Reich Government entertain similar ambitions and that we shall do everything in our power to assist you in the attainment of your goal. I am truly grateful for the best wishes for the prosperity of the German Volk, extended by the President of the United States of America, to whom I would like to respond in kind.

On March 5, Hitler rendered a second extensive visit to the international Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibiton.⁹⁷ On March 8, at the Chancellery, Hitler spoke with the former President of the United States, Herbert Hoover, who was traveling in Europe.⁹⁸

During these first days of March, Hitler also had several lengthy conversations at the Chancellery with the British Ambassador.⁹⁹ Henderson explained the British proposal to satisfy the German demand for colonies through territorial cessions in Central Africa. But Hitler had other things on his mind at the time. He was in the process of creating the prerequisites for a conquest of new Lebensraum for Germans in the East, and to this end he wished to convert Austria and Czechoslovakia into military bases for the venture. At a time like this, he simply could not bother with one of these "senile" Englishmen, who was rambling on about Africa. Thus, he declared that the colonial question was not a matter calling for immediate attention.

Far more important to him at the present was that Great Britain did not become involved "in matters that were none of its business." Here he was referring to Austria and the Sudetenland. Now that Hitler dominated the conversation, he indulged in an agitated discussion of the situation there. He claimed that Schuschnigg was supported by only a small percentage of the people and that the Sudeten Germans were oppressed. Further, he demanded autonomy of the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovakian federation.

Hitler also spoke of the Czech-Russian Mutual Assistance Pact, which naturally was a thorn in his side. He declared that it was a criminal act for one of the European nations to throw open the door to Soviet expansion into Central Europe. With this forceful "final remark," Hitler dismissed the British Ambassador.

Austria, March 12, 1938

For the first time, Hitler is wearing the cockade and oak leaf cluster of the Wehrmacht as cap badge.



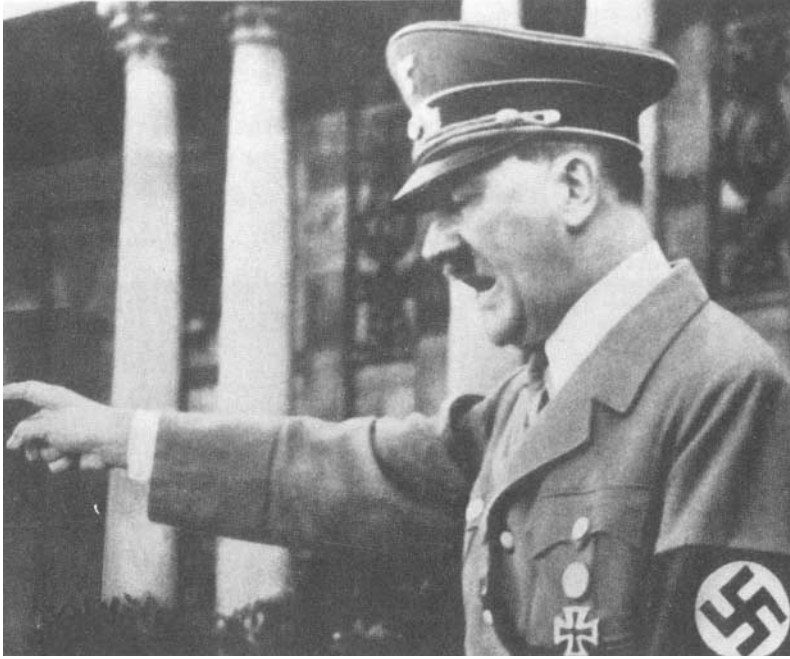
XXII Braunau. Inhabitants of Hitler's native city greet him with flowers.



XXIII Linz. In the evening, Hitler gives an address in front of the City Hall.

Photos: Domaras archives

Vienna, March 15, 1938



XXIV The Liberator. Hitler speaking from the balcony of the Viennese Hofburg.



XXV Loyal servants. Ribbentrop and von Papen at the military review on the Viennese Ring. On his old uniform of a Prussian Lieutenant Colonel from the days of the Empire, von Papen is wearing the Golden Party Badge.

Photo: Domaras archives

3

On March 9, Hitler had announced that he would take part in the March 12 launching of a new KdF ship in Hamburg.¹⁰⁰ However, that same March 9 brought about an event that threw off the timing of Hitler's plans. Already the day before, Hitler had been notified that Schuschnigg intended to conduct a separate plebiscite in Austria, but had not believed the rumor.¹⁰¹ However, when he heard the radio address of the Austrian Federal Chancellor in Innsbruck that night, Hitler had to admit that he had misjudged Schuschnigg. On Sunday, March 13, Schuschnigg called upon the Austrian population to decide upon "a free and German, independent and social, Christian and united Austria."¹⁰²

It was obvious that the Austrian Chancellor's intent was to prevent the annexation envisioned by Hitler.¹⁰³ Schuschnigg, whose Vaterländische Front was a pale copy of the National Socialist Movement—including its uniforms, organizations, etc.,—believed he could duplicate Hitler's tactics by resorting to a plebiscite in a situation like this. However, he overlooked the fact that he enjoyed very little support in the populace. The pull of the mighty German Reich was far too strong, and the Austrian people's willingness for an Anschluss was much greater than Schuschnigg had estimated.¹⁰⁴ Annexation had been a topic in 1918—and even before the First World War—and had been reinforced considerably by the economic crisis in Austria. The *Anhaltelagers* and the methods of oppression used under his regime made a bad impression on non-National Socialists as well. Schuschnigg had underestimated Hitler, believing that he would simply wait for the plebiscite maneuver to run its course. Mussolini proved to be a better judge of character than Schuschnigg. The Italian assured the Austrian Envoy, who had informed him of Schuschnigg's plan on March 7: "This bomb will blow up in his own face!"¹⁰⁵

March 9, 1938

As Schusehnigg's designs to deceive him were revealed to Hitler on the evening of March 9, he began to pace up and down in long strides, immersed in thought. There was no doubt about it: his attempt to resolve the Austrian question without the use of force had failed. The whole theatrical performance of February 12 had been for naught; his rhetorical prowess had not borne any fruit. Now he reluctantly felt he had no choice but to proceed with military measures. He had ventured too far already to turn back. If he let Schuschnigg's gambit pass unchecked, doubts of the military capacities he claimed to possess could arise, and he would unquestionably lose much prestige as a result. This consideration proved decisive on his decision to intervene. In the March 25 address in Königsberg, Hitler enumerated the reasons that had prompted him to issue the order to march on Austria: the item at the top of his list was that of a demonstration to the entire world of Germany's military might.¹⁰⁶

I did it first of all to show the world that I was now in bitter earnest and that nothing could keep me from taking this step. They had more than enough opportunities to settle these problems.¹⁰⁷ They missed them and had to know that the times were over when Germany could be blackmailed.

Hitler called for his generals on March 10 and ordered the partial mobilization of troops in Bavaria. This order affected the Military Districts and Army Corps VII (Munich) under General von Reichenau, or rather General von Schobert¹⁰⁸ in this instance, and XIII (Nuremberg) under General von Weichs.¹⁰⁹ Both the army corps and their wartime reinforcements were to form the Eighth Army and would be under the command of General von Bock,¹¹⁰ with whom they were to march on Austria shortly. On the evening of March 10, the order for mobilization reached the respective command posts of the military districts. At the same time, the active troops were put on alert.¹¹¹ Shortly later, the motorcyclists were on their way to inform the respective cities and villages of the call-up.

As the inhabitants of Bavaria's cities stepped outside their doors on the morning of March 11, 1938, they were confronted with a sight the like of which they had not seen since World War I: mobilized civilians were reporting for duty at their barracks. Peasants brought their requisitioned horses and rack wagons to the collection points indicated. At all public places, the men of the Wehrmacht assembled the confiscated trucks and cars to form military convoys. Motorized troupe contingents and their vehicles rolled through the cities heading southeast.

When Hitler ordered the partial mobilization on March 10, the affair did not absorb him so much that he forgot about other issues. Rather it seemed to him to be a most opportune moment in which to deal a final blow to the Soldatenbund. The Wehrmacht would in “one way or another” gain new glory and fame in the Austrian venture. Thus the generals could do wonderfully well without the Soldatenbund, and simultaneously they would have to bury their hopes to establish a military dictatorship. Once again Hitler resolved two problems in one lightning blow. On March 10, he ordered the dissolution of the Soldatenbund and all remaining associations within the Wehrmacht, as well as the integration of their members into the Reichskriegerbund (Kyffhäuser) under the leadership of SS Gruppenführer Reinhardt. This new federation was placed directly under Hitler’s control.¹¹² Thus ended the generals’ dream, which had envisioned building up a military state by keeping all active personnel and reservists under the military’s direct supervision.

That same March 10, Hitler also extended Schacht’s presidency of the Reichsbank for another four-year period.¹¹³ Schacht’s term did not expire until March 16, but circumstances dictated the Führer’s actions, for he was not sure whether he would be in Berlin on that date!

Early on the morning of March 11, the order was issued to proceed with “Operation Otto,” the armed invasion of Austria. The instruction read as follows:¹¹⁴

1. Should all other means fail to bring about the desired result, I intend to have the Armed Forces invade Austria, to establish a situation congruent with the Constitution, and to put an end to atrocities directed at the pro-German (*deutschgesinnt*) population.

2. I assume command of the entire enterprise. In accordance with my instructions, the Commander in Chief of the Army will lead the operations on land with the Eighth Army in the composition and strength I proposed and with the Luftwaffe, SS and police contingents, which can be inferred from the enclosures. The Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe will lead the operations in the air with the forces I proposed.

3. Tasks:

a) Army: The invasion of Austria is to proceed in the manner I detailed. The goal for the Army is primarily to occupy Upper Austria, Salzburg, Lower Austria, Tirol, the quick taking of Vienna, and the securing of the Austro-Czechoslovakian border.

b) Luftwaffe: The Luftwaffe is to display and to disseminate propaganda material, to occupy Austrian airports for a possible reinforcement of troops, to support the Army to the extent necessary, and to maintain task forces for special missions.

4. Those Army and Luftwaffe units to participate in the operation must be ready to be deployed and to march by noon on March 12, 1938, at the latest. I reserve for myself the final decision on the time when to cross the border on land and in the air, and the permission hereto.

5. The comportment of the troops must account for the fact that we do not wish to lead a war against a *Brudervolk*. It is in our interest that the entire venture be conducted without the use of force, in the manner of a peaceful entry, welcomed by the population. Therefore, any form of provocation is to be avoided. Should resistance be encountered, however, it is to be broken with utmost ruthlessness by force of arms (*mit grösster Rücksichtslosigkeit durch Waffengewalt*). Austrian units surrendering are to be placed under German command immediately.

6. For the time being, there are no security measures to be taken along Germany's borders to other countries.

Adolf Hitler

As stated earlier, Hitler wanted to avoid bloodshed in this venture. On March 11, he was still eagerly trying all sorts of ways in which to exert pressure on the men in power in Vienna. It was his goal to have the Austrian Government forbid the Austrian army and police units to fire upon the advancing German military contingents. He would much prefer the Austrian Government to "cry for help" of German troops. After all, he had placed two National Socialists in the Schuschnigg cabinet already. While the one (Seyss-Inquart) controlled the police force through his post of Minister of Security, the other (Glaise-Horstenau) had good connections to the Austrian Army, having served as a colonel and as Director of the Army Archives in Vienna. However, the question remained whether these two men would have any decisive impact on the Austrian Government in Vienna with regard to the upcoming events.

It was a lucky coincidence that Glaise-Horstenau had just held a lecture at the German Foreign Institute in Stuttgart. He immediately was called to Berlin, instructed by Hitler and flown back to Vienna. In his pocket, he already carried the final version of the "cry for help," which had been presented to him in Germany.

On March 11, Hitler also assigned numerous men of the party leadership to Vienna. Prior to the actual military invasion, there was to be a veritable invasion of the city by leading National Socialists. Their arrival in the Austrian capital was noted in the Vienna newspapers as if it were the most ordinary event.¹¹⁵ First, there was a mention of Gauleiter and Councilor of State Bürckel flying into Vienna early on the morning of March 11 on a special mission. He had been received shortly thereafter by the Federal President. As a veteran of the Saar

annexation, Bürckel was an “experienced man,” and Hitler was considering him for the post of Reichskommissar for Austria.

That afternoon at 5:00, the “adviser of the Reich Chancellor, Engineer Wilhelm Keppler,” flew into Vienna on a special flight, landed at the Aspern Airport, and from there immediately drove to the Federal Chancellery. Around the same time, a train pulled into the West Train Station in Vienna, bearing aboard the “Reich Chancellor’s Deputy, Reich Minister Rudolf Hess.” He proceeded to the Federal Chancellery for consultations immediately upon arrival. As officially reported, on March 12 at 5:00 a.m., the Reichsführer SS Himmler arrived in Vienna, coming from Munich. Among others he was accompanied by: the Chief of the Security Police, SS Gruppenführer Heydrich;¹¹⁶ and by the Chief of the Civil Police, SS Obergruppenführer General Daluege.

Assigned to serve as acting deputy for the time of Hitler’s absence from Berlin, Göring was to survey and to influence the course of events in Vienna by telephone. The content of the calls to Vienna on March 11 were taken down in shorthand by Göring’s Research Department (*Forschungsamt*), and were among the papers discovered by the Allies after the War.¹¹⁷ They provide a remarkable record of the pressure exerted on Vienna. Seyss-Inquart, in company of the recently returned Glaise-Horstenau, had seen Schuschnigg as early as 9:30 a.m. to demand a postponement of the plebiscite. Bürckel, Keppler, and Hess came to their aid later that day. After consulting the Federal President, Schuschnigg had the postponement of the plebiscite announced in a radio broadcast in the late afternoon.

At 8:00 p.m., Schuschnigg himself stepped up to the microphone and declared the resignation of his cabinet with the following words:¹¹⁸

I am facing a most difficult situation. The German Government has given an ultimatum to the Federal Government of Austria to appoint a federal chancellor of its choice and to compose the Austrian Government according to the instructions of the Reich Government. Otherwise an invasion by German troops is immanent. Allegations that there has been civil unrest and bloodshed among the working class are pure fabrications. The Austrian Government would have been capable of ensuring law and order in the country by itself.

The Federal President has asked me to inform the Austrian people that we yield to force. We have ordered the [Austrian] Wehrmacht to withdraw without offering resistance because we do not wish to shed German blood. In the event of an invasion, General Schilhawsky will be entrusted with the command over Federal troops.

At this hour, I bid my farewell to the German Volk in Austria, desiring that I be granted one last wish: *Gott schütze Österreich!*

In his calls to Vienna, Göring now repeatedly demanded the nomination of Seyss-Inquart as Federal Chancellor, threatening German invasion if his demand was not met. Federal President Dr. Miklas¹¹⁹ at first stood fast and refused, even though Hitler's adviser Keppler and the German Military Attaché Muff persistently urged him to consent to the appointment.

In the late evening hours, the Official News Agency spread word that Seyss-Inquart had been entrusted with the conduct of governmental affairs. Nonetheless, Göring insisted that the provisional Austrian Government send Berlin a telegram requesting the assistance of German troops. However, Seyss-Inquart did not yield to the pressure. Finally Göring himself dictated the verbatim content of the telegram,¹²⁰ and around 10:00 p.m., Keppler called him back to inform him that Seyss-Inquart had finally agreed to go along and send the prepared telegram. Its text read as follows:

To the Führer and Reich Chancellor, Berlin

The provisional Austrian Government, which, after the resignation of the Schuschnigg government, considers it its task to restore law and order in Austria, urgently requests the German Government to support it in its task and to help it to prevent bloodshed. For this purpose it asks the German Government to send German troops as soon as possible.

Seyss-Inquart

When Göring accepted total responsibility for this act as he was confronted by the Military Tribunal in Nuremberg on the issue, he even declared that the affair had been his idea. Naturally, this was more due to his personal vanity than to the historic truth. In a sense, he wanted to retroactively claim credit as the creator of the Greater German Reich, and as such to enter into the book of history. There is no doubt that Hitler had left precise instructions for Göring on how to proceed before he left Berlin, and that the aforementioned telegram preventing bloodshed had been contrived by Hitler. After all, Göring was "his best man," known for his quick grasp of the full intent of Hitler's instructions and for his energy in executing an order as though the idea had been his own. And as mentioned earlier, Hitler had already handed Glaise-Horstenau a version of the telegram prior to his departure from Berlin.

Around midnight, Miklas' resistance broke down, and he appointed Seyss-Inquart Federal Chancellor. The leader of the Austrian National Socialists, Major Hubert Klausner,¹²¹ gave a radio address at 1:15 a.m. on March 12, in which he proclaimed, markedly moved by the events: "*Osterreich ist frei, Osterreich ist nationalsozialistisch!*"

Hitler and the Austrian National Socialists had been completely victorious—all their demands were met and the threat of an invasion by German troops appeared to be far removed. However, Hitler intended to show the world now that he was “in bitter earnest,” and that nothing could stop him.¹²² He made matters even more clear on April 6, 1938, in Salzburg: “It was an irrevocable decision which can no longer be reversed! Once German soldiers march, their mission cannot be rescinded!”¹²³ This sentence reflected clearly what was to be expected from Hitler in the future.

On March 11, however, Hitler still entertained certain doubts with regard to his “irrevocable” decision on the envisioned military invasion. These concerns pertained primarily to the stance of Mussolini in this matter. The Italian had declared that he would “march till the end”¹²⁴ alongside his friend Hitler. However, Hitler was skeptical, as usual. He assumed that Mussolini would not tolerate such a move, as he most certainly would not in the latter’s place. Hitler could also ruefully recall both the attitude the Duce had displayed on July 25, 1934, and his persistent “shaking of the head” in January of 1934, when Göring had asserted to him the necessity of an Anschluss of Austria.

As a man well versed in the art of letter writing, Hitler was confident that he could dispel Mussolini’s concerns. He wanted to approach the matter by raising a sensitive issue for Mussolini, the possibility of a reinstatement of the Habsburg Monarchy. Hitler quickly dictated a lengthy letter to the Duce. In it, he maintained that the obvious intent of Schuschnigg’s plebiscite was to precipitate the restoration of the House of Habsburg;¹²⁵ further, that Schuschnigg was already conspiring with Czechoslovakia in order to “throw upon the scales the weight of at least twenty million people to bear against Germany;” Hitler claimed that for years Schuschnigg had repressed the nationalistically minded majority of the Austrian people; in Berchtesgaden, Schuschnigg had promised to better his ways only to break his promise; a revolution and hence anarchy were imminent; Hitler had, therefore, decided to restore law and order to his homeland, and to offer the Volk the possibility to decide upon its fate itself.

To make the affair more palatable to Mussolini, Hitler enclosed three solemn assurances in his letter.¹²⁶

I feel compelled to solemnly assure Your Excellency, the Duce of the Italian people, and Fascist Italy:

1. Consider this action as one of national self-defense and therefore as an action which, in my place, any man of character would have executed in

precisely the same manner. Your Excellency also would have reacted no differently had the destiny of the Italian people been at stake. As Führer and National Socialist, I cannot act any differently.

2. In a critical hour for Italy,¹²⁷ I have proven the steadfastness of my feelings. You need not doubt that anything in the future could possibly change this.

3. Whatever the ultimate result of the upcoming events may be, I have drawn a clear line delineating the border with France and I am now doing the same along the border to Italy. The border is the Brenner.

This decision shall be neither doubted nor challenged. I have not arrived at this decision in 1938, but rather immediately after the World War, and I have never made a secret of this.

The fact that Hitler went to such trouble is ample proof of the extent of his worries at the time. He handed the letter over to Prince Philip of Hesse,¹²⁸ whom he had summoned, and who was one of the sons-in-law of the King of Italy. Immediately the Prince was dispatched on a special mission and flown to Rome.

There is no way of ascertaining whether Hitler's letter had any impact once it reached its destination. Some time earlier, Mussolini had grown weary of his role as guardian of Austrian independence and had reached the conclusion that it was best to respond in a positive fashion to things which were really out of his purview. In any case, Mussolini read the letter of his dictator friend to the Grand Council of Fascism during a session on the evening of March 11. As was announced later,¹²⁹ the body acknowledged the content of the letter with great interest. In the official note, Mussolini betrayed a sort of malicious joy at Schuschnigg's fiasco. The announcement noted that Schuschnigg had not informed the Italian Government on the topic of his February 12 meeting in Berchtesgaden and that he had not heeded Mussolini's advice, which cautioned against the plebiscite.¹³⁰

At 10:25 that same night, Prince Philip of Hesse phoned Hitler and reported the positive reaction of Mussolini.¹³¹ At the other end of the line, Hitler was beside himself with joy, and shouted ecstatically into the receiver:

Then please tell Mussolini that I will never forget him for this. [—] Never, never, never, no matter what happens. [—] When the Austrian matter has been cleared up, I am prepared to go through thick and thin with him; it is all the same to me. [—]

Listen—I would sign any agreement now—I no longer feel like I am in that terrible situation we just had, in the event I wouldn't have been able to decide. You can just tell him that. I want you to really thank him for me; I will never, ever forget what he has done. [—]

I will never forget him for this, no matter what happens. If ever he needs anything or is in any kind of danger, he can be certain that I will stand by him, come hell or high water (*auf Biegen oder Brechen*), no matter what happens, even if the whole world joins forces against him.

Meanwhile in Berlin, von Neurath had been called back to the Foreign Ministry, since Ribbentrop was in London bidding farewell to the British King. Neurath was summoned to be at hand to accept the protests which the British and French ambassadors were expected to voice with regard to the invasion of Austria. In the eyes of the foreign journalists in Berlin at the time, the call for Neurath created the impression that the Cabinet Privy Council which had been formed on February 4 was to convene, and that Neurath had been requested to preside over the proceedings.¹³² However, as noted before, Hitler had no intention of actually convening this body.

Also on the evening of March 11, Göring held a banquet at the Haus der Flieger. He took advantage of the intermissions between the artists' performances to brief the British Ambassador Henderson and the Czechoslovakian Envoy Mastny on the events in Austria. He did not refrain from giving his word of honor that no like measures were being planned for Czechoslovakia. After midnight in the Chancellery, Hitler accepted the first congratulatory notes on bringing about a turn in the Austrian situation.

As was officially reported, at 8:00 on the morning of March 12, motorized German troop units moved across the border of Austria for a "goodwill visit."¹³³ The Austrian General Schilhawsky, who had been placed in command of the Austrian army the previous day by Schuschnigg, instructed the Austrian army to "give a heartfelt welcome" to their German comrades.

It has to be noted that up to March 12, no one in Austria had considered effecting an all-inclusive annexation of Austria to the German Reich. Neither Glaise-Horstenau, nor Seyss-Inquart, had entertained any such ambitions at first. Austria was a National Socialist country now, and there seemed to be nothing left to be desired. No one had given much thought to the legal repercussions of this venture. A few had contemplated the establishment of a union of the leadership personnel of the both states that, for example, the office of Federal President of Austria might be offered the German Führer. At first Hitler also, judging by his statements made in public on that twelfth day of March 1938, thought only of conducting a plebiscite in Austria, albeit under the control of the German occupational forces. It was not until

the night of March 12, that he appears to have decided upon the immediate and complete annexation of Austria.

Before Hitler left Berlin on March 12, he published the following official note:¹³⁴

The Führer has assigned Field Marshal Göring to function as his deputy for the time period of his absence from Berlin, which the events to date have necessitated.

What Hitler was announcing in this note was that he intended to leave the country to assume control of activities in Austria himself. In addition, Hitler dictated a lengthy appeal to the German people, which Goebbels was to read over the radio at noon.

At 10:00 a.m., Hitler arrived at the Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich. First he drove into town and went directly to the Headquarters of the Eighth Army, to see General Bock. For the trip into town, Hitler rode in his special three-axle, cross-country, gray-colored Mercedes. He had ordered the car with remarkable foresight so that it was at his disposal for future journeys as the victorious battle commander of his troops. That day, he sported a new leather coat of a military cut, worn over his uniform. However, the more important point was that on his cap there was a new symbol: a cockade, surrounded by the golden oak leaves of the Wehrmacht. Prior to this appearance, Hitler had worn a peaked cap at the top part of which there had been the national eagle; the center had remained empty, which had resulted in a rather odd denuded look, at least to German eyes at the time. Now he had placed the Wehrmacht's cockade with the oak leaves there. This was to symbolize that from this point onward he would not be the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht in name only, he would be its warlord in the battlefield, and even more so its sole and independent decisionmaker! In appearance, this amounted only to a slight change, which not many people noted, but those who knew Hitler and were familiar with his fervent belief in the power of symbols, realized that the time had come.

As agreed upon, Göring read Hitler's proclamation at noon, broadcasting it on all German and Austrian radio stations. Its verbatim content was the following:¹³⁵

Germans!

It is with deep grief that, for years now, we have been witnessing the fate of our Volksgenossen in Austria. An eternal, historic bond which was broken for the first time by the year 1866 but was sealed anew in the World War, has

made Austria a part of the community of race and destiny common to all Germans. The pain inflicted upon this country, first from without and then from within, we experienced as our own; just as we know, conversely, that the misfortune of the Reich was the object of the same concern and sympathy for millions of German Austrians!

When in Germany—thanks to the victory of the National Socialist idea—the nation found its way back to the proud self-confidence of a great Volk, in Austria there began a new period of suffering and of the bittermost trials. A regime totally lacking any sort of legal mandate attempted to maintain its existence—which was rejected by the overwhelming majority of the Austrian Volk—with the utterly brutal instruments of terror and of physical and economic castigation and destruction. Hence, as a great Volk, we witnessed that more than six million people of our own lineage were suppressed by a numerically small minority which was adept at gaining possession of the instruments of power it needed.

This political gagging and deprivation of rights had its counterpart in an economic deterioration which stood in crass contrast to the flourishing new life in Germany. Who could blame these unhappy Volksgenossen that they focused their gaze longingly on the Reich? On that very Germany that had been bound to their ancestors for so many centuries, with which it had once fought the worst war of all time shoulder to shoulder, whose culture was its culture, to which it had contributed its own highest values in so many areas? Suppressing this awareness meant nothing other than condemning hundreds of thousands of people to uttermost spiritual torment.

Yet although, years ago, this suffering was still borne with patience, with the increasing prestige of the Reich, the will to put an end to the oppression grew ever stronger.

Germans! In the past few years, I have attempted to warn the former rulers in Austria not to continue on this route of theirs. Only a lunatic could believe that suppression and terror can permanently rob people of their love for their ancestral Volkstum. European history has proven that such cases serve to breed an even greater fanaticism. This fanaticism then compels the oppressor to resort to ever harsher methods of violation, and these in turn increase the loathing and hatred of the objects of those methods.

I have further attempted to convince the rulers responsible for this that, in the long run, a great nation in particular is incapable—because undeserving—of constantly being made to look on while people belonging to the same race are oppressed, persecuted, and imprisoned only because of their ancestry or their declared affiliation with this Volkstum, or because they hold fast to an idea. Germany alone has had to take in more than 40,000 refugees, while 10,000 more have landed, in this small country, in prisons, dungeons and interim camps; hundreds of thousands have been reduced to beggars, are destitute and impoverished. No nation in the world would be able to tolerate these conditions at its borders for any length of time unless it deserved nothing but disdain. In 1936, I attempted to find some course which might hold the promise of being able to alleviate the tragic fate of this German brotherland, and thus to perhaps bring about a true reconciliation. The

agreement of July 11, however, was signed only to be violated the next minute. The overwhelming majority was left without rights as before; their degrading position as a pariah in this state was not changed a whit. He who openly supported German Volkstum was prosecuted as before, regardless of whether he was a National Socialist streetworker or an aged and deserving commander of the World War.

I have now made yet another attempt to bring about an understanding. I endeavored, with the representative of that regime with whom I myself, as the Führer elected by the German Volk, was dealing and who had no legitimate mandate whatsoever—I endeavored to make it clear to him that this situation could not prevail for any length of time because the rising indignation of the Austrian Volk could not be suppressed forever by an escalation of force; and that here, after a certain point, it would also be intolerable for the Reich to look on in silence while such a violation took place.

In today's age, when colonial problems are made contingent upon the question of self-determination with respect to the inferior tribes involved, it is intolerable that six and a half million members of an old and great civilization are practically subjected to lesser rights by the type of its regime. Thus I had intended to achieve in a new agreement that all Germans in this country be accorded the same privileges and the same obligations. This agreement was to constitute the fulfillment of the treaty of July 11, 1936.

Only a few weeks later, we were unfortunately compelled to realize that the men comprising the Austrian Government of the time had no intention of abiding by the spirit of this agreement. In order to procure for themselves an alibi for their unremitting violations of the equal rights of Austrian Germans, a petition for a referendum was devised with the purpose of completely depriving the majority of this country of its rights! The procedural details of this plan were to be unique. A country that had had no elections whatsoever for many years, which did not even possess any documentation for determining who was eligible to vote, schedules an election which is to take place within a scarce three and a half days!

There are no lists of voters, no voter cards. There is no such thing as checking a voter's eligibility; there is no obligation as to the confidentiality of the ballot; there is no guarantee for the impartial conduct of the election; there is no supervision when the ballots are counted, etc. If these are the methods designed to lend a regime the character of legality, we National Socialists must have been idiots for fifteen years! We went through hundreds of election campaigns and toiled to gain the approval of the German Volk.

When the deceased Reich President finally summoned me into the Government, I was the leader of the strongest party in the Reich by far. Since then, I have made repeated attempts to have the German Volk verify the legality of my presence and my actions, and I was given this verification. Yet if the methods Herr Schuschnigg is trying to use are the right methods, then that plebiscite in the Saar back then was sheer harassment, rendering the return of a Volk to the Reich even more difficult. We are of a different opinion here. I believe we can all be proud that, particularly by virtue of this ref-

erendum in the Saar, we have been given the trust of the German Volk in such an indisputable fashion.

Finally the German Volk in Austria itself has arisen in protest against this unparalleled attempt to put on a fraudulent election. Yet if the regime once again plans to crush the protest movement with brute force, the result could only be a new civil war.

From now on, the German Reich, however, will no longer tolerate that Germans are persecuted in this territory because of their affiliation with our nation or their open support of certain ideas. The Reich wants peace and order. I have, therefore, decided to place assistance from the Reich at the disposal of the millions of Germans in Austria.

Since this morning, the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht have been marching over all the borders of German Austria.

Tank troops, infantry divisions, and the SS formations on the ground, and the German Luftwaffe in the blue skies above, summoned by the new National Socialist Government in Vienna, shall guarantee that the Austrian Volk will now be given, as quickly as possible, the opportunity to shape its future and thus its own fate in a genuine referendum of the people. Behind these formations stand the will and resolve of the entire German nation.

It will be a personal pleasure to me, as Führer and Chancellor of the German Volk, to now once more be able to set foot, as a German and free citizen, in that country which is, at the same time, my home. Let the world conclude for itself that the German Volk in Austria is spending these days in the most blissful joy and stirring emotion it has ever experienced.

Long live the National Socialist German Reich! Long live National Socialist German-Austria!

Berlin, March 12, 1938

Adolf Hitler

At 3:50 p.m., Hitler crossed the Austro-German border at Braunau. The following members of his staff accompanied him: the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, General Keitel; the Reich Press Chief, Dietrich; Reichsleiters Bormann¹³⁶ and Bouhler,¹³⁷ and finally Gauleiter Bürckel. As Hitler passed through the streets of his native town, all church bells chimed, and he was greeted with thunderous applause of a gathering numbering in the tens of thousands.

In Linz, an enormous crowd had gathered at the market place to await Hitler's arrival. Tremendous enthusiasm was evident in Ward Price's impressive live radio report. Speaking in German on the Austrian broadcast services, the British journalist congratulated the Austrian people on the advent of this day.

Hitler's triumphant ride from Braunau to Linz took nearly four hours, since the Mercedes could barely work its way through the jubilant crowds. Fifteen kilometers out of Linz, Seyss-Inquart, Glaise-Horstenau and Himmler, together with other National Socialists,

awaited the Führer. When his car finally reached Linz, it was dark. Hitler stepped out upon the small balcony of the City Hall in Linz and listened to the welcoming address by Seyss-Inquart. Thereupon, Hitler gave a speech that was frequently disrupted by thunders of applause from the audience below:¹³⁸

Germans! German Volksgenossen! Herr Bundeskanzler!

I thank you for your words of greeting. But above all I thank you who have assembled here and testified to the fact that it is not the will and desire of only a few to establish this great Reich of the German race, but the wish and the will of the German Volk!

May there be those among you this evening, our reputed international truth-seekers, who will not only perceive for themselves this reality, but admit it afterwards, too. When I first set forth from this city, I carried within me exactly the same devout pledge that fills me today. Try to fathom my inner emotion at having finally made this faithful pledge come true after so many long years.

The fact that Providence once summoned me forth from this city to the leadership of the Reich, must have meant it was giving me a special assignment, and it can only have been the assignment of restoring my cherished home to the German Reich! I have believed in this assignment, I have lived and fought for it, and I believe I have now fulfilled it! May you all witness and vouch for this!

I do not know when you yourselves will be summoned. I hope the time is not far off.¹³⁹ Then you shall be asked to stand up to your own pledge, and it is my belief that I will then be able to point to my homeland with pride before the entire German Volk.

The outcome must then prove to the world that any further attempt to tear this Volk asunder will be in vain. Just as you will then be under an obligation to make your contribution to this German future, the whole of Germany is likewise willing to make its contribution. And this it is already doing today!

May you see in the German soldiers who are marching here this very hour from all the Gaus of the Reich fighters willing and prepared to make sacrifices for the unity of the great German Volk as a whole, and for the power and the glory and the splendor of the Reich, now and forever! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

Thereafter, Hitler set up quarters in the Weinzinger Hotel on the shores of the Danube River. Without a doubt, he had scored a great success that day. No one had stood in the way of the German invasion, and no one would rise in opposition in the course of the following days. Both the ambassadors of Great Britain and France had formally registered their protest to the move with Neurath in Berlin, however, it was obvious that the German and Austrian people desired unification. The right to self-determination of a people that undoubtedly had not been done justice in Article 88 of the Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain,¹⁴⁰

had made itself heard in a most impressive manner. It was in light of this fact, and not of the display of military might as Hitler deemed, that the Western Powers had given in.

At the Weininger Hotel, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price for the *Daily Mail*¹⁴¹ in which he touched upon the surprising turn of the events in Austria the previous day. Not even on this extraordinary and most unusual occasion did Hitler miss an opportunity to refer to the Polish in the most friendly terms. He acknowledged Poland's right of free access to the Baltic Sea in spite of the fact that this access transgressing German territories was painful to Germany. Poland's stance was extraordinarily important to him because of his designs on Czechoslovakia.

Ward Price's first question had been whether in his—Hitler's—mind the events in Austria the day before would have any impact on the upcoming German-British negotiations. Hitler answered:

For our part, not in the least, and I do hope not for the British, either. What injustice have we done to any foreign country, whose interests have we violated, when we concur with the desire of the overwhelming majority of the Austrian population to be Germans?

To the question on how he stood on the issue of the Franco-British note of protest, Adolf Hitler replied that he could not fathom what had prompted such a measure on their part.

These people here are Germans. A protest note from other countries on my action in Austria has no more significance than a note of the Reich Government would have in which it protested against the relations between the British Government and Ireland.

I assure you in all earnestness that, four days ago, I had no inkling of any of what was to happen here today or that Austria was to become a German Land, just as Bavaria or Saxony. I did this because I was deceived by Herr Schuschnigg, and deception is something I will not tolerate. When I shake hands and give my word on something, then I adhere to it, and I expect from everyone who enters into agreements with me that he does the same. I had agreed with Herr Schuschnigg that he was to discontinue his oppression of the majority in his country. I treated him with total fairness in my speech to the Reichstag.

I gave him the opportunity to say, "I have reached an understanding with the Reich Government and will abide by the provisions of the agreement in loyal cooperation." Instead, Herr Schuschnigg attempted to conduct this referendum he had planned for his country. In the beginning, I could hardly believe the news. I dispatched an envoy to Vienna to ascertain whether it could possibly be true. He informed me that it really was true. Hence I decided to take immediate action and arrange that I would make the unification of

Austria with Germany an accomplished fact the same day Schuschnigg planned to conduct his referendum.

This unification will be subjected to a different, national referendum. You will see the outcome for yourself. It will be an overwhelming majority as in the Saar. This is my homeland. I was long grieved by seeing the Volk to which I belong by birth oppressed and suffering. More than 2,000 members of this Volk have lost their lives. Many have been in prison. Some of them were hanged for their political views and for their faith in the German ideals. A minority of 10 percent suppressed the majority of 90 percent.

I put an end to that. I went even further. I prevented the majority from taking revenge upon their oppressors. I hope that the world will understand that what I have accomplished here is a work of peace. If I had not intervened and the Schuschnigg government had attempted to conduct its fake referendum, a bloody revolution would have taken place here. Austria could then have quite easily become a second Spain in the very heart of Europe.

I am a realist. Take a look at my relations to Poland. I am fully prepared to admit that Poland—a country with thirty-three million inhabitants—needs an outlet to the sea. It is a bitter thing for us that this access to the sea must be created at the expense of a corridor through German territory. Yet we understand what this means for Poland. There are Germans living under the Polish Government, and Poles live under German rule. If the two countries were to enter into a conflict, each country would oppress its minorities. It was a far better solution to resolve our differences by way of an agreement. It is my hope that all the nations will recognize, from what has just taken place in Austria, how senseless it is to oppress their national minorities. Wait a while, and you will see what I will do for Austria. Come back here in four years' time, and you will discover that the number of unemployed in Austria has been greatly reduced. You will also see how much better the Austrian Volk is faring, and how much happier it will be.

In Linz, there was only one question of importance for Hitler—how to proceed. Should he let events run their course, hold a plebiscite and then have both states slowly grow together? There would have been great acclaim for such an approach.

However, after such an astounding victory, Hitler slipped into a frame of mind which did not allow for any such considerations. He clearly saw before him all that he wished to accomplish: to resolve the Czechoslovakian problem by the end of 1938; to move on to take Danzig and the Polish Corridor, and thereafter to conquer Poland and Russia!—All of a sudden, he had not a minute to lose. Suspicion set in that something might happen to rob him of the fruits of victory, which he had acquired so easily.

And so it came about that Hitler, already on March 13, 1938, at the Weinzing Hotel, signed the "Law on the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich." Its verbatim content is reproduced below:¹⁴²

March 12, 1938

The Reich Government¹⁴³ has decided upon the following law, which is promulgated herewith.

Article I

The Federal Constitutional Law, dated March 13, 1938, by which the Austrian Government has effected the reunion of Austria with the German Reich, hereby becomes a Law of the German Reich. It has the following verbatim content:

By virtue of article III, section 2, of the Federal Constitutional Law, concerning extraordinary measures in the realm of the Constitution (Bundesgesetzblatt, I, no. 255/1934), the Federal Government has resolved:

Article I. Austria is a Land of the German Reich.

Article II. On Sunday, April 10, 1938, a free and secret plebiscite will be held among all German men and women in Austria over twenty years of age on the reunion with the German Reich.

Article III. A majority of the ballots cast shall decide the plebiscite.

Article IV. The regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of Article II of this Federal Constitutional Law shall be issued by decree.

Article V. This Federal Constitutional Law shall enter into force on the day of its publication.

The execution of this Federal Constitutional Law shall be entrusted to the Federal Government.

Vienna, March 13, 1938.

Seyss-Inquart, Glaise-Horstenau, Wolff, Hueber, Menghin, Jury,
Neumayer, Reinthaler, Fischböck

Article II

The law at present in force in Austria shall remain in force until further notice. The introduction of Reich law to Austria shall be reserved to the Führer and Reich Chancellor or to the Reich Ministers empowered by him.

Article III

The Reich Minister of the interior shall be authorized, in concurrence with the Reich Ministers involved, to decree the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of this law.

Article IV

This law shall enter into force on the day of its publication.

Linz, March 13, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
The Reich Minister of the Interior
The Reich Foreign Minister
The Deputy of the Führer

On the 1938 *Heldengedenktage*, Hitler effected the "reunion" of Austria with the German Reich. He set the plebiscite for April 10, 1938. The Federal Government of Austria had received instructions from Hitler to sign into law the above cited Federal Constitutional Law

March 12, 1938

sanctioning the integration of Austria into the German Reich and to call for the plebiscite envisioned. Seyss-Inquart was ordered to effect the resignation of the Federal President.¹⁴⁴ Hitler himself announced that the Austrian Federal Army (Bundesheer) henceforth would be under his orders, and the soldiers were to take their loyalty oaths immediately. The decree read as follows:¹⁴⁵

1. The Federal Government of Austria has just passed a law effecting the reunion of Austria with the German Reich. The German Reich Government has acknowledged this decision by issuing a law today.

2. Hence I decree: From this day onward, I assume command of the Austrian Bundesheer as part of the German Wehrmacht.

3. I appoint Infantry General von Bock, Commander in Chief of the Eighth Army, to lead the now German Wehrmacht forces within the national borders of Austria.

4. All members of the previously Austrian Bundesheer are immediately to be sworn in on my person as their Supreme Commander. Infantry General von Bock is immediately to see to the measures necessary hereto.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler made clear that he was not willing to allow the Austrian National Socialists an influential role in the further development of the political situation. Therefore, on March 13, he appointed Bürckel to lead the country. The respective decree had the following content:¹⁴⁶.

1. I assign Gauleiter Bürckel, Saarpfalz, to reorganize the NSDAP in Austria.

2. Gauleiter Bürckel is entrusted with the preparations for the plebiscite in his capacity as acting leader of the NSDAP in Austria.

I have granted Gauleiter Bürckel full power of attorney to resort and order all measures necessary to allow for a responsible completion of his assignment.

Linz, March 13, 1938

Adolf Hitler

At noon, Hitler went to Leonding, a small town outside of Linz, to place flowers on the grave of his parents. After returning to the city, Hitler met with various Austrian National Socialists and conversed with them on the topic of politics and private affairs. That day, Hitler sent the following exuberant telegram to Mussolini:¹⁴⁷

To His Excellency the Italian Prime Minister and Duce of Fascist Italy, Benito Mussolini. Mussolini, I shall always remember you for this!

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini's telegram in reply was written in a significantly more sober tone, reflecting how little Hitler's earlier lengthy letter had affected Mussolini's stance. The Duce almost seemed insulted by

Hitler's lack of trust in him. The telegram of March 14, that in knowing foresight had been addressed to Hitler in Vienna, read:

Hitler, Vienna. My stance is determined by the friendship between our countries, as sealed in the axis agreements.

Mussolini

On March 14, Hitler left Linz shortly after 10:00 a.m., taking the old *Nibelungenstrasse*, which passes by the Abbey of Melk and ends in Vienna. Enthusiastic crowds hailed him all along the route. In the meantime in Vienna, people were preparing for the reception of Hitler. The entire city was in an ecstasy of joy. The Vaterländische Front had been completely forgotten, as though it had never existed.

Some of the men, who had been in power in Austria up to this time, escaped across the border to Hungary or Czechoslovakia. The Gestapo, as well as the SS, immediately arrested and liquidated others. Even von Papen's secretary Wilhelm von Ketteler could not escape this fate.¹⁴⁸ A short time after his arrest, his body was retrieved from the Danube Canal.

On the other hand, the former Federal President Miklas, who had resigned his post, was not bothered in the least. However, Schuschnigg was incarcerated. For some time, there was talk that he would be put on trial. However, this particular court-hearing materialized no more than those of the supposed "November Criminals." Rumor had it that there was apprehension on the part of the prosecutors to statements Schuschnigg might be liable to make in reference to Mussolini.¹⁴⁹

That day as well, a man who had played a most dubious role in the revolt in the Federal Chancellery of July 1934, the former Minister of Security and Leader of the Heimwehr, Major Fey, committed suicide with his entire family.¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the ecstatic citizens of Vienna were waiting for Hitler. Finally around half past five in the afternoon, he entered the city that had once been the capital of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, passing the Schönbrunn Palace. The church bells here also chimed for him, and "the demonstrations of enthusiasm that accompanied Hitler's entry into the city defied description," as the *Neue Basler Zeitung* wrote.¹⁵¹

Hitler stayed at the imperial Hotel at the Ring. Since the jubilations and the chorus of the crowd outside of the hotel would not abate, Hitler stepped onto the balcony around 7:00 p.m. together with the aged Austrian General Krauss and delivered a short address:¹⁵²

March 14, 1938

My German Volksgenossen!

What you are feeling now is something I myself have felt to the bottom of my heart in these five days. It is a great, historic change which our German Volk has undergone. What you are witnessing at this moment is something the whole German Volk is experiencing with you; not only two million people in this city, but seventy-five million members of our Volk, in one Reich. They are all deeply stirred and moved by this historic turning point, and they all consecrate themselves with the vow: no matter what may happen, the German Reich as it stands today is something no man will ever again break asunder and no man will ever again tear apart!

There is no crisis, no threat, and no force that might break this vow. Today these are the devout words of all German beings from Königsberg to Cologne, from Hamburg to Vienna!

On March 15 around 11:00 a.m., hundreds of thousands of people assembled on the Heldenplatz in front of the Hofburg to hear a “proclamation of liberation.” Two little boys greeted Hitler upon his arrival. Between them they carried a banner which bore the slogan: “The Sudeten Germans greet the Führer.” On the balcony of the Hofburg, Hitler gave the following address:¹⁵³

Germans! Men and Women!

Within a few short days, a radical change has taken place in the German Volksgemeinschaft, whose dimensions we might see today, yet whose significance can only be fully appreciated by coming generations. In the past few years, the rulers of the regime which has now been banished often spoke of the special “mission” which, in their eyes, this country was destined to fulfill. A leader of the legitimists outlined it quite accurately in a memorandum. Accordingly, the so-called self-sufficiency of this Land of Austria, founded in the peace treaties and contingent upon the mercy of foreign countries, was to perform the function of preventing the formation of a genuinely great German Reich and hence block the path of the German Volk to the future.

I hereby declare for this Land its new mission. It corresponds to the precept which once summoned the German settlers of the *Altreich* to come here. The oldest Ostmark of the German Volk shall from now on constitute the youngest bulwark of the German nation and hence of the German Reich. For centuries, the storms of the East broke on the borders of the Old Mark in the turbulent times of the past. For centuries into the future, it shall now become an iron guarantor of the security and freedom of the German Reich, and hence a safeguard for the happiness and peace of our Great Volk. I know the old Ostmark of the German Reich will do justice to its new task just as it once performed and mastered the old.

I am speaking on behalf of millions of people in this magnificent German Land, on behalf of those in Styria, in Upper and Lower Austria, in Carinthia, in Salzburg, in Tirol, and above all on behalf of the city of Vienna, when I assure the sixty-eight million other German Volksgenossen in our vast Reich

listening this very minute: this Land is German; it has understood its mission, it will fulfill this mission, and it shall never be outdone by anyone as far as loyalty to the great German Volksgemeinschaft is concerned. It will now be our task to devote our labor, diligence, shared dedication, and joint strength to solving the great social, cultural and economic problems; yet first and foremost to make Austria ever grow and expand to become a fortress of National Socialist willpower.

I cannot conclude this address to you without calling to mind those men who, together with me, have made it possible to bring about this great change—with God's help¹⁵⁴—in such a short time. I may thank the National Socialist members of the government, with the new Reichsstatthalter Seyss-Inquart at their fore. I may thank the innumerable party functionaries; I may thank above all the countless anonymous idealists, the fighters of our formations who have proven in the long years of persecution that the German, when put under pressure, only becomes tougher.

These years of suffering have served but to strengthen me in my conviction of the value of the GermanAustrian being within the framework of our great Volksgemeinschaft. At the same time, however, the splendid order and discipline of this tremendous event is proof of the power of the idea inspiring these people. Hence in this hour, I can report to the German Volk that the greatest orders of my life have been carried out.

As the Führer and Chancellor of the German nation and the Reich, I now report to history that my homeland has joined the German Reich.

After delivering this “report to history,” Hitler stood at attention and saluted as though he were indeed facing an imaginary superior. At the Ring that afternoon, a huge military display took place. At first, Hitler approached the monument of the Unknown Soldier at the outer gate of the Hofburg, where he placed a huge wreath in honor of the dead of the World War. He was accompanied by General Keitel and Seyss-Inquart. Thereafter, Hitler proceeded to the rostrum at the Ring. Here he granted an interview to the Italian journalist Filippo Bojano, Viennese correspondent of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

The Italian paper published the following article on the interview:¹⁵⁵

“Believe me,” said the Führer to Bojano, “under no circumstances will I ever forget what Italy has done. The entire German Volk”—his hand made a sweeping gesture, as if he were attempting to include all Germans from the Baltic Sea to the Danube River—will never forget what Mussolini and Italy have done. Our friendship is beyond all formality. The Axis is strong and firm, more than ever.”

After a short pause, the Führer added: “We are willing to demonstrate our friendship and gratitude to you, if one day Italy should need it.”

Then the Führer made appropriate comments on the subject of Austria, which he put in the following words, according to Bojano: “This Volk of Austria felt an internal drive to be united with Germany. Have you seen how

the Austrians reacted to our coming? Have you seen the enthusiasm? The Austrian Volk had been duped and oppressed by a handful of men for a long time.”

Standing next to Hitler on the rostrum, waiting for the troops were the following men among others: Colonel General von Brauchitsch; Reichsführer SS Himmler, attired in a gray field uniform; General der Flieger Milch, and the Austrian General Krauss, who wore civilian clothes. Similarly attired that day was also Seyss-Inquart, who had been named Reichsstatthalter of Austria by Hitler, even though he had already been promoted to SS Gruppenführer at an earlier date.

Among the men present, there was one who had occupied a key position in Viennese politics for many years, but had played no part in the recent events, Hitler’s Ambassador Extraordinary Franz von Papen. Notwithstanding the fate of his secretary Wilhelm von Ketteler, von Papen still desired to watch the parade at the very least and to do so properly clad. Given the fact that, contrary to Neurath,¹⁵⁶ von Papen had not been appropriated a uniform by his Führer yet, he was attired with his old Lieutenant Colonel uniform that still hung in his closet as a relic from the First World War and wore the just awarded Golden Party Badge. The Führer, however, accorded little attention to the former Reich Chancellor on this occasion.

During the first fifteen minutes of the parade, Luftwaffe groups soared by overhead. Standing at attention in a motor vehicle, General von Bock headed his Eighth Army, as it approached the reviewing stand. After General von Bock had reported to the Führer properly, Hitler promoted the Army Commander to the rank of Colonel General on the spot. Then, the troops goose-stepped past Hitler: armored regiments, artillery, motorized troops, and infantry, followed by Austrian infantry and cavalry units. The last soldiers to file by the rostrum were the men of the SS Verfügungstruppe, attired in their gray field uniforms which on the occasion of the Anschluss were adorned with the national emblem embroidered on the left sleeve of their tunics. It was obvious that they had long been prepared to exchange their black peacetime uniforms for this textile war equipment.¹⁵⁷

The national euphoria that swept the city of Vienna as well as the remainder of the country ironically grasped hold even of a man of such standing as the Catholic Archbishop, Cardinal Innitzer. Although the Cardinal had supported Schuschnigg’s Vaterländische Front as an outspoken critic of the National Socialists, on March 15, 1938, he called upon Hitler at the Imperial Hotel to pay his respects to the Führer.

The official note published on this occasion detailed the following on the topic of the cleric's visit:¹⁵⁸

The Cardinal and Archbishop of Vienna, Dr. Innitzer, visited the Führer on Tuesday at the Imperial Hotel in Vienna. He expressed his rejoicing at the unification of German-Austria with the Reich and declared the Catholic population willing to actively join in the German reconstruction work.

As if this did not suffice, the Cardinal took care that the Austrian dioceses of Vienna and Salzburg issued solemn declarations of sympathy. On March 18, he enclosed these in an official note sent to Gauleiter Bürckel, to which he personally affixed a *Heil Hitler!*¹⁵⁹

Hitler left Vienna by plane around 5:00 p.m. on March 15. He arrived at the Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich two hours later. There Reichsstatthalter General von Epp welcomed him. As Hitler proceeded to his apartment at the Prinzregentenplatz by car, throngs of enthusiastic people crowded the roads. Although not one battle had been either lost or won during the Austrian campaign, the *Völkischer Beobachter* proclaimed the return of Hitler as that of "a victorious warlord coming home."¹⁶⁰

On March 16, Hitler took off from Munich at 2:50 p.m. and landed shortly after 5:00 p.m. at the Berlin Tempelhof Airport. Göring greeted Hitler with the following speech:

Mein Führer!

May I greet you today on behalf of the entire Volk, its Reich Capital, its Reich Government and the Wehrmacht. On this day, there are no words which can express, mein Führer, what every single one of us feels today. You have brought to us all of Germany today. Our brothers are free. Not by force, rather with your heart did you bring us your homeland. This is the moment, mein Führer, in which I may return to your hands the power of attorney you entrusted to me during these days. Mein Führer, let me greet you in the name of all!

Goebbels, too, gave an address, in which he maintained that in Berlin "hundreds of thousands, yes, one may say millions" of people had come to greet the Führer. Set against a background of chiming bells throughout Berlin, it took Hitler almost one hour to complete his triumphant drive through the city.¹⁶¹ At the Chancellery, he stepped onto the balcony and addressed the crowd below in the following words:¹⁶²

My Volksgenossen!

You can appreciate how I have felt since these past few days and what I am feeling now. I am so happy that Fate has chosen me to bring about this

March 16, 1938

great consolidation of the German Volk, and I am pleased to know and to see here that today the whole German Volk is happy—here and in all the other places where Germans are, most of all in that Land which was the most unhappy of all until a few days ago, and today is the happiest of all.

Our new community—and to all of us, this is a certainty—will never again be dissolved. Whoever might still not believe this can witness the final confirmation on April 10. Germany has become and will remain Greater Germany, and that will be ensured by the German Volk in its entirety, from East to West, and now from the South all the way here to Berlin. *Heil!*

On March 18, the dissolution of the Soldatenbund was made official. The High Command of the Wehrmacht published the following note:¹⁶³

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has effected the reorganization of the Federation of German Veterans' Associations (Reichskriegerbund, Kyffhäuser), with the instruction that the existing associations within the Wehrmacht are to be absorbed by the new Reichskriegerbund (Kyffhäuser).

This new Federation will be under the direct control of the Führer and will renounce all its former ties. The reorganization is to be effected by September 30, 1938. Instructions on the execution thereof will follow.

Berlin, March 18, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

At the same time, Hitler promoted the leader of the Reichskriegerbund, the SS Gruppenführer retired Colonel Reinhardt, who was celebrating his fiftieth service anniversary, to the rank of Major General and addressed the following letter to him:¹⁶⁴

Dear General Reinhardt,

I extend to you my congratulations on the day you celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of your entry into the Army. In appreciation of the service you have rendered to the cultivation of the concept of defense (*Wehrgedanke*) in the German Volk, I award you the brevet rank of retired Major General, with the privilege of wearing the uniform of the present Army. I rejoice that this token of appreciation enables me to place such an officer, who has proven to be utterly efficient in wartime, and at the same time to place this general of the new Wehrmacht at the fore of old and young soldiers who are to be organized in the Reichskriegerbund to tend to the cultivation of soldierly virtues.

With comradeship and the best wishes for the future success of your endeavors, I remain yours faithfully,

Adolf Hitler

At 8:00 p.m. on March 18, Hitler spoke before the Reichstag in the Kroll Opera, beginning with the following words:¹⁶⁵

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

I have had you summoned to attend this short session today, myself moved to the depths of my heart, in order to give you a report on the events whose significance you all appreciate. Furthermore, I must inform you of decisions affecting the German Volk and the German Reichstag itself.

When I was able to speak to you a few weeks ago, I gave you an account of the five-year work of constructing the National Socialist State, which may well be described, in terms of overall outcome, as beyond compare.

The “party narrative” that ensued was relatively short, yet it afforded Hitler the opportunity to complain that the German Nation had been denied the right of self-determination:

Wilson’s right of self-determination of the peoples, which was used in part to persuade our Volk to lay down its arms, was replaced by the most brutal national violation of countless millions of German Volksgenossen. Rights which were self-evidently accorded to the most primitive colonial tribes were withheld from one of this world’s old civilized nations for reasons as unacceptable as they were insulting.

In my speech on February 20, I explained that it will hardly be possible to reach a settlement concerning the *völkisch* and territorial conditions in Europe to the satisfaction of everyone involved; i.e. we do not believe that it should be the objective of a national leadership of state to use every means available, be they protests or actions, of enforcing territorial claims which, although motivated by national necessities, ultimately cannot lead to general national justice. The countless *völkisch* enclaves in Europe make it, to a certain degree, simply impossible to establish borders which do equal justice to all the interests of the peoples and states. However, there do exist political structures that so strongly embody the character of conscious and intentional national injustice that they cannot be maintained for any length of time except by means of the most brutal force.

Hitler had two states in mind: Austria and Czechoslovakia. In vivid phrases Hitler described the “violation” of the Germans living in Austria in 1919. While he did not make any mention of Czechoslovakia that day, his statements regarding Austria would have been appropriate for the Czechoslovakian case, too.

The formation of a new, mutilated Austrian state was also a measure which signified a naked violation of the right of self-determination of six and a half million people belonging to the German race. This violation was admitted with cynical frankness—for it was of no importance whatsoever at that time, either to the reputed inventors of the right of self-determination, the independence, and the freedom of nations, nor to the extremely curious, pious world rulers who otherwise profess to be so very concerned about justice being done on this earth—that the free will of six-and-a-half million people was simply cut off by the so-called peace *Diktats* and that these

people were being coerced by force to surrender to the robbery of their right of self-determination and to accept their unnatural separation from the great common motherland.

When the decision was nonetheless made in Austria at that time to hold referenda on the Anschluss—and I might particularly remind the Mister Democrats in London and Paris of the fact that this was a tune at which National Socialism existed neither in Germany nor in Austria—and the referenda resulted in more than 95 percent of all votes in favor of unification, the apostles of the new international law simply made use of the power of brutal force to prohibit without further ado this peaceful demonstration of the true desire of unhappy people who are separated from their Volk.

The tragic part about it was that, from the very beginning, this state of Austria was simply not viable! The economic distress was horrendous as could be anticipated; the annual mortality rate rose alarmingly. Alone in a city such as Vienna, there were 24,000 fatalities and only 10,000 births. I am not saying this in the belief that it might make an impression on democratic world Philistines, because I know that their hearts are completely hardened to such things. They can calmly look on while half a million people are butchered in Spain without being moved in the least. At the same time, they are equally capable of feigning profound indignation without blushing in the least, when in Berlin or in Vienna some Jewish agitator is divested of his means of doing business. No, I mention this only in order to ascertain in all objectivity how the perpetrators of the peace *Diktats* succeeded, by the simple fact of establishing this inviable figment of state, in passing a sentence of slow but sure death for millions of people.

Hitler once again expressed his disgust with international institutions, above all with the League of Nations. He spoke of the League of Nations' supervision of the Saar plebiscite which, as mentioned earlier, had particularly enraged him.¹⁶⁶ On this topic he maintained:

The fact that the Saar—with the exception of a few thousand people of French nationality—is inhabited exclusively by Germans was proven in the plebiscite conducted there under international supervision. However, the fact that these few percent nonetheless sufficed to coerce a territory to submit to a plebiscite before its reunification with the Reich was allowed is a crass contradiction to the attitude taken when millions upon millions of German beings are involved. In that case, complying with their wish to return to their fatherland is simply rejected as inopportune for the democracies, and indeed the mere hope is virtually branded as a crime. In the long run, a violation of rights of this sort cannot be glossed over with the transparent morals of certain international institutions! Justice will be done, even if Germans are concerned! And who would not be surprised that the peoples who are being stubbornly denied this right ultimately see themselves compelled to procure their human rights for themselves. The nations are created according to God's will and are everlasting, but the League of Nations is a highly dubious construction of human fallibility, human greed, and human bias.

And one thing is certain: just as the peoples have been existing for countless millenniums without a League of Nations, there will come a time when the League of Nations is a thing of the distant past, and the peoples will nevertheless prevail throughout the millenniums.

As early as in the above address, Hitler had announced that he intended “to procure the human rights” himself if they were refused to him. In other words, he aimed to invade countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland, or indeed, any country where Germans resided. The same sentiment is evident in the following excerpt as well:

Germany has once again become a world power. Yet which power in the world would calmly tolerate for any length of time that, before its very gates, a mass of millions (*Millionenmasse*) belonging to its own national race are so bitterly abused? There are moments when it becomes simply impossible for a self-confident nation to bear that sight any longer!

In addition, “a mass of millions” of Germans inhabited Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, and the Balkans. It was merely a question of time before it became “simply impossible for a self-confident nation to bear that sight any longer.” However, for the time being, Hitler continued to concentrate on the topic of Austria and on his Berchtesgaden meeting with Schuschnigg.

It was for these reasons I had decided to arrange for that conference in Berchtesgaden with the former Chancellor Schuschnigg of which you are all aware. In all earnestness, I confronted him with the fact that a regime totally lacking in legitimation, which was governing virtually by force alone, would, in the long run, necessarily come into ever greater conflict with the will of the Volk running diametrically opposed to its own currents. I endeavored to make it clear to him that this situation must ultimately lead to an ever increasing opposition on the one hand and to an ever mounting use of force on the other. Yet particularly in consideration of the great power of the resurrected German Reich, revolutionary uprisings were impossible to be ruled out. Under these circumstances, the only consequence was a further increase in terror. And in the end, a situation would arise making it impossible for a major power with a sense of national honor to patiently stand by any longer, much less to take an indifferent standpoint.

I left no doubt in Herr Schuschnigg’s mind that there was not a single German-born Austrian with national decency and a sense of honor who would not, at the bottom of his heart, yearn and be willing to strive for a unification with the German Volk. I asked him to spare German-Austria, the German Reich and himself a situation that, sooner or later, would inevitably lead to very serious disputes. In this context, I suggested a path to him which could lead to a gradual lessening of tensions internally and, hence to a slow reconciliation not only among the people within Austria themselves, but also between the two German states!

I pointed out to Herr Schuschnigg that this would be the final attempt on my part and that I was resolved, in the event that this attempt were to fail, to protect the rights of the German Volk in my homeland with the only means ever left on this earth when human insight closes itself off from the precepts of common justice: for no decent Volk has ever sacrificed its life for the sake of democratic formalities. And, by the way, this is something which is out of the question in precisely those democracies where there is the most talk about it.

On February 20, I offered my hand to former Chancellor Schuschnigg before the German Reichstag. Even in his initial reaction, he rejected my offer of reconciliation. Indeed, he began to only haltingly fulfill the obligations he had assumed as soon as it became evident that certain other states were propagating a negative attitude. Moreover, we are now in a position to know that a part of the campaign of lies being launched against Germany was inspired by Herr Schuschnigg's own press office. There could no longer be any doubt that Herr Schuschnigg, who had no legal justification whatsoever for his existence and who had been ravaging German-Austria with a dwindling minority's reign of terror, was determined to violate this agreement.

On Tuesday, March 8, the first reports on plans for a referendum appeared. They were so fantastic and so unbelievable that they could only be dismissed as rumors. Then on Wednesday evening, by way of a truly astonishing speech, we were made aware of an attempted assault not only against the agreements reached between us, but above all, against the majority of the Austrian population. In a country which has not held a single election for years, in which there are neither voters' registration nor lists of voters, an election was scheduled to take place within scarcely three days' time. The question at issue was to be worded such that a rejection would seem to be punishable as a criminal offense according to the prevailing legislation in Austria at the time.

There were no voters' lists; hence it was impossible to examine such lists from the very beginning; there was no way of contesting the results; secrecy was neither guaranteed nor desired; the "nay" voters were stigmatized from the very beginning; the "yea" voters were provided with every opportunity to falsify the results; in other words: Herr Schuschnigg, who was perfectly aware that only a minority of the population was behind him, attempted to procure for himself, by means of an unprecedented election fraud, the moral justification for an open breach of the obligations he had undertaken. He wanted a mandate for continuing to oppress—with even more brutal force—the overwhelming majority of the German-Austrian Volk.

The fact that he both broke his word and resorted to this measure could but lead to rebellion. Only someone who was crazy and blind could believe this could possibly serve to silence a tremendous majority of the Volk, allowing him to create a legal foundation upon which he could present his illegal regime to the world. Yet the rebellion which was undoubtedly to come and which did, in fact, announce itself immediately, would have led to renewed—and this time terrible—bloodshed. For once the embers of a passion fanned by such a permanent state of injustice begin to flame,

experience has always shown that they can only be extinguished by blood. Of this, history has given us sufficient examples.

I was thus resolved to put an end to the further violation of my homeland! Hence I immediately initiated that the requisite measures be taken designed to ensure that Austria could be spared the fate of Spain.

The ultimatum which the world suddenly began to complain of consisted solely of the firm assurance that Germany would no longer tolerate any further oppression of German-Austrian Volksgenossen—and hence of a warning not to choose a path which could only have led to bloodshed.

The fact that this attitude was right is proven by the fact that, in the midst of the intervention which had nonetheless become necessary, within the space of three days my entire homeland came rushing to meet me without a single shot having been fired and without a single casualty, as far as I know—naturally to the great disappointment of our international pacifists. Had I not complied with the wishes of the Austrian Volk and its new National Socialist Government, in all probability circumstances would have evolved in such a manner that our intervention would subsequently have been necessary in any case. I wanted to spare this magnificent country endless misfortune and suffering. For when hatred has once begun to smolder, reason is obscured. Then a just assessment of crime and punishment becomes a thing of the past. National wrath, personal vindictiveness, and the primitive instincts of egotistical drives together raise the torch and frenziedly go about their mad hunt for victims with total disregard for what is right and total ignorance of the consequences!

Perhaps Herr Schuschnigg did not believe it possible that I could make the decision to intervene. He and his followers can thank the Lord God for that. For it was my resolve alone that probably saved his life and the lives of tens of thousands of others, a life they by far do not deserve, given their complicity in the deaths of innumerable Austrian victims of the Movement, but which the National Socialist State generously gives them as a sovereign victor! I am also happy that I have thereby now become the one to fulfill this supreme historic assignment.

Can there be a prouder satisfaction for a man in this world than to have joined the people of his own homeland to the greater Volksgemeinschaft? And you can all appreciate my feeling of joy that I did not need to conquer a field of corpses and ruins for the German Reich, but that I have been able to bestow upon it an intact Land filled with overjoyed people! I have acted in the only way for which I can assume responsibility as a German before the history of our Volk, before the past and living witnesses to our Volksgemeinschaft, before the holy German Reich, and before my cherished homeland!

Seventy-five million people are standing behind the decision I have made, and before them stands, from now on, the German Wehrmacht!

Then Hitler turned to international public opinion on the Anschluss of Austria. Even though the Western Powers had displayed marked restraint, he was still not satisfied with their performance. On the other hand, Hitler had much praise for Poland, the country which he

intended to keep in good spirits as he prepared for his envisioned foray into Czechoslovakia. He spoke highly of Hungary and Yugoslavia as well, but failed to mention Czechoslovakia in any way, in spite of the fact that it had displayed benevolent neutrality similar to that of the other two countries. Italy and its leader Mussolini were assured yet one more time that Hitler would never forget their stance regarding the Anschluss. A peace declaration coupled with a threat of force followed. In Hitler's words:

It is almost tragic that an event that, at bottom, merely eliminated a tension in Central Europe which in time would have become unbearable, has met with such an utter and complete lack of understanding, particularly on the part of our democracies. Their reactions were in part incomprehensible and in part insulting. However, a number of other states had declared from the very beginning that the matter was no interest of theirs, while others expressed their hearty approval. This was the case as regards not only the majority of the smaller European countries, but many of the larger states as well. Of these, I might mention the dignified and sympathetic attitude of Poland, the warm-hearted approval of Hungary, the declarations submitted by Yugoslavia in cordial friendship, and the assurances of absolutely sincere neutrality on the part of many other countries.

Yet I cannot conclude my enumeration of these votes of friendship without going into more detail on the stand taken by Fascist Italy. I had felt myself under an obligation to explain in a letter to the leader of the great Fascist state, who is a close personal friend of mine, the reasons for my actions and, moreover, to assure him that not only would nothing change in Germany's attitude toward Italy subsequent to this event, but that moreover, just as this was the case as concerned France, Germany would regard the existing borders to Italy as given.

At this time I would like to express our warmest thanks to this great Italian statesman, on behalf of the German Volk and on my own behalf! We know what Mussolini's attitude during this time has meant for Germany. If any further reinforcement had been possible in the relations between Italy and Germany, it has now come about. What was originally a mutuality based on *Weltanschauung* and interests has now become, for us Germans, an indissoluble friendship. For us, the land and borders of this friend are inviolable.

I may repeat that I will never forget Mussolini for taking this attitude! Let the Italian Volk know that the German nation backs up my word! Hence once again the axis which joins our two countries has done a supreme service for the cause of world peace. Germany desires only peace. It does not intend to do harm to other peoples. Yet under no circumstances will it tolerate that harm is done to itself; it is prepared at all times to go to the bitter end in defense of its honor and its existence. May no one believe that these are empty words, and may it be, above all, understood that no great Volk with a sense of honor can sit by idle and look on while great masses of millions who share its blood are subjected to unremitting oppression!

After this ill-disguised threat to use force should “a mass of millions” of Germans be repressed somewhere in any way, Hitler returned to the topic of domestic policy. He dissolved the Reichstag and announced a general plebiscite in the entire Reich to be held on April 10. Then he asked for another four years’ time to mold the new “German Volksreich” together into an indissoluble unit.

As a matter of fact, the plebiscite he called for was to be the last one of Hitler’s career. He explained:

I believe that—in these great and historic hours when, thanks to the power of the National Socialist idea and the strength which it gives to the Reich, an age-old dream of Germans has come true—not only one part of our people can be called upon to verify, by its affirmation, the tremendous feat of the long-awaited foundation of a truly great Reich of the German Volk. On April 10, millions of German-Austrians will make their pledge before history to the great German common destiny and the great German Volksgemeinschaft. And they shall not be alone in taking this first great step in the new German Reich. They will be accompanied from now on by the whole of Germany. For beginning with March 13, their path will be the same as the one taken by all the other men and women of our Volk. Hence on April 10, for the first time in history, the entire German nation, to the extent that it is today a part of the great Reich of the Volk, will come forward and make its solemn vow. Not six and a half million will be asked, but seventy-five. [—]

I am thereby dissolving the Reichstag of the old German Reich and ordering elections to be scheduled for the representatives of Greater Germany. This date I am also setting for the 10th of April.

I am thereby calling upon nearly fifty million of our Volk eligible to vote and asking them to give me a Reichstag which will enable me, with the generous help of the Lord God, to accomplish our great, new tasks. Now the German Volk shall once more weigh and consider what I have achieved with my staff in the five years since the first Reichstag election in March of 1933. It will come to the conclusion that these achievements are historically beyond compare. I expect of my Volk that it has the insight and the power to make a decision both honorable and unique!

Just as I asked the German Volk in 1933, in view of the tremendous work lying ahead of us, to give me four years’ time to solve the greatest problems, I must now request of it a second time:

German Volk, give me another four years so that I can consummate the consolidation which has now been performed externally in an internal sense as well, for the benefit of all. When this term has expired, the new German Reich of the Volk shall have grown to become an indissoluble unit, firmly anchored in the will of its Volk, under the political leadership of the National Socialist Party, protected by its young National Socialist Wehrmacht, and rich from its flourishing economic life.

When today we see the boldest dreams of so many generations coming true before our very eyes, we are filled with a feeling of boundless gratitude

to all those who have done their part, by their labors and above all by their sacrifices, to help us achieve this highest goal. Every German tribe and every German landscape has made its own painful contribution to make this work a success. In this moment, let there rise from the dead before us those who constitute the last victims for the cause of German unification—all those many fighters who, in the old Ostmark which has now come home to the Reich, were the faithful heralds of the German unity we have achieved today and, as blood witnesses and martyrs, gasped with their dying breath those last words which shall, for us, be more sacred now than ever before: one Volk, one Reich. *Deutschland! Sieg Heil!*

Hitler inaugurated a new election campaign in Königsberg on March 25. He had no idea that this was to be the last one of his life. First he held an official reception at the Königsberg Castle, where in a short address he celebrated the bonds that tied Austria and East Prussia together.¹⁶⁷

You yourselves are well aware that a not insignificant part of this German province¹⁶⁸ in particular is composed of members of the brother tribe that was annexed to and hence became an integral part of the German Reich only a few days ago.

At a mass rally in the city of Königsberg (Schlageterhalle), Hitler delivered a speech beginning with the following words:¹⁶⁹

German Volksgenossen!

Only a few days ago, I was in the major city in the south of our newly united German Volk and Reich, and there I proclaimed that the entire German Volk supported this consolidation. In that context, I also mentioned the most northeasterly province of our Reich. Today I have come here with the purpose of urging you to back up my word and to keep it on April 10! I have also come here in order to begin the election campaign in the city in which I ended my first campaign after the takeover in 1933. I came to this German borderland with the conviction that I would nowhere find such sympathy for my actions as in a territory which was formerly made to suffer so much from the feeling of being neglected and abandoned. You yourselves have experienced the whole range of feelings one has in fighting for what seems to be a lost cause—yet also the feelings one gets when one knows that now the great and concerted power, faith and resolve of an entire nation is behind one.

The ensuing “party narrative” was directed primarily against the Peace Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain, and culminated in the following statement:

In an age in which it is self-evident that all the peoples of the earth are accorded the right of self-determination, one has denied this right of self-determination to the members of a great civilized Volk and robbed them of it. Today we share a feeling of community which is far stronger than one

founded in political or economic interests ever could be. It is the feeling of a community determined by blood. Today man has neither the capacity nor the desire to be separated from his *Volkstum*, he clings to it with obstinate love. He will endure even the worst distress, he will endure misery, but he shall be with his Volk! [—]

Blood binds more firmly than business! [—]

The National Socialist idea extends far beyond the borders of a small Germany. We certainly have no desire for proselytes in foreign peoples. But no one can prevent the National Socialist doctrine from becoming the creed of all Germans!

Hitler then addressed the topic of Austria and declared with regard to its previous system of government:

The crisis in Austria was nonetheless growing ever more extreme. And in this part of Germany things were exactly as they are in all the other parts! The people were all the more attached to Greater Germany, they wanted to join the great *Volksgemeinschaft*, they belong to it in terms of blood, and their will is the same! And then one day there came the hour when one had to make the decision before one's own conscience, before one's own Volk, and before an eternal God who created the peoples. And I made this decision two weeks ago, and it could not have been any different! For when people become deaf to every precept of justice, the individual must take the law into his own hands! For then he must recall that ancient commandment: "God helps him who helps himself!" And God has helped us!

What exactly was the situation in Austria?

As soon as the National Socialist Movement commenced preparing to take power via the path of legality, the custodians of democracy abandoned this route and established a dictatorship of naked tyranny. The government was truly a dictatorship, because the majority of the population no longer supported it. When other countries repeatedly make it seem as though Germany were suffering from a dictatorship in comparison to the democratic regime in that country, I can only reply as follows:

I am standing in the midst of my Volk. Yet where were these men standing who abused and oppressed the Volk in Austria as the democratic agents of their interests and ideas? For many years, they had no longer dared to approach the Volk. I do not believe there is a state in existence whose regime is more firmly established than ours and which yet has so often turned to the Volk and had its mandate verified.

This has not been done in Austria for years now. In fact, it could not be done, for any referendum would have finished these men in an instant. Initially, a group of tyrants in possession of the instruments of power proclaimed themselves rulers of the state; then they had this group lay down a new constitution, and ever since, the Volk has been denied any opportunity to object and any opportunity to judge or assess its leaders.

The person who was acting as agent for this small group in control was a man named Schuschnigg. In the course of this winter, there were many signs

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which led me to believe that, in the long run, this situation had become untenable, and that there were only two alternatives: either a structured settlement or an unstructured outbreak of revolution.

I wanted to avoid the latter, and I invited this man to come to see me in spite of the fact that he had no mandate whatsoever to represent this territory. I bade him to come to me, and in all earnestness I confronted him with the inevitable consequence of continuing to maintain this tyranny. I said to him, "Herr Schuschnigg, you are oppressing a country! You have no right to do so! This country is my homeland, too, just as much as it is yours! Who do you think you are to keep violating this country? I am prepared, in concert with you, to submit to a referendum of the people. The two of us shall stand as candidates. The Volk shall decide." He found this would not be possible on constitutional grounds. However, I warned him to seek a peaceful way of lessening the tension, because otherwise no one could guarantee that the tortured soul of the people would not cry out.

And there was one thing about which I could leave no doubt: no more shots will be fired against German Volksgenossen at the German borders! I attempted in all earnestness to make it clear to him that it was the only remaining way to perhaps bring about a peaceful settlement of the crisis. I left him in no doubt that, if this attempt should miscarry, the events would take their course one way or another. And I bade him to have no doubt that I was serious in my intention to provide assistance from the Reich to the oppressed Volksgenossen, and to have no doubt in my resolve if this route were abandoned and hence a crisis were to arise. He did, however, doubt the seriousness of my word; apparently that is also why he broke the agreement.

Today we have evidence; we have found correspondence in which, one day before my speech to the Reichstag on February 19, he writes that on his part the whole affair was a purely tactical move designed to gain time so that he could wait and see whether the situation abroad might become more favorable. That means he was hoping to be able to stir up foreign feeling against Germany in a more propitious hour. As moral justification for his plan, this man invented the farce of a referendum which is most pointedly unmasked for what it is by the fact that we have now been able to confiscate leaflets and posters in which the results of the referendum were published eight days before the referendum itself! That was an incredible feat of deception from a country which has not had an election and has been deprived of voting rights for years. It was obvious that, were this new fraud to be successful, the world would have declared without batting an eye, "Now this regime is legitimated!"

And then the German Volk in Austria finally began to rebel, and it turned upon its persecutors. It stood up for itself! And then I had to lend my support to this Volk. I gave orders to comply with the Volk's wishes.

I gave the orders to march!

I did it first of all to show the world that I was now in bitter earnest and nothing could keep me from taking this step. They had more than enough opportunities to settle these problems. They missed them and had to know that the times were over when Germany could be blackmailed.

Yet then came the great danger—and that was the second reason I gave the order to march: Austria had been oppressed too long; the people had been abused too long not to be filled with a desire for revenge. I openly admit that, in view of the horrible persecution, the thought occurred to one that it would only be right if the Volk would finally wreak its vengeance on its persecutors. But I nonetheless resolved to avoid that, for one thing I knew: there are those in the ranks of our opponents who are so depraved that they must be deemed lost to the German Volksgemeinschaft; on the other hand, there are also many who are blind or mad and who have simply jumped on the bandwagon. They have perhaps not been made fully aware of what is happening. And above all: who can guarantee that, once the frenzy has taken hold, the private passions, too, will not begin to rage, and that private scores are settled under the motto of political action?

And above all: just as I once staked my entire pride on bringing about the revolution in Germany with a minimum of casualties—because I held that the National Socialist State would win over the good men and had nothing to fear from its incorrigible foes—here, too, it was my wish to keep the reunification from being burdened down with unnecessary suffering and stained with unnecessary blood.

I am quite certain that many would have deserved it. They sentenced to death many of our Volksgenossen who were guilty only of loving their country and their great German Volk more than anything else. They did not even grant them the consideration of a bullet. No, they were hanged! In Vienna alone there are thirteen graves of victims hanged by the noose. More than 400 murdered and 2,500 shot are the regrettable victims¹⁷⁰ of this most despicable and foul oppression against our Volk in modern times.

Yet although they deserved it, it is my conviction that it was right to spare this country from civil war. It is a beautiful country. I did not want to see it destroyed. We will be able to deal with those incorrigible foes using the normal powers of our state, too. Some of them will leave of their own accord and go to where all the European “men of honor” of this type have assembled in recent years. And we are happy that some have already left. I can only hope and anticipate that the rest of the world, which has such deep-felt sympathy with these criminals, might at least be generous enough to turn this sympathy into practical assistance.

On our part, we are prepared to ship those criminals to these countries on luxury steamers, for all I care. The joy that has overwhelmed us during these few days has made us forget any desire for revenge.¹⁷¹

I have spoken with many men and women from my homeland who tell me, “We all had someone we hated so much that we were certain that, when the hour of liberation comes, these criminals must be banished. And when the hour came at last, we were all so overwhelmed by joy, we were so drunk on the miracle, that we completely forgot. We only want to be spared the sight of them! We are all so happy that we belong to Germany now, that we have been taken into the German Volksgemeinschaft and that our country has now become a part of the German Reich, and that our Wehrmacht is now a part of the German Wehrmacht.”

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I wanted to spare this country the horrors of Spain. And that was the second reason why I gave orders to march. And there was a third: I had to help. I had been summoned. I would not have been able to bear the responsibility before German history had I not given the orders to occupy the country. When certain foreign newspapers are now writing that we launched a cruel invasion, I can only say that they cannot stop lying, even on their deathbeds. [—] In the course of my political struggle, I have been given a great deal of love from my Volk. Yet when I recently crossed the former border of the Reich, I met with a wave of love stronger than I have ever before experienced.

Not as tyrants have we come, but as liberators. An entire Volk cried out in joy. In doing so, it also provided evidence and proof of the power of the idea. For there are two things we must never forget:

First: this never would have happened without the National Socialist idea. It has conquered these people and cast its spell over them. It is the idea that has made Germany great and shown these people the great ideal they are now serving. During these past few days, it has been a wonderful sight to see how our Movement has risen again like a phoenix one has long believed dead; how it has spread to cover an entire state within but a few hours; how all these careworn faces of the National Socialists are now beaming with joy, how they took public power into their own hands, and how they have become representatives of this state within a few short hours. That was accomplished by the power of the idea.

And second: I believe that the power of this idea also served to inspire our divisions and regiments in their march. It showed them all what it means to be instruments of a great faith. It was not brutal force which triumphed here, but our swastika. When these soldiers marched into the country, I remembered a song from my youth. Back then I frequently sang it, with faith in my heart, this proud battlesong: "The people are rising, the storm is breaking loose."¹⁷² And in fact now a people has risen up, and a storm has broken loose.

The enormous impression this has made on me has moved me to decide not to wait until April 10, but to bring about the unification immediately. I am able to do this because I have seen this Volk myself. And I have dared to do it because I knew that on the tenth of April my faith would not be proven in vain, but quite the opposite: the entire Volk will profess its support of my deed. Above all, I wanted to make it quite clear to those around us that there is to be no further discussion on this point.

Naturally one might now ask, "Why are you holding a referendum at all? Why should this GermanAustria vote at all now?" We want this act to go down in German history. The Volk shall choose and take a stand. I am a better democrat here at home than many of the democrats around us. The Volk in Austria shall be given the opportunity to rise up, and I want to know whether it will not indeed choose the son of its own homeland and the Führer of the German nation. And it shall thereby take a stand for all time. For we National Socialists continue today to swear, as in the past:

What we once possess we will never again surrender! Where our banners are driven into the earth, there stands before them a living wall of German

beings!¹⁷³ You ask why I am now allowing a referendum to take place in Germany itself as well?

My Volksgenossen! Within a few days' time, we have wrought a miracle. It would be all too easy for some Germans to underestimate the full importance and significance of this act. Within a few days, we have won more than could be brought home in the victorious wars of the past: 84,000 square kilometers and 6.8 million people. It is an enormous gain for our Reich. Today Germany is larger in terms of territory than in 1914. It has nearly seven million more inhabitants. That is a tremendous, tremendous conquest. That is something Germany must know and appreciate, and that is something the German nation shall always remember. Hence this time it shall be a sacred vote. The whole of Germany must step forward and pledge its faith! Therefore, all of our Volksgenossen will now be asked to join us on our path. It will be short compared to the distance the National Socialist Movement has covered in its battles; short compared to the distance hundreds of thousands and millions of men of the SA were made to march in these long years so that Germany might become what it is today. It will be short compared to the route which generations of German soldiers took to establish and maintain the Reich. And it will be short compared to the distance our troops have just put behind them. Yet if German divisions have accomplished daily marches of sixty kilometers and more these past few days, the whole of Germany is also under an obligation to march to the polls and pledge its faith in its Führer and its soldiers.

Let no man and no woman be allowed to stay home; they shall all step forward and, just as their conscience bids them, they shall cast their vote. I believe that it can only be in favor of the preservation of our *Volkstum* and the strengthening of our Reich. And above all: this new *Grossdeutschland* shall thereby be given its first Reichstag.

What has happened in these past weeks is the result of the triumph of an idea, the triumph of will, and even a triumph of persistence and tenacity, and above all it is the result of a miracle of faith, for only faith could have moved these mountains. I once went forth with my faith in the German Volk and took up this immeasurable struggle. With faith in me, first thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and finally millions have followed after me. With faith in Germany and in this idea, millions of our Volksgenossen in the new Ostmark in the south of our Reich have held their banners high and remained loyal to the Reich and German Volkstum.

Today I have faith in that tenth of April. I am convinced that, on that day for the first time in history, the whole of Germany will truly be on the march. They shall march not only in the Alpine valleys from Carinthia and Tirol, from Styria or Bavaria; not only shall they march at the Danube, but at the Rhine and in the marshes of Schleswig-Holstein, too; they shall march in the cities and in the villages, and above all here in this province. And on this day, I shall be the Führer of the greatest army in world history. For when I put my vote into the ballot box on this 10th of April, I will know that fifty million will follow me, and that they all recognize one motto, my motto:

Ein Volk and ein Reich—Deutschland!

On March 26, Hitler gave another campaign speech in Leipzig, where he once again described the great suffering of Austria before the “liberation” on March 12, concluding:¹⁷⁴

We Germans have found ourselves again on this day. It was neither the insight nor the accomplishments of other states and peoples, rather the concentrated force of the nation which brought about this feat. Now order has returned to the Reich territory.

Prior to his third speech of the campaign, a speech he would deliver in Berlin, Hitler conducted an important meeting with Konrad Henlein in the Chancellery on March 28. Henlein was the leader of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten German question constantly occupied Hitler’s mind, even during the campaign. Already at this early date, Hitler had issued instructions on how to proceed. The existing information on the meeting between Hitler and Henlein is derived from the “top secret” minutes of a session held in the Foreign Office at noon on March 29.

Ribbentrop summarized these instructions to Henlein and his assistants, in the presence of the German Envoy in Prague, Dr. Eisenlohr, and other leading figures. The recording of the session states in its introduction:¹⁷⁵

The Reich Foreign Minister emphasized at the beginning the necessity of keeping the appointed discussion strictly secret and then stated, with reference to the principles imparted to Konrad Henlein yesterday afternoon by the Führer personally, that there were two questions above all others which were important for the conduct of the policy of the Sudeten German Party: 1) The Sudeten German element must know that behind it stood a people of seventy-five millions who would tolerate no further suppression of the Sudeten Germans by the Czechoslovak Government.

2) It was for the Sudeten German Party to present to the Czechoslovak Government those demands, the fulfillment of which they considered necessary for the attainment of the freedom they desired.

With regard to this, the Reich Foreign Minister said that it could not be the duty of the Reich Government to make detailed suggestions to Konrad Henlein, who was the expressly recognized leader of the Sudeten German element, recently confirmed by the Führer, as to what demands should be put to the Czechoslovak Government. It was a matter of drawing up a maximum program which would guarantee as its final aim total freedom for the Sudeten Germans. It seemed dangerous to accept prematurely promises of the Czechoslovak Government, which on the one hand could give the impression abroad that a solution had been found, and on the other would only partially satisfy the Sudeten Germans themselves. Caution was chiefly necessary also because previous experience had shown that no confidence would be placed in the assurances of Beneš and Hodža.¹⁷⁶ The final object of the negotiations

to be conducted by the Sudeten German Party with the Czechoslovak Government could be, by the scope and step-by-step specification of their demands, to avoid entry into the Government.

These guidelines are clear proof of what Hitler sought to effect in Czechoslovakia; namely, the prevention of the consolidation of any Government through the participation of the Sudeten German Party. By constantly presenting new demands, the Sudeten German Party would contribute to the development of an increasingly chaotic situation, which would provide a pretext for Germany's forced entry into the country.

In the evening of March 28, Hitler spoke at a campaign rally in the Berlin Sportpalast.¹⁷⁷ At first Hitler again delivered a lengthy "party narrative," relating the "early stages of National Socialism." He concluded his convoluted description thereof with the profound observation:

Both bourgeoisie and proletariat were left behind, and the German nation is the sole victor.

Turning to the situation in Austria, Hitler spoke of the bloodshed there and maintained:

The tiny country of Austria alone can claim more murdered National Socialists than all of Germany.¹⁷⁸

Hitler then described his negotiations with Schuschnigg in great detail and recounted precisely how he had dealt with the Austrian after the latter had broken his promise:

I was frank with him. [—] He thought today's Germany to be the Germany of yesterday. That was the biggest mistake he ever made in his life! [—]

What happened within these past three weeks is a miracle, a miracle in our history. In only three days a Volk rises up, within two days it crushes a regime, and within one day it greets its liberator! This is the greatest victory ever scored by an idea!

At the end of his campaign speech in Berlin, Hitler referred to the upcoming plebiscite and the elections to the Reichstag in the following terms:

I myself have done my duty. And now I expect of every German man and of every German woman to do likewise this April 10. March 13 witnessed the creation of Greater Germany, and April 10 will witness its affirmation!

On March 29, Hitler's train pulled into the Dammtor station in Hamburg at 2:00 p.m. He had come to that city to attend the launching of the second KdF ship,¹⁷⁹ *Robert Ley*, initially scheduled for March 12. The launch had been delayed because of the events in Austria.

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Hitler himself gave the address at the ship's christening,¹⁸⁰ speaking of the German Volksgemeinschaft as a problem largely of education and then expanding on the subject of the National Socialist Community *Kraft durch Freude*. With regard to the name chosen for the ship, Hitler called Ley "the greatest idealist among German workers." At the reception at the City Hall of Hamburg, Hitler declared in a short address:¹⁸¹

I am particularly happy that this mightiest and largest German port pledges its allegiance to the entire German Reich in such a forceful manner. I believe that this realization is not the product of material considerations but rather that it is an expression of heartfelt desire and of an innermost conviction.

That evening, Hitler spoke at a mass rally in the Hanseatenhalle.¹⁸² He took advantage of the occasion to once again speak on the topic of the "careers, doubters and faultfinders" who were "proven completely wrong today." The "party narrative" that day was held in an aggressive tone of voice. Hitler proclaimed:

First of all, domestic political order had to be restored to the Volk. Only then was it possible for the economy to revive. Only then was it possible for the Volk to become a decisive factor once more in foreign policy. Events proved us right. What could a Volk expect that had neither trust nor confidence in itself? Could it expect that others would rate it more highly than it rated itself? First, one had to get rid of all this cronyism and rubbish about an economically bankrupt system just as one had to discard obsolete economic doctrines and terminology. These had to be replaced with simple and fundamental principles and realizations. Only what a nation produces as a whole will benefit the nation as a whole. What it does not produce, it does not possess. Money can never replace inadequate production, rather—in this case—it becomes merely a means of duping the nation. [—]

Those who base their politics on corrosion shall be mercilessly exterminated.

At the end of the "party narrative," Hitler again referred to the KdF ship, explaining its mission:

Thousands of German workers will sail the seas aboard this German ship, a ship so beautiful that people abroad will be tempted to think all those aboard are millionaires in disguise. And now we are building yet another Volkswagen factory. All these accomplishments cost much in terms of labor and sweat, but they bring pleasure to millions. And in this fashion, we are building up Germany on the basis of solidarity and Volksgemeinschaft, and no one can deny that Germany has become all the more beautiful in these past five years.

Then Hitler painted a vivid picture of the untold suffering of the Austrian National Socialists to express his disdain for democracies.

Frequently, people abroad have claimed that we were making propaganda, while in truth it was the idea that propagandized itself. It holds great attraction especially for those who are of the same blood. It does not matter whether or not this pleases the democrats.

Ideas cannot be imprisoned. States can be torn apart, but the bonds of a Volksgemeinschaft are indissoluble. And once the sparks of these ideas begin to fly, they inflame every man whose blood links him to them as though it were an internal antenna. And this is precisely the case with National Socialism. Austria's National Socialists were persecuted, hundreds of them were murdered and thousands were shot. They were hanged as though they were murderers lacking any feeling of honor although their only crime had been their belief in their Volk.

And the world remained silent and uttered not a word of condemnation. You can judge for yourselves the meaning the word democracy took on for us. It became the embodiment of lies and injustice, the pinnacle of hypocrisy. But the minute—be it in Berlin or Vienna—we cause one of those Jewish agitators to close his shop for a while and to go somewhere else, then democracy becomes incensed and speaks of an assault upon holy rights.

Hitler then concluded the campaign speech in Hamburg:

Wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain. I have called upon the Austrian Volk to pass judgment on April 10, so that even the jurists will believe it. I have called upon Germany to confirm this. Today's Germany is larger than the Germany of 1914; it has more inhabitants than it did then, and this fact alone merits that the German nation be asked to go to the polls. Every man and every woman must come. I have a right to demand this since I made sacrifices myself—as did so many others—in the times of struggle in Germany. My path will lead me further than to the voting box, the box into which I know the German Volk will step on April 10.

From the balcony of the City Hall, Hitler spoke to the assembled crowd one last time;¹⁸³

Since, oddly enough, the rest of the world believes only what it sees printed in black and white, on April 10 we will give it something to look at in black and white. While the politicians and statesmen can no longer change it [the Anschluss of Austria] anyway, I hope the jurists will also be content at last.

Hitler visited Cologne on March 30. He arrived at the main station at 5:30 p.m., and from there proceeded to the City Hall, where a reception was held in his honor. Hitler replied to the welcoming words of the city's Mayor Dr. Schmidt in a short address.¹⁸⁴ In it he recalled the restitution of German sovereignty to the Rhineland two years earlier. It was not until this move that the area had finally been rescued and restored to Germany.

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A second lovely and beautiful German stream has come to Germany as the stream of the Nibelungs. In Vienna, I pointed out that it is my conviction that the enthusiasm will be an immeasurable one—in particular here in the West, in Cologne.¹⁸⁵ [—]

You can well imagine how happy I am that Fate has chosen me to bring about this historic turn.

At 9:00 p.m., Hitler delivered a campaign speech¹⁸⁶ to a crowd of 60,000 in the Exhibition Hall in Cologne. Hitler concluded the lengthy “party narrative” with the following observation:

The point was to make a unified whole again out of this German body politic, a body that was torn by inner conflicts. Only in this manner was it possible to save the nation, by the force of an ideal, an ideal that inspires all of us. Reason can never replace idealism nor can it ever stand in opposition to idealism. To create a new Volk and a *volklich* ideal and to unite the Volk under this ideal—that, too, was the prerequisite for economic recovery.

God has created us not that we should perish, but that we should sustain ourselves.

The remaining part of the speech was devoted to a rendition of the events that had taken place in Austria.

On March 31, Hitler was greeted ceremoniously in the Kaisersaal of the City Hall in Frankfurt. In reply to the welcome extended by the Mayor, Dr. Krebs, Hitler declared:

I am happy that today I am able to enter this city as the man who has realized a yearning which once found its most profound expression in this location. Above all, I am happy that—for the first time in my life—I am able to stand in this magnificent hall. The cause for which our ancestors struggled and shed their blood ninety years ago may now be regarded as accomplished. I am firmly convinced and confident that this cause—the new Greater German Reich—will remain in existence for all time to come, for it is supported by the German Volk itself and founded upon the eternal yearning of the German Volk to possess one Reich.

That evening, at a mass rally in the Festival Hall in Frankfurt, Hitler began his campaign speech with the following words:

In these historic times, I come into this historic city in which ninety years ago the attempt was launched to bestow upon the German Volk one Reich.

Hitler continued to describe the history of the development of the concept of a Greater Germany. This idea had first been evident in the parliament of 1848, which had convened in the Frankfurt Paulskirche. Bismarck had expanded upon the idea, and up to the year 1918, the thought had been nurtured. Hitler then continued with the obligatory, longwinded “party narrative.” At its conclusion, Hitler proclaimed:

I have been in power for five years. And in this time period I have torn page upon page from the book of the disgraceful Treaty of Versailles. I have done so not in defiance of law, but rather as a man who preserves law and order, a man who is not in breach of contract, but rather as a man who refuses to acknowledge a shameful *Diktat* as a holy contract!

After a detailed rendition of the events in Austria, Hitler ended his speech on the following note:

I have taken great risks for our Volk. In my youth, I knew nothing but the German Volk. In the Great War, I fought for it, and afterwards I went on a pilgrimage throughout Germany, always filled by the only desire to bring about the resurrection of this Volk. The story of my life lies like an open book before every one of my Volksgenossen. I have done my duty! Now German Volk do yours!

After the rally, Hitler left Frankfurt and continued his tour, which next took him to Heidelberg. There he spent the night at the Europäischer Hof Hotel. At 3:00 p.m. on April 1, Hitler arrived in Stuttgart on a special train. In the City Hall, the Mayor Dr. Stroelin greeted Hitler at a reception held in his honor.¹⁸⁷ Hitler replied to this welcome in a short address, emphasizing that the concept of a Greater Germany was nowhere as lively and vibrant as in Stuttgart, “the city of Germans living abroad.”¹⁸⁸ At 9:00 p.m., Hitler delivered another campaign speech at a mass rally in Stuttgart.¹⁸⁹ Following the “party narrative,” he again turned to the events in Austria: “We have all forgotten what it means to be compelled to live outside of the German Volksgemeinschaft!”

By the time Hitler delivered his speech, the supposed number of National Socialists who had sacrificed their blood to the Austrian cause had mysteriously increased: at this point, Hitler already claimed that “10,000 had been injured, 2,500 shot, 400 murdered, and 16 hanged.” Thereafter, Hitler announced that the Reich Government had succeeded in securing a letter written by Schuschnigg. The Austrian Chancellor had addressed it to a Landeshauptmann (head of the government of an Austrian province),¹⁹⁰ and had informed him—in reference to the meeting at Berchtesgaden—that he had accepted Hitler’s demands only for appearances’ sake. He had done so only to gain time “until the attitude abroad changed.” At such a time, he would take the offensive.

We knew that this was what Schuschnigg was thinking: for he thought too loudly. [—] I have taken the ancient path history has imparted upon me, and I believe that the German Volk will reaffirm this mission. I, the so-called dictator, ask the German Volk to pass judgment!

April 1, 1938

During those days, the headlines of German newspapers were filled with sensational reports on Hitler's speeches and other events connected with the campaign. This flood of propaganda was such that one easily could have overlooked a small DNB report, dated April 1, concerning the case of Fritsch and—in a sense—symbolizing the rehabilitation of the Colonel General as a result of the meager findings of the March 17 court-martial. The note had the following verbatim content:

Berlin, April 1. The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has expressed his best wishes to Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch in a handwritten note, on the occasion of the latter's restoration to health.

This was the extent of Hitler's statements in public with regard to the affair. The content of the handwritten note was never published. There was no thought of reappointing the former Commander in Chief to his previous post. Naturally, the German public neither heard of this nor was it ever informed of the type of "disease" from which Fritsch had supposedly recovered.

On April 2, Hitler spoke at a campaign rally in the exhibition halls near the Theresienwiese in Munich.¹⁹¹ This particular speech was nothing more than a "party narrative." From the beginning, Hitler reminded his audience that Munich had been the site of the inauguration of his "crusade against lethargy, unreason, and dishonesty" twenty years earlier. He concluded his monologue by describing his efforts of the past five years as Reich Chancellor.

The German Volk itself brought about this miracle as it trustingly followed my lead year after year. [—] I place my trust in you, German Volk, so that I may stand before the world to say that I did not accomplish this feat alone, but rather that seventy-five million people willed it.

After Hitler had campaigned for the plebiscite in eight major German cities, he concentrated his efforts on cities in Austria. Ever since the campaign for the election to the Reichstag in 1936, a certain ritual had been observed in the various electoral districts. A campaign appearance of Hitler in a city was treated as a state visit and staged in connection with official receptions and ceremonies. This custom was emulated by the capitals of the Austrian Under and Gaus, which had possibly even improved upon it.

Hitler's tour started on April 3 in the city of Graz. Its citizens had demonstrated strong National Socialist proclivities in the previous years and, therefore, had already been expecting a visit by the Führer

for a long time. In his speech at a mass rally in the city,¹⁹² Hitler excused his late attention to the capital of Styria and maintained that he had intended to visit Graz far earlier. He mustered all of the persuasive powers at his disposal in an effort to impress his audience. As he drew to a conclusion of his “party narrative,” he appeared to be quite pleased with himself and declared with great pathos:

The German Volk carries it head high once again. With great pride, it looks to its Wehrmacht once again, and it is convinced that no power on earth shall be able to vanquish it ever again.

This statement was followed by a detailed description of the events in Austria, beginning with Berchtesgaden and ending with the Anschluss.

I made it clear to Schuschnigg that the minute the Federal Chancellor issued orders to fire upon Germans once more—simply because of their convictions—German regiments will cross the border. [—]

Within three days the man, who thought himself capable of stemming the tide of Germany’s ascent, collapsed together with all his cohorts. [—]

The song I had faithfully sung so often in my youth became reality: *Der Sturm brach los, das Volk stand auf!*¹⁹³[—] And on this day, German-Austria’s true mission was imparted upon it: to serve as bulwark and foothold for the German Reich as the Ostmark of the historic Germania!

Hitler emphasized the following about Mussolini’s stance during the critical days in Austria:

We shall never forget this and we unconditionally pledge our word. Yugoslavia espoused the same stance and so did Hungary. We are happy to call four borders our own, borders that relieve us of the burden of having the military protect them.

Hitler concluded his speech with a pious appeal for the votes to be cast on April 10:

The Lord created all peoples. What God has placed together, let no man put asunder.¹⁹⁴ And as a holy symbol of this truth the whole German nation will step forth on April 10! I have called upon the nation to do so not only here, but in the entire Reich. And it will do so.

Today I stand at the fore once more as I did during the times of my struggle and wrestle for the German individual. On April 10, we will jointly pass judgment. For the first time in the history of our Volk, a Reich is being constructed in accordance to the will of the Volk. And I desire to be nothing other than what I have been in the past: the warner of my Volk, the instructor of my Volk, the Führer of my Volk! In the future as well, I will bow to one single commandment only, a commandment which has compelled me ever since I was born: *Deutschland!*

April 3, 1938

That same April 3, the celebrations for the “Day of the Legion” took place in Vienna. Three weeks after the Anschluss of Austria, Hitler had allowed all Austrian National Socialists to return to their native land. Beginning in 1934, many adherents of National Socialism in Austria had fled their country and had escaped to Germany. As mentioned before, Hitler had various reasons¹⁹⁵ for not permitting his Austrian followers to return to their homeland at an earlier date in the course of the Anschluss.

Naturally, they were more eager to do so at this point than they had ever been. At a speaking engagement on the Heldenplatz in Vienna, Gauleiter Bürckel read them the following, none too warm appeal by Hitler:¹⁹⁶

Men of the Austrian Legion!

Once, following a most difficult fight which circumstances had rendered hopeless, you stepped across the border into Germany to form a training unit for a future Austrian SA in compliance with my instructions.

Despite great longing for your homeland, you loyally and obediently bowed to my command for many years. Now the hour of liberation has come and with it comes the hour of your return home. From now on you shall place your knowledge and expertise at the service of the resurrection of the Austrian SA. At the Nuremberg Party Congress, I will review the progress you made for the first time.

Today already I am assured in the knowledge that you will then stand out as examples of obedience, discipline, and dedication to the National Socialist Party’s cause, and hence to the cause of Greater Germany. Above all, you will form an inseparable link to those thousands of brave SA men who were not as fortunate as you, who could not express their convictions freely in the course of these years and who remained loyal to the Movement in spite of prosecution and terror. Let me express my gratitude to you as well as to all other Austrian SA men. From this day onward, you will once again be called: German SA men of the National Socialist Party.

Adolf Hitler

On April 4, Hitler triumphantly entered the city of Klagenfurt. In the banquet room of the City Hall, the Prince Bishop Dr. Heffter and the Mayor of Klagenfurt greeted Hitler and feted him as the liberator of Austria. In a short address,¹⁹⁷ Hitler recalled the hard times that Klagenfurt had known in the aftermath of the World War and in the subsequent times of political turmoil.

It shall be the foremost task for all of us to allow these wounds to heal gradually and to reintegrate this wonderful and beautiful country as a pearl in the chain joining together the lands of our equally wonderful and beautiful German *Vaterland*.

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At a mass rally in the festival hall, Hitler delivered a two-hour speech.¹⁹⁸ While speaking, he touched upon the topic of the National Socialist uprising of July 25, 1934. At the time, Hitler had simply discarded his faithful adherents who had heeded his call to rally. On several occasions in the past, he had solemnly disavowed any involvement on his part in the affair.¹⁹⁹ However, now he declared:

You can take my word for it, I suffered with you back then. I could not help you, but I made an oath to myself then, and now I have kept it.

Hitler ended the address in Klagenfurt with an unmistakably clear reference to his God-given mission. He proclaimed:

Whoever believes in God must avow: when the fate of a Volk is changed within three days' time, then this could only have come about as a result of divine intervention, an ordeal. [—]

The election on April 10 will not be one in the ordinary sense of the term: it will be a pilgrimage made by the entire German nation.

Not only Austria, but all of Germany, from the Arctic Ocean to the Karawanken, must stand up to bear witness before history to the creation of the Greater German Reich. [—]

German Volk, hold it tightly in your fist now, and never allow it to be wrung from you!

On April 5, Hitler gave a short address at a reception in the Tirolean Landhaus (parliament) in Innsbruck. That evening, he followed with a campaign speech, transmitted by radio. Hitler paid particular attention to the fact that it had been in the city of Innsbruck that Schuschnigg had announced his plans for a plebiscite.

How could these men be so blind as to believe that here an entire Volk would turn a blind eye to the rise of Germany, and on the other hand, how could these men believe that I would remain blind and deaf in light of the suffering of this country. [—]

After all, it is only natural that a man who loves his great Vaterland more than anything in the world, that such a man is not capable of forgetting the country from which he himself once came. Only someone lacking in character could fathom so great a lack of character on the part of someone else as to divest himself from the fate of his own homeland. I would not deserve the love, trust, and loyalty of so many Germans in our Old Reich if I myself did not know loyalty and love for my homeland. I have suffered everything that my homeland suffered. [—] When the day of April 10 draws to a close, the entire world will have to acknowledge that on March 13, one man united one Volk; one month later, that Volk affirmed that man.

At the very beginning of the campaign speech he delivered at the Salzburg Festspielhaus on April 6, Hitler exclaimed:²⁰⁰

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For years I dreamt of liberating this country, despite all those who feared this hour—and now I am here!

Then Hitler expanded upon the concept of the Reich and cried out:

In the beginning stood the Volk, was the Volk, and only then came the Reich!²⁰¹

Subsequently, he again described in great detail the recent events in Austria and proclaimed:

When Fate leads a young man forth from his homeland, and leads him to a position such as the one in which I find myself today, then it is only natural that the thoughts of this man turn time and time again to his homeland. I believe that the period of my leadership of Germany is one of historic greatness for the German Volk.

I believe that one day posterity and German history will affirm that in the time in which I conducted the affairs of the German state, I rendered the greatest service to the German Volk. A man of like convictions must naturally desire that his homeland should partake in the blessings he brought about. I was convinced that I would be able to better lead this country in unison with the German Reich than Herr Schuschnigg or anyone else possibly could. This is not arrogance on my part.

When a man manages to bring a state of sixty-eight million to such height as Germany has attained in the past five years, then that man can well entrust himself with the resolution of such a problem. This was my conviction and this makes me particularly happy—millions of my fellow countrymen shared this conviction. [—]

I regard Herr Schuschnigg as one of those power which always wills the Bad but which Fate has preordained to work the Good in the end.²⁰² [—]

With all my heart I have desired to absolve the former Austrian Federal Army from its—in my eyes—untenable position and to declare it part of the German Wehrmacht.

What today remains set apart by different uniforms is of the same blood anyway and in a few years' time will have become one—indistinguishable in its uniform as well.

However, the true reason why Hitler had moved so swiftly to integrate the Austrian Federal Army into the German Wehrmacht was his well-known preoccupation with questions of power politics. He did not wish this potent instrument to be left to its own devices for even a minute. Whenever questions of military power arose, Hitler became totally ruthless. This is evident in the careful wording he chose to justify his decision to march on Austria, despite of the fait accompli he had affected in the political situation there:

It was an irrevocable decision which can no longer be reversed! Once German soldiers march, their mission cannot be rescinded!²⁰³

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In the course of the remainder of his speech in Salzburg, Hitler turned to the issue of an economic integration of Austria into the Reich:

We have a most magnificent goal before us, the goal of rendering this Volksgemeinschaft more profound and to integrate this country economically in the enormous cycle of our great economic life—a truly magnificent goal. I am so happy that I was allowed to create this goal and to work on it.

In only a few months' time, the tide of new creativity and new economic activity will surge through this country. In a few years, thoughts of Social Democracy and Communism will have faded like the memory of an evil spirit from a distant past, and these ideas will be laughed at. [—]

Never before have I stepped before the nation with a clearer conscience or with greater pride and confidence. I am certain: on April 10 the entire German Volk will make its greatest avowal in history. It will solemnly pledge its allegiance to the new Reich and the new community. For only if all Germans form part of a sworn-in and unified community can Germany's future be assured for all time. Our children and grandchildren shall not have to be ashamed of their ancestors. One day they shall, with all due respect, look back to those who lived before them, to those who protected the Reich, the Reich which gives life and sustenance to them. By then, April 10 will have become one of the great days in German history. All of us greatly rejoice in the knowledge that Providence has chosen us to fashion this day.

On April 7, Hitler attended the breaking of new ground at the Walserberg near Salzburg for the Reich Autobahn, which one day was to connect the cities of Salzburg and Vienna. In front of an assembly of construction workers, Hitler delivered a short address, declaring:²⁰⁴

Here, too, we will begin with action immediately. I will hold you responsible, Herr Generalinspekteur [Todt], not only for commencing work here on this very day, but also for completing this first section within three years. You, my fellow workers, will help him. This bond shall tie together all of Germany and it shall serve as proof to the world that a Volk and a Reich capable of seeing through such an enormous undertaking—that these can never be separated. Now I myself will commence this work.

Subsequently, Hitler himself inaugurated the construction by digging the ceremonial first spadeful. Nonetheless, his wish did not come true that the Autobahn might be completed “within three years.” As with many of his other enterprises, the war was to end the construction work prematurely.

Later that afternoon in Linz, Hitler delivered another campaign speech. Here he declared:²⁰⁵

Ever since March 13, the city of Linz has been indelibly engraved in the annals of German history. This obliges all of you to do your duty on the 10th of April. [—] As a boy I ventured forth from here to the capital of what was

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then Old Austria. There I could not settle either as I was unrelentingly drawn to the great Reich: I simply had to find my way there, my way to the country of my dreams and yearnings!

Then Hitler paid most detailed attention to the topic of the *kleindeutsch* Reich. He observed that Bismarck had forged Smaller Germany together out of the molten iron of rivaling tribes and lands by unifying them, or rather by forcing unity upon them. Therefore, Hitler drew the conclusion:

In all likelihood, only a German from the South could have brought about this second unification. After all, he had to return a large parcel of territory to the Reich, a parcel which had been lost to the Reich in the course of our history.

Now it was time again for a lengthy “party narrative.” Hitler declared that what had enabled him to fulfill his mission had been his experience in the school of “harsh training as a German soldier.”

Those six years as a soldier instilled in me the foundations for tenacity, steadfastness, and persistence. Everything I gained in terms of virtues and values during this time I owe to the once unrivaled German Army.

In the further course of his speech, Hitler magnanimously praised his own accomplishments and proclaimed:

The Germany of misery and plight, of profound despair, and above all the Germany of defenselessness and helplessness is a Germany of the past. Today we once again possess an enormous Reich; a strong Wehrmacht protects us; no power on earth shall ever vanquish us. The National Socialist leadership of state has wrought miracle upon miracle within the past five years thanks to the nation standing as one behind it. [—]

An iron will has created this Reich of today. Iron and steel will protect it against any foe. The German Volk has finally triumphed over the German states. [—]

For I know what I am bringing home [to the Old Reich]: a most beautiful country! For me natural resources and material goods do not count. For me only one thing counts: those six and a half million men, German men, whom I am integrating into the German Volksgemeinschaft as the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich. This is the proudest contribution a man can make to his Volk and to his Reich. April 10 will witness the whole of Germany pledging itself to the one resolution: on this day, we say yes to Germany, to our Germany!

On April 9, Hitler was ceremoniously received in the banquet hall of the City Hall of Vienna by the new Mayor Dr. Neubacher. There Hitler expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome in the following words:²⁰⁶

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Mr. Mayor!

I thank you for your welcome. I hold this to be a welcome extended both by the city of Vienna and by all of German-Austria. Rest assured that this city remains a pearl in my eyes. I will restore it in a manner worthy of it, and I will place it in the care of the entire German Reich and of the entire German nation. This city as well will witness a new bloom.

We all sense the import of the historic events which we were allowed to witness and which tomorrow we will bring to a close. It is my conviction that this city will say yes to this close as well.

This yes is both historic and irrefutable. For all that must remain and will remain, both has been and is the German Volk. And it will remain so for all time to come. I entrust the future fate of this city and of this country to the German Volk.

That evening, Hitler's last speech of the election campaign in the hall of the Northwest train station in Vienna was broadcast throughout Germany.²⁰⁷ As he explained in his introductory comments, this address was to parallel two earlier ones, delivered in Königsberg on March 4, 1933,²⁰⁸ and in Cologne on March 28, 1936,²⁰⁹ respectively. At the end of those campaigns, Hitler had also directed one last appeal to the German Volk.

As a matter of fact, Hitler's speech in Vienna turned out to be far worse than those of 1933 and 1936. He was edgy and in the course of the "party narrative" insinuated how much it infuriated him that he had been forced to bide his time for so long before he was allowed to take power. The Führer reveled in sentimental recollections of the ordeal that he and the German Volk had to submit to in the years 1918 through 1933. He grew increasingly bitter as he spoke and finally uttered a statement against which his better judgment ought to have cautioned him;²¹⁰ "I have wasted my best years in this struggle!"

Indeed, Hitler had this sentence deleted from the text of the speech so that it would not be published. Perhaps he himself felt that there was not much to be expected in the future from a man who already had "wasted his best years." The latter part of the speech revealed how much Hitler still thought it necessary to justify his presence in Vienna, as well as the fact that he spoke in this city. Listing five points to that effect, he enumerated the following reasons:

First of all, this land is a German land, and its people are German! Here the Reich once established its Ostmark. The Reich's people moved here and throughout the centuries fulfilled their duties in the Ostmark of the Reich. Not only did they remain German, they became what one might term bearers of the shield for Germany.

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Secondly, this land cannot exist without the Reich for any period of time. What are 84,000 square kilometers today? What are six and a half million people? No one takes notice of them. Here, too, the realization applies that each German tribe by itself can be destroyed easily but once all tribes stand united they are invincible.²¹¹ Reality has proven that this land and these six and a half million people cannot exist in seclusion. This tiny country is incapable of solving the problems of its 300,000 unemployed and hundreds of thousands of dispossessed. And this proves that so small a country is not a viable unit. The greatest evidence yet for the lack of all prerequisites for life lies with the development of birth and mortality statistics. No one can deny that this is the country with the lowest birth rates and the highest mortality rates.

Third, this Volk never wanted to be separated from the Reich. The instant that its mission as leader of the peoples of the Reich was rendered obsolete, the voice of its blood spoke out. After the 1918 collapse, German-Austria desired to return to the Reich immediately. The democratic world prevented the Anschluss of German-Austria. Now the Volk has turned against this world. As the banner of National Socialism rose in Germany, the people here as well began to increasingly look to this symbol. In their hearts, hundreds of thousands pledged their allegiance secretly. Then came the time when this Volk suffered abuse at the hands of a group that could claim neither numerical superiority nor moral supremacy to justify its leading position.

Fourth, all I can say to those still not content: it is my homeland! I fought as a decent German soldier, and once this war was over, I went on a pilgrimage through Germany, and I won this country for me, this country so dear and lovely. When Germany was in despair, I was so proud to be German. I fought and struggled for this Volk, and I won its trust. I have wasted my best years in this struggle! This Reich has become so dear to me. It should come as no surprise that I yearned to integrate my own homeland in this dearest of Reichs.

Fifth, all I have to say to those who still remain untouched: I stand here today because I fancy that I can do better than Herr Schuschnigg!

In the thirteen speeches Hitler delivered in the course of the campaign, he endeavored to make the events in Austria appear as though they had been willed by God himself, thus making his mission appear divinely inspired. He had spoken of a "trial by ordeal" that had come to pass; of the "miracle" of these past few weeks; of "God who had helped"; of "a sign from heaven"; of a "sacred election" which he now demanded of the people; and finally of a "pilgrimage of the nation."

Now that he was speaking in Vienna, he intended to surpass the story of these religious, mystical assertions by claiming that Providence had called upon him to act:

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

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thus enabling him to reintegrate his homeland into the Reich. There is a divine will, and all we are is its instruments.

When Herr Schuschnigg broke his word on March 9, at that very instant I felt that Providence had called upon me. And all that happened in the next three days could only have come about because Providence willed and desired it. In three days the Lord struck them down!²¹² And it was imparted upon me to reintegrate my homeland into the Reich on the very day of its betrayal. [—]

When one day we shall be no more, then the coming generations shall be able to look back with pride upon this day, the day on which a great Volk affirmed the German community. In the past, millions of German men shed their blood for this Reich. How merciful a fate to be allowed to create this Reich today without any suffering!

Now, rise, German Volk, subscribe to it, hold it tightly in your hands! I wish to thank Him who allowed me to return to my homeland so that I could return it to my German Reich! May every German realize the importance of the hour tomorrow, assess it and then bow his head in reverence before the will of the Almighty who has wrought this miracle in all of us within these past few weeks!

After this final appeal, Hitler left Vienna on a special train at 10:00 that evening. He arrived at the Anhalt train station in Berlin at 1:25 the following afternoon. It was April 10, the day of the plebiscite. In the election booth erected at the station, Hitler cast his own vote. The ballot read:²¹³

Are you in agreement with the reunion of Austria with the German Reich as effected on March 13, and do you vote for the list presented by our Führer Adolf Hitler?

When the returns of the plebiscite had come in, its official result showed that of the 49.3 million voters, 48.8 had voted in favor of the proposition, corresponding to 99.08 percent. Naturally, the result of the plebiscite in Austria would have to look even better than that achieved in the Old Reich.

As officially announced, 4.2 million Austrians cast their vote for Hitler, which amounted to a percentage of 99.75, a result similar to that attained in the 1936 Saar plebiscite, in which 99.9 percent of the electorate had supposedly supported Hitler.

As had been the case in the Saar, it was Bürckel once more who reported the Austrian election results to Hitler—albeit from Vienna in this instance. His report contained the following statement: “These 99.75 percent mean: we are Germans, and to the end of time we belong exclusively to Germany and its Führer!” Hitler replied in the following radio address:²¹⁴

April 10, 1938

Gauleiter Bürckel! German-Austrians!

I expected much of my homeland. The results of this plebiscite here as well as throughout the Reich, however, exceed even my greatest expectations.

I am very happy in face of this avowal at long last of German-Austria's true innermost convictions and of the trust placed in me. For this historic affirmation of the reunion of Austria and the Reich affected by the entire German Volk also, after all, signals the complete sanctioning of all my actions. For me, this hour is the proudest in my entire life. I feel compelled to thank, with all my heart, the entire German Volk and, in particular, my own dear homeland.

4

On April 11, Göring celebrated his fifth anniversary as Prussian Minister-President. On this occasion, Hitler sent him the following congratulatory telegram:²¹⁵

Dear Field Marshal Göring,

Five years ago today you entered office as Minister-President of Prussia. With heartfelt gratitude, I honor your loyal cooperation in the rebuilding of Germany. The feats you have accomplished within the past five years in the service of strengthening Germany belong to history. It is my sincere desire that I may continue to count upon your loyal assistance for many years to come.

Yours in old friendship,

Adolf Hitler

At the Chancellery the next day, Hitler received the SA member Hannes Schneeberger, the first man to raise the swastika flag on Grossglockner mountain.²¹⁶ On April 15, Hitler wired a congratulatory note to General von Lüttwitz on the occasion of the latter's sixtieth military service anniversary.²¹⁷

On April 20, Hitler celebrated his forty-ninth birthday in Berlin. At 9:00 a.m., the Ministers and Reichsleiters congratulated him. An hour later, Hitler watched the SA Standarte *Feldherrnhalle*²¹⁸ parade by on Wilhelmstrasse. At 11:00 a.m., there was a military review of greater magnitude conducted on the square in front of the University. At 7:00 p.m., Hitler attended the first showing of Leni Riefenstahl's documentary *Olympiade* in the Ufa cinema at the Zoo. In the Reich Ministry of Propaganda there was a special reception in honor of the occasion, at which Hitler also appeared.²¹⁹

In the Chancellery the next day, Hitler conducted a most important discussion with General Keitel. The topic of their conference was the envisioned military aggression directed against Czechoslovakia. Hitler believed that the time had come to issue precise instructions to prepare for "Case Green."²²⁰ The content of the meeting and the issues on its

agenda have been preserved in the “Summary of the Discussion Führer/General Keitel on April 21, 1938,”²²¹ drawn up by Hitler’s new Wehrmacht Adjutant Schmunt.²²² The verbatim content of these “Basic principles Regarding the Study ‘Case Green’” was the following:

A. Political

(1) Idea of strategic attack out of the blue without cause or possibility of justification is rejected. Reason: hostile world opinion which might lead to serious situation. Such measures only justified for elimination of last enemy on the Continent.

(2) Action after a period of diplomatic discussions which gradually lead to a crisis and to war.

(3) Lightning action based on an incident (for example the murder of the German Minister in the course of an anti-German demonstration).²²³

B. Military conclusions

(1) preparations to be made for political contingencies 2 and 3. Contingency 2 is undesirable because “Green” security measures will have been taken.

(2) The loss of time through transport by rail of the bulk of the divisions—which is unavoidable and must be reduced to a minimum—must not be allowed to divert from lightning attack at the time of action.

(3) “Partial thrusts” toward breaching the defense line at numerous points and in operationally advantageous directions are to be undertaken at once. These thrusts are to be prepared down to the smallest detail (knowledge of the routes, the objectives, composition of the columns according to tasks allotted them).

Simultaneous attack by land and air forces.

The Luftwaffe is to support the individual columns (for instance, dive bombers, sealing off fortification works at the points of penetration; hindering the movement of reserves; destruction of signal communications and thus isolating the garrisons).

(4) The first 4 days of military action are, politically speaking, decisive. In the absence of outstanding military successes, a European crisis is certain to arise. *Faits accomplis* must convince foreign powers of the hopelessness of military intervention; call in allies to the scene (*Teilung der Beute!*—sharing the booty); demoralize “Green.”

Hence, bridging the period between first penetration of enemy’s lines and throwing into action the advancing troops by the determined ruthless advance of a motorized army (for instance through Pi [Pilsen] past Pr [Prague]).

(5) If possible, separation of the transport Movement “Red”²²⁴ from “Green.” A simultaneous deployment of “Red” might cause “Red” to adopt undesirable measures. On the other hand operation “Red” must at all times be ready to come into action.

C. Propaganda

(1) Leaflets for the conduct of the Germans in “Green” territory (*Grünland*).

(2) Leaflets with threats to intimidate the “Greens.”

Schm[undt].

At nearly the same time that Hitler was drawing up these instructions for the military, Konrad Henlein announced in Karlsbad on April 24 that, in accordance with the guidelines he had received on March 28, the Sudeten German Party had drafted an “Eight-Point Program,” which demanded complete autonomy within the Czechoslovakian state.²²⁵ In this way, the conflict here, too, was intensified so that a hostile act at any time could result in the boiling-over of tensions.

In Berlin on April 22, Hitler delivered various addresses on the occasion of the respective receptions of the newly appointed Peruvian Envoy Gildemeister, the Romanian Envoy Djuvara and their Bulgarian colleague Draganov.²²⁶

The next day, Hitler turned his attention back to the situation in Austria. Barely two weeks had passed since that “proudest hour” of his life when 99.75 percent of the Austrians had voted in his favor. Nevertheless, the Führer considered that the time had come to pass a measure that was not in the least to the liking of his adherents in Austria. That April 23, Hitler appointed Gauleiter Bürckel to the decisive post of “Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich.” Up to this point, Bürckel had solely been in charge of the conduct of the plebiscite and the reorganization of the NSDAP in Austria. In his new position, Bürckel commanded the administration of Party and State in Austria and was directly responsible only to Hitler. By the end of Bürckel’s service in this post on May 1, 1939, nothing was to remain of the ancient concept of “Austria.” The federation of the various Austrian Provinces around the central power in Vienna was to cease, and even the name “Austria” was to be eradicated.²²⁷

Hitler’s decree of April 23, 1938 read verbatim:²²⁸

Article 1. As Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich, I appoint Gauleiter Bürckel (Saarpfalz).

Article 2. The Reichskommissar shall ensure the political organization and the administrative, economic, and cultural reintegration of Austria into the German Reich.

Article 3. The Reichskommissar’s official residence shall be in Vienna. He is directly subordinate to me and has to fulfill his task on my instructions until May 1, 1939. On this day, his task shall end.

Article 4. The Reichskommissar is empowered to issue directives to the administrative departments of the German Reich within the Land of Austria, to the authorities of the Land of Austria and the former Austrian Federal States, as well as to the offices of the National Socialist German Labor Party, its

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subdivisions, and connected organizations in the Land of Austria. He supervises the public institutions and corporations in the Land of Austria.

Article 5. The Reich Minister of the interior shall head the implementation of the reunion of Austria with the German Reich and take his measures, in particular with regard to legal questions, in accordance with the Reichskommissar.

The Reich Commissioner (Reichsbeauftragter) for Austria²²⁹ (§ 2, section 2 of the decree to the Law on the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich of March 16, 1938; RGBI. I, p. 249) shall be affiliated with the Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich.

Simultaneously, Hitler addressed the letter below to the Reichsstatthalter in Austria, Seyss-Inquart:²³⁰

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
Berlin W 8, April 23, 1938
Herr Reichsstatthalter,

I have appointed Gauleiter Bürckel as Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich, effective as of this date as detailed in the enclosed copy of today's decree. I remark the following in reference thereto:

The Reichskommissar shall be directly subordinate to me. For the period of one year, during which time the Reunion of Austria with the Reich must be largely accomplished, the Reichskommissar shall function as my intermediary to assist both myself and you in implementing the reintegration of Austria into the Reich in the realm of politics, law, economics, and culture. In particular, it shall be his mission to play a pivotal role in the process of introducing and assimilating Reich law to the Austrian legal system, doing this in cooperation with the central agency for the Reunion of Austria with the Reich under the aegis of the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Further, he shall assist you in investigating and determining for the Reich Government and the Party the extent and timing with which Reich law shall be either introduced to the various Austrian legal realms or Austrian law shall be recast to correspond to Reich law.

As Reichsstatthalter authorized to head the Austrian Land Government, it shall be your task to implement the new law in Austria. When, after a year's time, the reintegration of Austria into the German Reich has essentially been attained, I shall appoint you as a member of the Reich Government. In this capacity, you shall then continue your service to Austria within the Greater German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

Bürckel was not the only new master that Hitler imposed on the Austrians. With Bürckel came a veritable army of political leaders from the Old Reich. The majority of these men were not well educated and had never set foot on Austrian soil; nor did their knowledge of the country and its people extend much beyond hearsay—usually of a pejorative nature.

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Placed in the most influential positions, these political leaders behaved as though they were administering an occupied territory. In addition, they endeavored to instill “German orderliness” and “work ethic” in the “sloppy” Austrians. It took less than half a year for the majority of Austrians to wake from their national euphoria of March to the harsh realities of Hitlerian methods.²³¹ In September, the people were further sobered by the prospect of war with Czechoslovakia.

Routine returned to Berlin as the eventful days of March and April came to a close. Hitler sent the Japanese Emperor a birthday telegram on April 27.²³² On the same day in Munich, the Führer proclaimed a so-called party amnesty in the aftermath of the creation of Greater Germany. Its verbatim content was the following:²³³

1. Within the hierarchy of the Party justice system, there shall be no prosecution for actions perpetrated prior to April 10, 1938, provided that punishment for these acts would not have resulted in expulsion from the Party.

2. To the same extent, cases pending shall be dismissed and sentences shall be remitted if they have not yet been served in their entirety.

3. Restrictions on Party membership for former Freemasons shall be removed, provided the applicants had not served with the Lodge as highdegree members. It shall be immaterial at what time the member left the Freemasons.

4. Instructions on the implementation of this ordinance shall be issued by the Supreme Judge of the Party.

Munich, April 27, 1938

Adolf Hitler

Walter Buch, Supreme Judge of the Party

On April 30, Hitler issued an appeal for donations to the Youth Hostel Association.²³⁴ On May 1, Hitler himself established a “medal in commemoration of March 13, 1938.”²³⁵ At 9:00 a.m. on May Day, Hitler addressed the German youth in the Olympic Stadium. The verbatim content of his speech that day is reproduced below:²³⁶

My Youth! My German Boys and Girls!

You have the great fortune to live in an age of which the German nation shall never have to be ashamed. In your youth you have witnessed the rise of our Volk. Your young hearts were set aglow and became impassioned by the historic events of these last weeks and months which stood under the spell of the reunion of the German Volk. This outward development was, my boys and girls, only the outcome of an inward development in our German Volk reflecting its union. And today we celebrate the day of this union of our Volk!

May 1, 1938

For centuries, our Volk was torn and at odds with itself, and hence it was incapacitated in its outside dealings; it was unhappy, lacking means of defense and a sense of honor. Ever since the victory of the Movement, under the banner of which you stand today, the inner union of the German people has been accomplished. And now Providence allows us to reap the fruits of our labor: Greater Germany! This union did not come about as a matter of coincidence, but rather as the result of the National Socialist Movement's systematic education of our Volk. The Movement has absolved this Volk from its division into a wild agglomeration of parties, classes, confessions, and ranks and has made an entity of it. And this educational process begins at an age where the individual's views are not yet encumbered by prejudice.

Our youth is the building block of our Reich! You are Greater Germany! For it is in you that the German Volksgemeinschaft constitutes itself. At the fore of the Reich there stands a Führer; at the fore of the Reich there stands a Volk; and at the fore of this one Volk stands our German youth!

Seeing you here, my belief in Germany's future becomes boundless and unshakeable! For I know that you will fulfill all our expectations!

So on this May Day, I greet you in our new great Germany! For you are our springtime! Through you shall and must be accomplished what has been fought for by generations throughout the centuries: *Deutschland!*

An hour later at 10:00 a.m., Hitler attended a ceremonial session in the Reich Chamber of Culture at the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg. This year's recipient of the film award was Leni Riefenstahl. The reward for the best book went to a collection of poems entitled *Das Lied der Getreuen* ("Song of the Faithful"), poetry written by anonymous Austrian Hitler Youth boys in the years 1933 through 1937. The award's remuneration was dedicated to the construction of a youth hostel in Austria. At noon, Hitler delivered a speech at the official ceremony in the Lustgarten, where a large crowd had gathered.²³⁷ After a lengthy "party narrative," Hitler declared:

Earlier there were people who declared, "An end to the battle! Never again war!"—while internally they let the battle rage on. I know that motto, "Never again war." It is my own motto as well. It is to that end that I made Germany strong once more and had it stand on its own feet.

However, in order to remain so strong and steadfast, so that no tumult abroad can endanger peace at home, it is necessary to end that fight for all time which otherwise will prevent us from making our strength felt abroad.

Not "never again war" should be our motto, but rather "never again civil war! Never again class struggle! Never again internal fighting and discord!"

I have acted in accordance with these realizations—and you, my Volksgenossen, see the results before you. In a few years, we resolved those problems which were earlier held to defy resolution. So once again we celebrate the first of May and this time it is the occasion of particularly great rejoicing. Six and a half million Germans have joined us within the borders

of our holy Reich. And they, too, are listening at this hour, as far south as the Karawanken, and they are happy that they now form part of our great community as well. Now we must take these new lands of the Reich into our strong community. They are to sense that they have become part of a meaningful order. We take pride in this order and through it we shall master all problems in the shortest time possible. This will bring about the same bloom there that we have already witnessed in the Old Reich.

Hence I appeal to you on this first of May: do not dwell on what might still separate us, but rather be happy about what we have already achieved. Focus on what we already have in common!

No Volk is born within five years' time, and neither is a state constructed in five years' time. However, we have placed the cornerstone and it is this occasion that we now celebrate on this first of May.

Ours was the conviction; ours is the will! What remains to be accomplished will be accomplished if only the advocates of our great ideal are courageous and reliable and unerringly follow the path laid before them! Today we celebrate the day of this ideal, the day of the German Volksgemeinschaft and hence the day of German labor in which we all take such great pride in the cities as well as in the countryside. Once every year we wish to rejoice in that for which this day was created in the first place as the celebration of the German Volksgemeinschaft. *Deutschland—Sieg Heil!*

Hitler's wording in this speech revealed that he wanted "no internal discord" since this would preclude "making our strength felt abroad." In other words, he feared this would endanger his plans to conquer the East. When Hitler repeatedly declared that he did not desire a war, he was referring exclusively to the Western Powers. With them, he honestly did not wish to be at war. Such a conflict, he thought, was not worthwhile. He believed they were headed for disaster anyway because of their "senility"; all he asked of them was to give him carte blanche to conquer Eastern Europe.

The May Day festivities had barely ended when Hitler made final preparations for his journey to Italy. Once again, he named Göring as his acting deputy for the time of his absence. On the afternoon of May 2, a convoy of cars left the Chancellery to see Hitler and his entourage to the special train that awaited them at the Anhalt station. Accompanying Hitler on his way south were a good number of ministers, Reichsleiters and generals, including the following: Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Frank, Lammers, Keitel, Himmler, Bouhler, Amann, Otto Dietrich, Lieutenant General von Stülpnagel, Rear Admiral Schniewind, Sepp Dietrich, and Major General Bodenschatz. Göring gave a short farewell speech at the station, climaxing in the following exclamation: "May the Lord preserve you until you return!" At 4:44 p.m., the special train pulled out of the Berlin station.²³⁸

May 3, 1938

Shortly after 8:00 on the morning of May 3, the Duke of Pistoia, a cousin of the King, welcomed Hitler to Italy on the Italian side of the Brenner Pass. That evening at 8:30, the special train pulled into the Ostia station in Rome. King Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini, and Ciano were present to greet Hitler.

Hitler was wearing his brown uniform and his peaked cap, knee boots and knee breeches. The King, Mussolini and Ciano were clad in uniforms as well. Thereafter, the King and Hitler rode to the Quirinal Palace in the royal carriage. Mussolini had to remain behind since he was not a head of state as Hitler was.

The next day, Hitler received Mussolini at the Quirinal Palace at 10:00 a.m. Thirty minutes later, they placed wreaths on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and at the Pantheon, and thereafter inspected four thousand militiamen. Above the swastika armband on his left sleeve, Hitler wore the insignia of an Honorary Corporal in the Fascist Militia. It consisted of a triangle of cloth with a fascio in its center. The honorary dagger of the Fascist Militia adorned his leather belt. In spite of the known fact that Hitler despised militia units, he was most patient that day, submitting to the ordeal without complaint for the sake of his friendship with Mussolini.

At 11:00 a.m., Hitler and Mussolini laid a wreath at the monument to the dead of the Fascist Movement. This monument was located in a small memorial chapel in the Palazzo Littorio, the headquarters of the Fascist Party. Here Hitler was honored by the Italian Fascists with a gift, a vase dating from the fourth century B.C. with the swastika insignia. At noon, Hitler visited the Palazzo Venezia²³⁹ and presented Mussolini with the following certificate of honor:²⁴⁰

As Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich, I ask Benito Mussolini, the Duce of this Volk, to which the world owes the great inventor and scholar Galileo Galilei, to accept this Zeiss telescope, complete with the entire equipment for an observatory, as a present and as a symbol of reverence and friendship.

At 4:30 p.m., the two dictators attended performances by 50,000 Fascist youths in Centocelle (Campo Roma). These exercises were exclusively of a military and paramilitary nature, conducted by the Young Fascists and the *Avantguardisti*, all of whom were only between fourteen and eighteen years old.

At 6:00 p.m., Hitler addressed 6,500 Germans living abroad who had congregated in the Basilica of Maxentius:²⁴¹

May 4, 1938

Party Comrades! My German Volksgenossen! My youth!

I have been greatly moved by the events of these past hours which I was allowed to experience here. It makes me happy in particular that I may greet you, my German Volksgenossen, here in this most hallowed city of mankind. On this day, I wish to express to you my gratitude for your loyal devotion, devotion you have shown not only to the Reich itself, but above all to the Reich of today. We have created this Reich, and it bears the imprints of our traits of character, traits closely related to those of your host country. In particular, I wish to thank you for your avowal of faith in this new Germany, a faith you have professed so forcefully a few weeks ago. I had expected no less of you. For a citizen of the Reich who has a strong character can be nothing other than a National Socialist!

I usually do not have the opportunity to convey my thanks to the German Reich citizens abroad for their avowal of faith and I am happy to be able to do so at this hour. Many of you have been so fortunate as to return to the Reich from time to time, to see it with your own eyes and to witness the progress made by it. Many of you, however, are not this lucky. They can but look to the Reich from afar, read about it or see it in pictures. However, its spell shall never desert them nor shall the power of the National Socialist Weltanschauung ever set them free. To the contrary, the further away they are from their homeland, the more fervent their dedication to it and the more resounding their avowal of that Weltanschauung which has converted their homeland, once so despised, oppressed, and trod upon, into a Reich of honor and dignity—because of character again!

You who have been so fortunate as to live in this country, you shall find many traits familiar to you so that it is easier for you than for any other group of Germans abroad to comprehend the essence and import of today's Reich. You yourselves live in a state that glorifies those virtues and ideals so dear to us. I have come here to say this to you in few words and to remind you to form a Volksgemeinschaft on a small scale here away from home such as the entire German nation forms at home—a Volksgemeinschaft of mutual aid and support. Rest assured that no matter where a German brings sacrifices to his Volksgenossen, these sacrifices shall be weighed and valued in the same manner and these shall be regarded as sacrifices to the entire Volksgemeinschaft.

You have never forgotten Germany; I know it well! Germany is happy about this and shall never forget you either! We will take care of you and I am happy to be able to say this in a country which makes the administration of such care so easy. We will take care of you because we are convinced that the bonds of this Volksgemeinschaft can never and nowhere be severed! Let us now turn to what fills our hearts at this moment: our dear homeland, our dear German Reich. *Sieg Heil!*

An hour later, Victor Emmanuel III held a banquet at the Quirinal Palace in the honor of Hitler. The Italian King proposed a toast to him, in which he declared among other statements:

May 4, 1938

Führer!

It is to our particular pleasure that we extend our most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you, our highly esteemed guest. Italy greets in your person the head of state of a great friendly nation, the Führer who has restituted to Germany its greatness and the realization of its cultural mission. The enthusiasm, which greeted your passage from the Italian border to Rome and which our capital had afforded your reception upon your arrival here, has allowed you to assess for yourself how deeply rooted are the feelings of friendship for your person and your Fatherland here in Italy.

We acknowledge that the German Volk fully shares these sentiments. Let us express our actively felt best wishes for this Volk, who has made such great contributions to Europe with its culture and its creativity, and whom you will lead onward with a steady hand toward a glorious future.

Hitler replied to the King's address in the following words:²⁴²

Your Majesty!

Please accept my deep-felt gratitude for the heart-warming welcome bestowed upon me. Your Majesty's kind words convey to me the Italian people's great sympathy for our cause which I have already witnessed in the course of my journey throughout Italy and Rome. I am greatly honored by the reception bestowed upon my person. For this was far more than the customary outwardly expression of hospitality: this was a demonstration of the profound bonds between our two peoples, their shared ideals and ambitions. I hence regard myself as most fortunate to function as the ambassador of my own Volk at this moment, a Volk filled with sincere sympathy and deep friendship for Your Majesty and the Italian people. With me, the entire German Volk greatly admires the extraordinary successes which Italy fought for and achieved in all realms of its national life under the wise reign of Your Majesty and under the leadership of its genius of a reorganizer and head of government in the face of a contrary world.

Your Majesty has also spoken of the profound bonds tying the new Italy to the new Germany. The overwhelming welcome given to me in this country is proof that Fascist Italy feels that it has found an earnest and steadfast friend in National Socialist Germany.

This mutual friendship is not only a guarantee for the security of our two peoples; it also remains a guarantor of general peace. It is in this spirit that I raise my glass and toast the health of Your Royal and Imperial Majesty, Her Majesty the Queen and Empress, and Your High Royal House as I toast the prosperity and good fortune of the great Italian nation.

At 10:30 p.m., Hitler's special train left the Termini station for Naples. On the next day, the display of the Italian battleships began off the coast of the city. Hitler attended the naval exercises and the ensuing naval review from aboard the armored ship *Cavour*, accompanied by the Italian King, the Crown Prince, and Mussolini. In the course of the festivities, an attempt was made upon the life of Eva

Braun.²⁴³ As she, along with her traveling companion Frau Dreesen and Hitler's personal physician Dr. Brandt, boarded the ship which had been assigned to them, a crush of people was staged. The assassin, striking with a knife, did not injure Eva Braun but instead stabbed Frau Dreesen in the back. Not severely wounded, she was hauled aboard and, following the naval maneuvers, taken ashore to a hotel. The assassin escaped and the incident was officially ignored. Nevertheless, when he appeared shortly thereafter at the hotel, Hitler appeared to be very agitated.

That afternoon, an enormous crowd of people hailed the German guests at a mass rally on the Piazza del Plebiscito. That evening, the Italian heir to the throne, Crown Prince Umberto, gave a banquet in Hitler's honor at the Royal Palace in Naples. The reception was followed by a performance of *Aida* at the Teatro San Carlo.

From Naples, the train returned to Rome. At 10:00 a.m. on May 6, a great military review took place along the Via dei Trionfi. Here the Italian troops displayed to Hitler their newly acquired "Passo Romano," the Italian version of the German goose step. That afternoon, Mussolini accompanied Hitler to the Augustus Exhibition and various other sights. At 5:40 p.m., Prince Colonna, the Governor of Rome, held a reception in their honor at the Capitoline Palace. That evening, they attended performances of the *Dopolavoro* organization in the park of the Villa Borghese and a concert given on the Piazza di Siena.

On the evening of May 7, Mussolini gave a dinner in the honor of Hitler at the Palazzo Venezia, where he delivered an address from which the following is excerpted:

The hundred years that have passed in history since Germany and Italy stood up to lay claim to their right to national unity, for which they fought revolutions with weapons in hand, are proof of the parallel nature of their principles and of the solidarity with these interests.

In the same faith and with the same determination, Italy and Germany have battled for a foundation of their unity; they have labored to render it strong and secure; they have freed themselves from destructive ideologies in recent times in order to build up this new people's regime, which is the mark of this century. Down this preordained path, our two people march side by side, united in their loyal ambition and with the strong confidence that stems from the knowledge of having passed the tests of these years of peace and agreement between both nations. Fascist Italy knows only one moral code with regard to friendship, the one which I pronounced before the German Volk assembled on the Berlin Maifeld. The cooperation between National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy has abided by this law, abides by it at present, and will abide by it in the future.

May 7, 1938

Führer! Vividly I recall the wonderful picture of work, peace, and strength which presented itself to my eyes while I visited your country last autumn. I have not forgotten this nation which you have restored on the basis of the virtues of discipline, courage, and tenacity which epitomize a great Volk. I have not forgotten, nor will I forget the reception bestowed upon me by you, the authorities and the Volk. The most fervent wishes I and Fascist Italy extend to the mighty project of reconstruction which you have undertaken.

Hitler replied to Mussolini's address as follows:²⁴⁴

Duce!

Deeply moved by the heart-warming words of welcome spoken by you, I thank you for the welcome bestowed upon me in the name of the Italian Government and the Italian people. I am happy to be here in Rome, the city in which witnesses to a past of unequaled greatness ally themselves naturally with the mighty tokens of the young Fascist Italy. Ever since I stepped upon Italian soil, I sensed a wave of friendship and sympathy everywhere, and it touched me deeply. It was the same inner movement which the German Volk expressed last autumn as it greeted your person as the creator of Fascist Italy, as the founder of a new empire and at the same time as a great friend of Germany. The National Socialist Movement and the Fascist Revolution have created two new powerful states, states which stand fast as structures of order and healthy progress in a world of civil unrest and dissolution. Germany and Italy have a common interest and are deeply intertwined through their shared Weltanschauung. Thereby a block of one hundred and twenty million people was created in Europe. These people are determined to ensure recognition of their eternal vital rights and to assert themselves against any powers which may attempt to stand in the way of their natural evolution.

A heartfelt friendship between our two peoples grew out of the struggle in which Germany and Italy were forced to stand together in defense against a world which neither understood nor accepted them. The developments in these past few years have proven the steadfastness of this friendship. These developments also proved to the world that one must account for the inalienable vital rights of great nations in one way or another. It is hence only natural that, in permanent cooperation, both our peoples should expand and intensify the friendship which has proven itself time and time again in the past years in the future as well.

Duce! Last autumn on the Maifeld in Berlin, you proclaimed an ethical maxim which is holy in your eyes and in the eyes of Fascist Italy, namely, "To speak openly and honestly and, if one has a friend, to march with him to the end." In the name of National Socialist Germany, I, too, profess allegiance to this maxim. Today I can respond to you in the following manner: to the best of our knowledge, Romans and Germans first encountered each other two millenniums ago. Standing upon these hallowed grounds testifying to the great history of mankind, I feel it to be a great tragedy that Providence failed to draw clear lines of division between these two highly talented and worthy races. Unspeakable suffering throughout many generations was the consequence. Today, nearly 2,000 years later, thanks to the historic efforts of you,

May 7, 1938

Benito Mussolini, the ancient Roman state once more emerges from a vaguely remembered past and is restored to new life. And to your north, numerous tribes forged a new Germanic Reich.

In light of experiences made during two millenniums, both of us acknowledge, now that we have become immediate neighbors, that border which Fate and history have so obviously drawn to separate Germany and Italy. This frontier will not only serve to delineate the Lebensraum of Italy and Germany, guaranteeing peaceful future cooperation, but will also serve as a bridge for mutual assistance and support. It is my unshakeable will which I bequeath upon the German Volk that the border drawn by nature in the Alps be recognized as eternal and inviolable. I am certain that this will ensure for both Rome and Germania a prosperous and great future.

Duce! Just as you and your people stood fast in your friendship to Germany in those crucial days, my people and I shall prove our friendship to Italy in difficult times.

The magnificent impressions I have already gathered looking at the powerful youth, the willingness to work and the proud spirit of the new Italy, shall remain with me forever engraved in my memory. Unforgettable is the sight of your soldiers adorned by recent fame, your black shirts, your fleet, and the verve of your great Air Force. In my eyes these ascertain that your magnificent reconstruction work shall be crowned by success in the future as well, accompanied by my best wishes. Hence I raise my glass to toast your health, the prosperity and greatness of the Italian people, and our unwavering friendship.

On May 8, Hitler was present for maneuvers of the Italian Air Force close to Civitavecchia. Subsequently, he was a guest of the King at the Villa Rospigliosi outside of Santa Marinella. Hitler also visited the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico, who happened to be in Rome at the time. At night, there was a huge fireworks display followed by a dinner with Mussolini at the Villa Madama.

The next day, Victor Emmanuel III accompanied his guest to the Termini station, from where Hitler's special train left at 9:33 a.m. Mussolini followed shortly thereafter. The two dictators met at 2:00 in the afternoon in Florence and proceeded together to the Palazzo Pitti, Thereupon followed the usual sight-seeing, placing of wreaths, and other ceremonies. At 7:45 p.m., Mussolini held a banquet at the Palazzo Riccardi, at which Hitler congratulated him on the second anniversary of the foundation of the Italian-Abyssinian Empire. Afterwards, both statesmen attended a performance of Verdi's *Simone Boccanegra* in the City Theater. Around midnight, Hitler bid Mussolini farewell and departed.

This was the end of the exigencies of protocol of Hitler's visit to Italy. The tightly packed itinerary left little time for talks on political

matters. Undoubtedly the Italians would have preferred the visit to have taken place prior to the Anschluss of Austria. Now Germany was the decidedly mightier party to the Axis agreement. Without a doubt, this was part of the reason why there had been little mention of the events in Austria in the official speeches in Italy.

Another embarrassing aspect of the visit had been Hitler's snubbing of the Vatican. Even statesmen whose countries entertained no official relations with the Holy See usually did not fail to pay their respects to the Pope, since he was a temporal head of state as well. Germany not only maintained diplomatic relations with the Vatican, but had even concluded a concordat with it. Pius XI had pursued a very accommodating course with the Third Reich, and Hitler exchanged telegrams with him each New Year's Day. Contrary to Napoleon, however, Hitler intended to ignore the Holy Father during his stay. This decision caused much embarrassment to his hosts, and Pius XI left Rome for the duration of Hitler's visit.

Hitler had been deeply affected by his stay in Rome and Florence. For a long time, he would relish the architectural details he had observed in these cities.²⁴⁵ However, he had been far less favorably impressed by the fact that Mussolini was not always in the limelight and at times had to leave the floor to the King. It was particularly annoying to Hitler that Mussolini had to, on occasion, defer to the King. Later Hitler would, most incorrectly, claim that the fall of Mussolini had been caused by intrigues of the Italian royal family.²⁴⁶

Nonetheless, while crossing the Italian-German border on May 10, Hitler sent the following telegram to Victor Emmanuel III to thank him for his hospitality:²⁴⁷

To his Majesty the King and Emperor, Rome

As I depart Italy, I feel compelled once again to express my deep gratitude to Your Majesty and Her Majesty the Queen and Empress for the hospitality bestowed Upon me.

I shall always recall the unforgettable and heartwarming reception I was given by the Fascist Volk and the marvelous displays by the Italian Armed Forces, the latter defying all words of praise.

The days I spent at the sites which testify to the most honorable past and its proud, self-confident present shall rank among the most precious of my lifetime recollections.

In the spirit of the strengthened friendship of Italy and Germany, I would like to ask Your Majesty to accept my best wishes for the welfare and future happiness of Yourself, the Queen and Empress, and of the Italian people.

Adolf Hitler

May 10, 1938

Both Mussolini and the Italian Crown Prince Umberto were honored by the receipt of telegrams, in which Hitler expressed his gratitude to them. The respective verbatim contents of the telegrams were the following:²⁴⁸

To his Excellency the Duce, Benito Mussolini, Rome

The impressions gathered during the days which I was allowed to spend at your side in your magnificent country are ineradicably imprinted in my memory. I greatly admire your colossal achievements in erecting the empire.

I saw the reflection of Italy's magnificence, a country you refashioned in the spirit of Fascism, in its Armed Forces' awareness of its own strength. I observed the stupendous attainments of your Fascist associations.

Foremost, however, these days have afforded me the opportunity to become acquainted with your Volk, Duce. I see its youth as the guarantor of Italy's future greatness. The ideological kinship between Fascism and the National Socialist Movement assures that the loyal comradeship which binds us both shall forever remain in the heritage of our peoples. Please let me express once again my deep gratitude and greetings in parting.

Adolf Hitler

To his Royal Highness, the Prince of Piedmont, Naples

Upon my return to Germany, I would like to ask Your Royal Highness and Her Royal Highness, the Crown Princess, to accept my gratitude for the hospitality extended to me.

Adolf Hitler

That same day, Hitler granted an interview to a member of the Italian Agenzia Steffani on the topic of his stay in Italy.²⁴⁹

The Führer emphasized the sincere friendship and sympathy the Italian Volk had extended to him throughout the country. He stated that this in particular had touched him deeply. In addition, he had much praise for the excellent organization and the appearance of strength conveyed by army, navy, and air force. He mentioned the deep impression that the city of Rome had made upon him and expressed his regret that there had been little time at his disposal to see the entirety of magnificent monuments in the city.

In warm words, the Führer finally expressed his joy at the mutual understanding between both peoples, uniting National Socialism and Fascism. A like friendship could never be created artificially.

Hitler's special train returned to the Berlin Lehrte station at 10:45 p.m. on May 11. Throngs of people stood to both sides of the street as Hitler's car made its way back to the Chancellery. A directive to the members of the Wehrmacht, issued immediately upon his return,²⁵⁰ constituted Hitler's first administrative step to forcibly institute the "German salute" (i.e. right arm raised and extended in greeting) with

the armed forces, when greeting their Führer. Evidently, Hitler had been greatly annoyed by the fact that in the course of his travels in Italy, German officers had consistently saluted in the usual military fashion.²⁵¹

Later that day, Hitler wired to the British King his condolences for the tragic mining accident at the Markham mine close to Chesterfield.²⁵² Subsequently, Hitler spent his time at the Obersalzberg to recover from the strenuous trip. Since he claimed to be “on duty constantly,”²⁵³ he used the time he allotted himself for recuperation to contemplate the pending military move against Czechoslovakia. On May 20, he drafted a new ordinance pertaining to “Case Green.” The instructions began with the following statement:²⁵⁴

In the absence of a provocation, it is not my intention to crush Czechoslovakia militarily in the immediate future lest an unavoidable development in Czechoslovakia’s domestic political situation necessitates this.

This addition, in effect, annulled the earlier announcement and indicated the distinct possibility of a strike in the near future, since every day could bring about the “unavoidable development” which Hitler had mentioned in the ordinance as a possible cause for a move at his personal discretion.

On May 22, Hitler signed the following decree pertaining to the commemoration of Richard Wagner’s birthday:²⁵⁵

On the 125th birthday of Richard Wagner, I decree the establishment of the Richard Wagner Research Institute in Bayreuth. It shall serve the study of his life and works.

On the same day at 11:00 a.m., Hitler attended the opening ceremonies for work on the subway at the Goetheplatz. In 1936, Hitler had claimed to build such subway systems “just in passing.”²⁵⁶ He was angered by the accomplishments that Moscow had achieved in the construction of its new subway system—which, much to his displeasure, had been praised by newspapers worldwide. Nonetheless, it had already taken him quite some time to see his project in Munich commence.²⁵⁷ Not a single kilometer of the planned subway system was ever completed, since the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 precluded construction work. For the entire duration of the war, a huge ditch in Lindwurmstrasse obstructed traffic.

After the Third Reich had met its end, the ditch was filled in without much ado. On May 22, 1938, however, Hitler announced boastfully: “There must not be a problem which we cannot resolve ourselves!”

Absolutely nothing did he want “to leave up to the children.” The verbatim content of the speech is reproduced below:²⁵⁸

Within the past five years, a series of construction projects has been undertaken in Munich and now that some of these projects have already been completed, on this day we commence a new project. I am certain it is the greatest yet for the expansion and beautification of this city.

The task which we have resolved to undertake is one that has been around for generations. Already prior to the War, people were aware that Munich’s railroad facilities were not only disgraceful but also could not keep up to the demands of technological advance. However, there was a shortage of power to arrive at a true solution for the problem. At the time, this was due to the disintegration of the Reich and to the eternal bickering in the parliaments of the Länder.

The question of an underground for Munich was already on the table in times of peace.²⁵⁹ Following the War, the issue was raised again, and a superficial plan was drawn up. In order to preserve the old Munich and the Munich of the times of King Louis I, it is necessary to arrive at a solution which keeps at least part of the traffic off the streets. Therefore, there is only one possible way to go, the way under the earth.

As soon as the amount of traffic has doubled or tripled, the streets in the inner part of the city will no longer suffice to handle this massive flow of traffic. However, the flow of traffic will not only triple or quadruple but, let me assure you, it will increase by a factor of six or eight. Today it is our obligation to anticipate this development and its consequences instead of waiting until a catastrophe occurs and it will have become impossible to master the problem. The men before us did not have the force of character to take this realization seriously and to implement the measures necessary for its resolution. However, today, the maxim of the National Socialist Movement applies to this issue as well: never to capitulate in face of difficulties!

Acknowledging the exponential growth of the flow of traffic demands us to take timely precautions today that shall allow us to smoothly channel the flow of traffic in the future. Here this shall be done in an uncommonly generous fashion.

At this point, I would like to thank the gentlemen of the Reichsbahn, and especially its brilliant chief Dr. Dorpmüller, for not broaching this problem with half-hearted attempts at resolution, but rather seeking a real solution for a real problem and ensuring its implementation.

Therefore, the city receives an exemplary net of suburban fast trains linking the surrounding areas with the center. In a few years, it will be possible to remove the streetcars from the city center and hence to make the streets calmer than is the case today. I would like to point out right away that, of course, some streets will be tumultuous in the next few years. Other big cities have had to go through this, too! Wherever there are subways, there is noise for an initial period. However, once construction is complete, the noise will disappear, and you will not hear a thing. In this or that street, where the underground will be built, there will be some noise for about a year. But one

has to take that upon oneself to have peace for the next five hundred or thousand years. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the humor of our Munich people will help them over the initial period.

Besides that, we experienced something similar when we laid the foundation for the Haus der Deutschen Kunst and 1,600 cement pillars had to be driven into the earth. At the time, it was as noisy there as it will be noisy here in a moment. Some may have shaken their heads back then, and certainly there were some particularly annoyed by the commotion, but I believe that there is not one man among Munich's citizens today who is not proud of his Haus der Deutschen Kunst.

We have now determined to find a generous solution for the traffic problems of the city of Munich. And you should know me well enough by now: whatever we begin, we will finish.

At the latest in five or six years, this task will be accomplished. Munich then will call an exemplary rapid mass transportation system its own as well as enormous railroad constructions surrounding the great new central railroad station. The same thing will happen in Berlin. I hope that both cities will enter into a noble competition of the kind where each attempts to outdo the other in realizing the necessity of the problems posed. The resolution of the traffic problems is the first step toward the resolution of other major problems facing us in Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg.

The second reason is the following: up to now it has been customary for everyone in Germany to build how and where he liked. This caused the disharmony in the overall design of German cities. Do you think a Ludwigstrasse would ever have been constructed had it been up to the citizens and other institutions of Munich? Great architectural solutions can only come about through a central plan, and this is the way it will be once again today.

All architectural projects, be it those of the Reich, of the Länder or communities, of insurance companies or private buildings, will be placed under one single central planning authority. This will be done in due consideration of aesthetic conditions and exigencies, of the needs of the cities and of traffic flow. And this is how it will be done in this city.

In addition, there will be a plan to secure those culturally important buildings which are essential in defining Munich's character as a city of the arts. Here, too, the maxim applies: idleness rusts the mind. When you review the new projects, you must admit efforts are being made constantly to improve the physical appearance of the city.

Thirdly, we wish to resolve these problems in the spirit of our times, a spirit of concern for the future of our German Volk. I desire that these construction projects we are undertaking today will be considered magnificent for centuries to come. A few statistics reveal that our ancestors also shared these concerns for magnificence: when the boulevard 'Unter den Linden' was built in the 17th century, Berlin had less than 40,000 inhabitants. And when the Ludwigstrasse was built, Munich had scarcely 70,000 inhabitants. Today Munich has a population of more than 800,000 and Berlin has more than 4,500,000. Nobody shall dare to come up to me to say that the new streets we are building are too wide.

The tasks we have to solve today simply cannot be of too grandiose a nature. As a National Socialist I have from the very first day divorced myself from the bourgeois and sluggish attitude of, "Yes, this street has to be constructed, but we shall leave that to our children." I have always followed the one maxim that says: there is no such thing as a problem requiring resolution which we do not resolve ourselves.

In just a few years' time, a new Berlin will have become a metropolis synonymous with the German Reich and its leadership, and a new Hamburg a metropolis synonymous with German trade. A new Nuremberg will come into being, symbolizing the festive spirit of the National Socialist Movement. A new Munich will come into being as the great city of German art and as the capital of our Party, of the National Socialist Uprising.

I have taken great care to choose four cities at once so that no one can claim receiving special treatment. No, everyone has to say to himself: if the others can bear it, so can we. Whoever feels himself unfairly burdened by the constant noise of piledrivers or the like, to him all I can say is: "My dear friend, it would sound entirely different if you had to stand next to it or had to work down there. If thousands of German workers can bear it, so can you!" It will take five years, perhaps six, and no more than one year per street, and then the great feat shall be accomplished, a feat of which generations to come will be proud and which will place the great creations in our great and beautiful city in an even more favorable light.

Now as we begin this enormous work, we realize time and again that all this is only possible because the concentrated force of seventy-five million people stands behind it. It is not Berlin building Berlin, not Hamburg building Hamburg, not Munich building Munich, not Nuremberg building Nuremberg, but rather Germany building its cities—its beautiful, proud, and magnificent cities!

And that is why once again our thoughts turn to our Germany to which we loyally pledge our life and soul. In this spirit, let us begin our work!

5

After Hitler had officially commenced the construction of the subway system in Munich, he returned to the Obersalzberg. There he was briefed by Henlein on the incidents that had taken place over the weekend in Czechoslovakia. Somehow, London and Prague had gotten wind of Hitler's preparations for an assault upon Czechoslovakia. The rumors had caused a veritable psychosis in Prague on May 20 and 21. The government, or more precisely President Beneš, had ordered the partial mobilization of troops. In the regions along the German-Czechoslovakian border, people were becoming increasingly nervous. Close to the town of Eger, two Sudeten German motorcyclists had been shot at by the state police, leaving one dead and the other seriously injured. A special train was being prepared to evacuate British diplomatic personnel from Prague. Moreover, the British Ambassador in Berlin inquired at General Keitel's office as to the extent and type of the German military measures. And all this had occurred while not a single German soldier had yet been mobilized and while the situation along the German side of the border was completely normal.

For Hitler, this news was welcome. Such a development was precisely what he had been waiting for! Now he could deal his hand as he pleased. He played the offended wrongly accused, whose feelings had been hurt. He termed the partial mobilization of troops by Beneš as an "unbearable provocation for the German Reich,"²⁶⁰ which could be made up for only by severely punishing the offender, or rather the Czechoslovakian state. He intended to do this much in the manner the Austro-Hungarian Empire had employed to "discipline" Serbia for the assassination in Sarajevo in 1914, by declaring war upon the country. On May 28, therefore, Hitler called for a conference of the generals in Berlin, at which he would announce the military ramifications of his decisions.

Beforehand, however, Hitler had to attend the placing of the cornerstone at the new Volkswagen factory in Fallersleben on May 26. On this occasion, he announced that the new Volkswagen car was to be christened “KdF car.” In addition, he declared: “I hate the word ‘impossible.’ It has at all times been the distinguishing mark of the coward who dared not to realize great ideas.” Hitler’s speech on the occasion of the dedication of the new Volkswagen factory²⁶¹ had the following verbatim content:²⁶²

As the National Socialist Movement came to power in 1933, it seemed to me that this area was particularly well suited to open the campaign against unemployment: the problem of motorization! Here the German Volk was the most in arrears. Not only by comparison to production figures in America, but also in comparison to those of other European countries, the production of automobiles in Germany had remained at a ludicrously low level: barely forty-six thousand cars a year! This did not correspond in the least to the motorization needs of the German Volk. It is only logical therefore that, in a time when seven million unemployed weighed down our life, there would have to be radical and immediate change in this area.

The first step toward motorization was a divorce from those precepts which claimed that a car was a luxury. Of course, this is true in a country where there are no more than two, three or four hundred thousand cars. However, the German Volk does not need two or three hundred thousand cars, it needs six or seven million! The crucial point is to adjust the costs for buying and maintaining this means of transportation—the most modern there is—to the income level of the Volk.

At the time, I was told, “This is impossible!” My only reply to this is, “What is possible in other countries, is also possible in Germany.” I hate that word “impossible” since it has always been the mark of people not daring enough to make and to implement great decisions.

The automobile must become the means of transportation for the Volk! Since this ambition could not be realized given the price range of automobiles to date, I had already resolved, even prior to our takeover of the government, to use the precise moment in which we rose to power to push for production of a car at a price which would make it accessible to the broad masses. Only then would the automobile cease to be a distinction of class.

There was yet another reason why I looked to motorization in particular. Given the limits imposed upon the production of foodstuffs in a country with 140 persons per square kilometer, a catastrophe would ensue if the German Volk invested its earnings in foodstuffs only. Therefore it is necessary to divert the buying power of the German Volk in other directions.

In former times, our political economists never bothered themselves with such questions. We, however, have to face the facts and solve the problems which result from them. The Volkswagen forms part of a series of measures aimed at channeling the buying power of the German Volk toward other products of equal value. Every year hundreds of thousands of marks will be

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invested in pursuit of this goal. These needs can be satisfied based on our work alone, on our own raw materials, our ores and our coal, and so on. Few today realize the true significance of this project and its consequences. The Volkswagen will not enter into competition with the cars produced by the automobile industry to date. After all, a man who buys this car and not a Mercedes does not do so simply because he might be an opponent of the Daimler factory, but because he cannot afford to buy a Mercedes.

What forces the buyer to turn to cheaper goods are simple and level-headed considerations. Whoever can afford the more expensive good will buy it anyway! For the broad masses, however, this is not possible! It is for these broad masses that this car has been designed. It is to correspond to their need for transportation, and it is in this context that it is to bring enjoyment to the people.

Hence I believe there is only one name that can be given to this car, a name I shall give to it on this very evening. It shall bear the name of that organization which strives to instill both joy and strength in the masses. The name shall be: *KdF-Wagen!*

As we build this greatest of Germany's automobile factories, we shall also build an exemplary German worker settlement. It shall also serve as a prototype for the future of social housing projects and city design. We wish to demonstrate how National Socialism sees, approaches, and resolves such problems.

It is at this point that I wish to thank those men who deserve recognition for their efforts in planning and hence in implementing this project; in particular to a man from the automobile industry who has labored to represent and implement my views and who has loyally stood by me in these past years: our old Party Comrade Jakob Werlin. And further let me thank those men who shall join forces with him in the practical implementation of this project: our great idealist Party Comrade Robert Ley, the brilliant engineer Porsche and finally Dr. Lafferentz.²⁶³ Those are the men to whom we will owe, in a large part, the realization of this enormous project! Hence I proceed to lay the cornerstone for this factory which, I am certain, shall become a symbol of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft!

After the speech, Hitler took a seat in a Volkswagen convertible and had himself chauffeured for an honorary ride.

On May 28, Hitler presided over the announced meeting of the generals. Among the military men present were: Göring, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Raeder, Chief of Staff Beck, as well as Ribbentrop and Neurath. Given the "German thoroughness" with which even touchy occasions and secret meetings were recorded during the Third Reich, all the proceedings of this conference are available in notations.²⁶⁴ It is, however, not necessary to resort to these notes. On September 12, Hitler would announce in public²⁶⁵ the measures decided upon on this May 28.

You will understand, my Party Comrades, that a great power cannot tolerate such a base incursion [the partial mobilization of Czechoslovakian troops on May 20/21] a second time. As a consequence, I have taken the necessary precautions. I am a National Socialist and as such I am accustomed to strike back at any attacker. Moreover, I know only too well that leniency will not succeed in appeasing, but will merely encourage the arrogance of so irreconcilable an adversary as the Czechs.

Let the fate of the Old German Reich be a warning to us. Its love for peace drove it to the brink of self-destruction. Nonetheless, the Old Reich could not prevent the war in the end. In due consideration thereof, I took steps on May 28 which were very difficult:

First, I ordered a far-reaching intensification and the immediate implementation and execution of the reinforcements announced for Army and Luftwaffe. Second, I ordered the immediate expansion of our fortifications to the West. I can assure you that ever since May 28, the construction of one of the most gigantic fortresses of all time has been underway there.

To this end, I entrusted Dr. Todt, the Generalinspekteur for road construction in Germany, with a new commission. Within the framework of the projects undertaken by the fortress construction inspectorate, he has achieved one of the greatest accomplishments of all time, thanks to his extraordinary organizational talents. [—]

I have made this greatest effort of all time in the service of peace. Under no circumstances, however, am I willing to quietly stand by and observe from afar the continued oppression of German Volksgenossen in Czechoslovakia.

On January 30, 1939,²⁶⁶ in a speech before the Reichstag, Hitler again referred to the conference of May 28 and openly declared:

Because of this unbearable provocation [the partial mobilization in Czechoslovakia on May 20/21], which was exacerbated by the truly infamous persecution and terrorization of our Germans there, I have decided to resolve the Sudeten German question in a radical manner and to resolve it once and for all.

On May 28, I issued orders:

- a) for the preparation of a military intervention against this state on October 2,
- b) for the intensification and expansion of our fortified line of defense to the West.

For the remainder of the confrontation with Herr Beneš and for the defense of the Reich against any attempts to influence or threaten it, there was a plan for the immediate mobilization of ninety-six divisions, to be reinforced if necessary by a great number of additional units within a short time period. The developments during the summer months and the situation of the Germans in Czechoslovakia proved these precautions to have been appropriate.

As Hitler openly admitted, he had envisioned October 2, 1938, as the date on which to initiate military action against Czechoslovakia.

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Judged in light of military considerations.²⁶⁷ October was the last month in which to launch a campaign before winter. Hitler was convinced that the Western Powers would not intervene. At the sight of the reinforced line of fortification in the West (*Westwall*), supposedly “the mightiest of all time,” they would soon lose their appetite for such a venture, provided such an intent still lurked somewhere in the recesses of English or French minds.

Based on the results of the conference on May 28, Hitler signed new instructions to proceed with “Operation Green.”²⁶⁸

Berlin May 30, 1938

OKW No. 42/38. g. Kdos. Chefsache (Top Secret, Military) L I

By order of the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, part 2, section II of the directive on the combined preparations for war of the Wehrmacht of June 24, 1937 (OKW No. 55/37, Top Secret, Mil. L I a) / (War on Two Fronts With Main Effort in the Southeast, Strategic Concentration “Green”) is to be replaced by the attached version. Its execution must be assured by October 1, 1938, at the latest.

Alterations of the other parts of the directive are to be expected during the next few weeks.

Keitel
Chief of the OKW

Appendix

II. War on Two Fronts With Main Effort in Southeast (Strategic Concentration “Green”)

1) Political Assumptions

It is my unalterable decision to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future. It is the business of the political leadership to await or bring about the suitable moment from a political and military point of view.

An unavoidable development of events within Czechoslovakia, or other political events in Europe providing a suddenly favorable opportunity which may never recur, may cause me to take early action.

The proper choice and determined exploitation of a favorable moment is the surest guarantee of success. To this end preparations are to be made immediately.

2) Political Possibilities for Commencing the Operation

The following are necessary prerequisites for the intended attack:

- a) A convenient apparent excuse and, with it,
- b) Adequate political justification,
- c) Action not expected by the enemy which will find him in the least possible state of readiness.

Most favorable from a military as well as a political point of view would be lightning action as the result of an incident which would subject Germany

to unbearable provocation, and which, in the eyes of at least a part of the world opinion, affords the moral justification for military measures.

Moreover, any period of diplomatic tension prior to war must be terminated by sudden action on our part, unexpected in both timing and extent, before the enemy is so far advanced in his state of military readiness that he cannot be overtaken.

3) Conclusions for the Preparation of Operation "Green"

a) For the military operations it is essential to make the fullest use of the surprise element as the most important factor contributing to victory, by means of appropriate preparatory measures, already in peacetime, and an unexpected swiftness of action.

Thus it is essential to create a situation within the first two or three days which demonstrates to enemy states which wish to intervene the hopelessness of the Czech military position, and also provides an incentive to those states which have territorial claims upon Czechoslovakia to join in immediately against her. In this case the intervention of Hungary and Poland against Czechoslovakia can be expected, particular if France, as a result of Italy's unequivocal attitude on our side, fears, or at least hesitates, to unleash a European war by intervening against Germany. In all probability attempts by Russia to give Czechoslovakia military support, particularly with her air force, are to be expected.

If concrete successes are not achieved in the first few days by land operations, a European crisis will certainly arise. Realization of this ought to give commanders of all ranks an incentive to resolute and hold action.

b) Propaganda warfare must on the one hand intimidate the Czechs by means of threats and wear down their power of resistance; and on the other hand it must give the national racial groups indications as to how support our military operations and influence the neutrals in our favor. Further instructions and determination of the appropriate moment are reserved to me.

4) Tasks of the Wehrmacht

Wehrmacht preparations are to be carried out on the following principles:

a) The whole weight of all forces must be employed against Czechoslovakia.

b) In the West, a minimum strength is to be provided as cover for our rear, as may become necessary; the other frontiers in the East against Poland and Lithuania are only to be held defensively; the southern frontier remains under observation.

c) The army formations capable of rapid employment must force the frontier fortifications with speed and energy, and must break very boldly into Czechoslovakia in the certainty that the bulk of the mobile army will be brought up with all possible speed.

Preparations for this are to be made and timed in such a way that the army formations most capable of rapid movement cross the frontier at the appointed time simultaneously with the penetration by the Luftwaffe, before the enemy can become aware of our mobilization. To this end a timetable is to be drawn by the Army and Luftwaffe in conjunction with the OKW and submitted to me for approval.

5) Tasks for the Services of the Wehrmacht

a) Army

The basic principle of surprise attack on Czechoslovakia must not be endangered by the time unavoidably needed for transportation the bulk of the field army by rail, nor must the more rapid deployment of the Luftwaffe fail to be exploited.

The first task for the Army is therefore to employ as many assault columns as possible simultaneously with the attack by the Luftwaffe. These assault columns organized in conformity with their tasks, must be composed of troops which can be rapidly employed because of their proximity to the frontier, their motorization, and their special measures of readiness.

It must be the purpose of these thrusts to break into the Czech fortified lines at numerous points and in a strategically favorable direction, in order to penetrate them or to take them from the rear. For success, cooperation with the Sudeten German frontier population, with deserters from the Czechoslovak Army, with parachutists or airborne troops, and with units of the sabotage service is our importance.

The bulk of the Army has the task of frustrating the Czech defense plan, preventing a withdrawal by the Czech Army into Slovakia, forcing it to battle and defeating it, and swiftly occupying Bohemia and Moravia. To this end a thrust into the heart of Czechoslovakia must be made with the strongest possible mechanized and armored units, exploiting the first successes of the assault columns and the effect of the Luftwaffe's action.

The rear cover provided for the West must be limited in quantity and quality in accordance with the existing state of the fortifications.

Whether the formations assigned for this purpose will be at once transferred to the western frontier, or be held back for the time being, will be decided by my special order.

Preparations must, however, be made to enable security detachments to be brought up to the western frontier, even during the strategic concentration "Green." Independently of this, a first security garrison must be improvised from the engineers and formations of the Labor Corps employed at the time on the construction of fortifications.

The remaining frontiers, as well as East Prussia, are only to be weakly guarded. According to the political situation, however, the transport of a part or the bulk of the active forces of East Prussia by sea to the Reich must be envisaged,

b) Luftwaffe

While leaving a minimum force for a defensive role in the West, the main strength of the Luftwaffe is to be employed for a surprise attack against Czechoslovakia. The frontier is to be crossed by aircraft at the same time as it is crossed by the first units of the Army (see No. 5 a). The most important task of the Luftwaffe is the destruction of the Czech Air Striking Force and its supply bases in the shortest space of time, to prevent its employment and, should the case arise, that of the Russian and French Air Forces, against the German Army during its deployment and invasion and against the German *Lebensraum*.

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The paralyzing of mobilization, of the conduct of civil affairs and the direction of the armed forces, as well as delaying the development of the Czech Army by attacks on its communication system and on centers of mobilization and government, will also be of vital importance for the initial success of the Army. Where in the frontier region stronger Czech Army formations or the depth of the defense systems may render a speedy and successful break-through of the German land attack doubtful, the employment of adequate air formations must be ensured.

As far as the course of operations at all permits, Czechoslovak industrial establishments are to be spared.

Reprisal attacks upon the population are subject to my approval.

Main centers for anti-aircraft defense are to be organized in Berlin, the industrial region of Central Germany, and the Ruhr district, and are to be gradually prepared from now in an inconspicuous fashion.

c) Navy

The Navy will take part in the operations of the Army by the employment of the Danube flotilla. For this purpose the flotilla is placed under the command of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

As regards the conduct of naval warfare, at first only such measures are to be taken as seem necessary for securing the North Sea and the Baltic against a surprise intervention by the other states in the conflict. These measures are to be limited to the absolute essentials. Their concealment must be ensured. In this it is of decisive importance to avoid all actions which might adversely affect the political attitude of the European Great Powers.

6) Economic warfare tasks

In the economic warfare it is essential that in the sphere of the armament industry a maximum deployment of forces should be made possible through increased supplies.

In the course of military operations it is important to help to increase the total economic war effort by rapidly collecting information about important factories and setting them going again as soon as possible.

For this reason the sparing, as far as military operations permit, of Czech industrial and engineering establishments may be of decisive importance for us.

7) All preparations for sabotage and insurrection will be made by the OKW. They will be made in agreement with and according to the requirements of the branches of the Wehrmacht so that their effects in both time and place will harmonize with operations by the Army and Luftwaffe.

Adolf Hitler

Certified true copy: Zeitzler,²⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel, General Staff

On May 29, a day after the conference with the generals in the Chancellery, Hitler went to Dessau to attend the local Gau Party Congress. At 2:30 p.m., he reviewed the Party formations that marched

down Kavalierstrasse. At night, Hitler was present at the opening of the new theater in Dessau, the first building of its kind to have been completed during the rule of the National Socialist regime.²⁷⁰

Initially, Hitler himself had intended to speak at the general appeal of the Gau of Magdeburg-Anhalt that was to take place at noon. On May 28, he had asked Goebbels to speak in his place. It seems likely that Hitler had changed his mind and planned to use the morning of May 29 to put the top secret preparatory instructions on the assault upon Czechoslovakia in even greater detail. Within the Party the rumor was spread that, "The Führer no longer speaks, he gets things done now."²⁷¹ Even if Hitler had reached a similar decision for refrain from speaking, he evidently did not manage to keep to his resolve for very long. Already on July 12 in Stettin, and two days later in Berlin, he was back at the podium again, delivering two lengthy speeches.

In addition, Hitler had resolved to dedicate that year to giving his 'culture speeches' once again. He did not wish to be disturbed during his preparation, not even by concurrent measures of a military nature. Before doing so, however, Hitler went to Munich. There, on May 30, he issued an ordinance on the award of the Blood Order to Austrian party members. Its verbatim content was the following:²⁷²

In the course of the struggle for the Greater German Reich, hundreds of men were murdered, thousands sustained injuries and were incarcerated. May these most courageous, self-sacrificing and bravest of all men of the Movement stand out as a shining example to our descendants.

I decree the following to lend visual expression to this imperative:

1. The Blood Order, the recipients of which up to this point had to have participated actively in the November 9, 1923 events, shall now as well be awarded to such Party comrades who suffered either of the following while fighting for the cause of the Movement both in the Old Reich and in the Austrian Gaus:

a) being condemned to death, though their sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment;

b) serving a prison sentence for the duration of one year at a minimum, this applying to time spent in Austrian *Anhaltelagers* as well;

c) sustaining severe injuries.

2. The Blood Order shall remain in the possession of the family even subsequent to the bearer's demise.

3. The NSDAP Reich Treasurer shall be responsible for the administration of all affairs related to the Blood Order. Upon application by the Reich Treasurer, I shall then personally award the Blood Order.

4. The NSDAP Reich Treasurer shall issue details on the provisions to implement this decree.

Munich, May 30, 1938

Adolf Hitler

The next day in Berlin, as a suitable preliminary to his ‘culture speeches’ and the “Day of German Art,” Hitler enacted a law regarding the “confiscation of works of degenerated art.” This measure having already been enacted in 1937—had not yet been applied to Austria. The verbatim content of the decree is reproduced below:²⁷³

The Reich Government has enacted the following law, which hereby is officially made public:

§1

Products of degenerated art, which prior to this law taking effect have been secured in museums or other collections accessible to the general public, and objects that have been designated as products of degenerated art by the appropriate administrative office determined by the Führer and Reich chancellor may be confiscated by the Reich without compensation. This shall apply to such pieces of art that were in the possession of Reich citizens or local legal persons at the time of confiscation.

§2

(1) The Führer and Reich Chancellor shall give orders for confiscation. He shall determine the future disposition of the items transferred to the possession of the Reich. He may delegate the authority granted in the above two sentences to others.

(2) Under exceptional circumstances, steps may be taken to alleviate undue financial hardship.

§3

In agreement with the respective Reich Ministers, the Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda shall decree the legal and administrative measures necessary for the implementation of this law.

Berlin, May 31, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Dr.
Goebbels

On June 3, Hitler received the Austrian General Krauss and his wife at the Chancellery.²⁷⁴ Krauss had been of significant assistance to Hitler in the years of the Schuschnigg regime. At this meeting, Krauss wore the Wehrmacht uniform which Hitler had granted him the privilege to wear in recognition of his services. Not being aware of the current circumstances, Krauss donned a “Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Tunic”²⁷⁵ with his tailored uniform.

At the June 9 reception in the House of the Reich President, honoring the newly appointed Swiss Envoy Frölicher, Hitler delivered an address in which he referred to the political neutrality of Switzerland as an “important aspect of world peace.” He gave another address that same day at the reception of the recently appointed Envoy Rios,²⁷⁶ the

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representative of Guatemala in Berlin. As always at receptions, Hitler was attired in a tailcoat. The next day, Hitler congratulated the Reich Minister of Postal Services, Ohnesorge, in a telegram on his sixty-sixth birthday.²⁷⁷

Two days later, on June 12, Hitler attended the Gau Party Congress in Pomerania and spoke at the Stettin Landhaus.²⁷⁸ There he opened his speech by praising the accomplishments of Gauleiter Schwede-Coburg.²⁷⁹ The laudatory comments were followed by a “party narrative,” which Hitler concluded:

It is the goal of the National Socialist Movement to provide a focal point for the aggregate power of the Volk and to apply this power in a step-by-step manner to the resolution of numerous tasks. [—]

We have not yet resolved all the tasks we took upon ourselves. The more Germany consolidates itself and the greater the upswing in the economic and social sphere, the greater the German realization of precisely what remains to be done.

And we are happy about this! After all, we are men of action and we will remain so for all eternity! Therefore, we are happy about each new task which faces us!

We will continue in the same vein as we have to date: strengthening the peasantry, reinforcing our national economic life and, particularly, building up our social community! After all, our great accomplishments were possible only because they led the masses and, above all, the German worker, to place their trust in us. We regard it as our foremost and most beautiful task to free him from the precepts which, only a few years ago, enslaved him and tied him to a despicable ideology. In this manner, we labor and strive for the creation of a socialist Germany ever the more.

And I know that you, Herr Gauleiter, are one of the great masters in this field.

Today I venture into Germany's Gaus with a great feeling of satisfaction and pride. Throughout the lands, a picture of great and enormous advance presents itself. All the more I am permeated by the realization that it is absolutely necessary to fortify the two pillars upon which our state rests: on the one hand, its eternal political support afforded by the National Socialist Party, and on the other hand, the German Wehrmacht.

The German nation can confidently look to its future in precisely that measure in which these two pillars stand united in support of Germany's fate!

On June 13, Hitler inspected training troops of the Luftwaffe and attended performances along the Pomeranian coastline. The Führer was accompanied by Göring, Brauchitsch and Raeder.²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Keitel was en route to Budapest, in an effort to strengthen the ties with the Hungarian Army in preparation for the envisioned Czechoslovak venture.

On June 14, Hitler attended the laying of the cornerstone for the House of German Tourism on Potsdamer Strasse in Berlin and delivered a lengthy address at this location.²⁸¹ He called the building the first structure along what would become “the widest street in the Reich Capital.” In his address, Hitler paid great attention to details of the traffic problems which the future would entail, declaring:

Once more we National Socialists cannot leave the resolution of such important issues, which we today can already anticipate, to posterity. It has always been our principle to approach such problems ourselves and to resolve them ourselves! It is for this reason that the newly constructed roads were not built for the years 1938, 1939, or even 1940. Rather they were constructed to account for the gigantic increase in flow of traffic certain for the coming decades, indeed for the coming centuries.

Yes, it is at this time—now that we can more easily deal with these issues—that we see to avoiding in Berlin the traffic problems we are witnessing today in many another metropolis. One day posterity will judge what many perhaps cannot comprehend today as a beneficial decision and its implementation as a most fortunate occurrence.

And so we are building not only great traffic circles in this city, but also we are constructing two great veins of traffic flowing through Berlin: one in the East-West direction and one in the North-South direction.

Parts of the East-West axis are already under construction and, in all likelihood, they will be opened for traffic within a few months' time. Completing the corresponding connection to the East will be a task for the coming years. And today, in a sense, we find ourselves placing the cornerstone for the North-South axis at this location as well. These great sections will later be connected to the great Reichsautobahn ring. In the future, they will lead the motorist from outlying areas directly into the heart of the city of Berlin. Again both stretches are not planned for the year 1940, but for centuries to come. For I believe in an eternal Germany, and hence I believe in its capital! I believe that just as we today are grateful to those men who three hundred years ago planned and brought to life the Unter den Linden Avenue, posterity will be grateful to us three hundred years from now! With this road system, we will find a generous solution for the suburban fast train traffic which no doubt will remain the primary means of transportation for the masses. Millions of people already utilize these trains to go to work each day and people will use them increasingly in the future. Thus this problem, too, has found a most generous solution for the immediate future.

There is yet another consideration which compels us to carry through this project: we want to introduce a planned order into cultural construction. My Volksgenossen, all which will be built here within the next ten, fifteen or twenty years, would be built in any event. However, as experience has shown, everyone would build precisely as he wished and where he wished to build. With this plan, all these construction projects will be synchronized, planned and more correctly carried through. Furthermore, buildings and constructions

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designed to bring benefit to the inner city, but which were consistently postponed, will he built. [—]

Just imagine where it would lead if everyone—the Reich, the Land, the Movement, the community, economy, trade, industry, etc.—built as he pleased in such a city, choosing a spot somewhere and putting up his house there. That could only lead to complete chaos. It is here that I intervened and led construction in this city into more orderly avenues! And on this foundation the new Berlin will be built!

In addition, there is the necessity to create new residential areas and to link these tip to the suburban fast train system that leads into the city. For the first time in over one hundred and fifty years, methodical order will be restored to the appearance of the city of Berlin!

And thus it is a day of great pride for me as I lay the cornerstone to the first building in this city, a building that owes its existence to the new planned order. The Haus des deutschen Fremdenverkehrs justly deserves to be the first in a series of new buildings in the inner city of Berlin. After all, everything we are building here today will one day lead to an immense increase in foreigners visiting Germany. The mighty structures we are erecting in the Reich today will pay off in the end as Germany increasingly becomes the center for tourism we imagine. The world will come to see us and will above all want to ascertain that this Germany is indeed a stronghold of European culture and human civilization. [—]

I am placing this cornerstone for the remodeling of the Haus des deutschen Fremdenverkehrs in Berlin, and hence I order commencement of the restructuring work for Greater Berlin!

It appeared to have completely slipped Hitler's mind that he had already claimed that the day of the laying the cornerstone to the Faculty of Defense Technology of the Technical University in Berlin had marked the beginning of the "period of the constructional redesigning" of Berlin.²⁸²

On June 14, the following order was published:²⁸³

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has accorded the brevet rank of Major General to the retired Brevet Colonel in the General Staff, Glaise-Horstenau, while simultaneously according him the right to wear the uniform of the present army.

Major Klausner,²⁸⁴ of the former Seventh Infantry Regiment, is relieved of active duty as of June 30, 1938, while simultaneously being accorded the brevet rank of a Lieutenant Colonel and the right to wear the uniform of the present Seventh Infantry Regiment.

Retired Captain Leopold²⁸⁵ of the former Austrian Sixth Infantry Regiment has been accorded the title of Major and enjoys the right to wear the uniform of the Sixty-Seventh Infantry Regiment.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* added the headline "Adolf Hitler honors deserving Austrian fighters" to the announcement.

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These men had certainly served Hitler well in the past by their involvement in the National Socialist Movement and in the Anschluss of Austria. Nevertheless, Hitler was not in the least willing to, therefore, permit them to exercise decisive influence in the political arena of their native country. By bestowing upon them the above honorary, but politically insignificant ranks, he was able to rid himself of them.

On the Obersalzberg on June 25, Hitler presented the mountain rescue service with four new cross-country cars.²⁸⁶ Three days later, he sent a telegram of congratulations to the University of Cologne for the 550th anniversary of its foundation.²⁸⁷ Around June 25, Hitler attended maneuvers on the training grounds at Grafenwöhr, close to the Czechoslovakian border.²⁸⁸

While spending the second half of June mainly on the Obersalzberg, the Führer reflected upon further constructions along the *Westwall*, which was to become “the most gigantic line of fortification of all time.” This preoccupation was much to Hitler’s taste, and on the night of June 30, he even composed a memorandum on the construction of fortresses in general, and specifically on the measures concerning the West Wall.²⁸⁹ In it, Hitler expressed the conviction that fortresses were not primarily to offer cover, but rather to ensure the application of weapons.

It is not the purpose of a fortress to guarantee the lives of a certain number of fighters under all circumstances, but rather to warrant the maintenance of overall fighting strength.

In the course of events at later dates, Hitler would display just how little regard he had for German life and how carefree he was regarding its expenditure. In the memorandum, Hitler then turned against the “five enemies” of the fortifications: infantry, artillery, tanks, gas poisoning, and mine-blasting.²⁹⁰ In the conclusion of his elaborate exposition, he claimed that his suggestion was the only realistic resolution of the problem.

All of the thoughts and suggestions taken down in this memorandum represent one approach, which need not necessarily be the right one to improving upon fortifications as such. However, in light of the time allotted, and in consideration of our overall capabilities with regard to material and manpower, this approach is the only one feasible today.

Under the present circumstances, this approach alone can assure for the Reich a high degree of resistive capacity and therefore security.

Berchtesgaden, July 1, 1938

Adolf Hitler

July 1, 1938

However, even the most profound memorandum could not change facts, nor could it increase Germany's potential beyond all bounds. In spite of Hitler's indomitable energy and oratory efforts, Germany's possibilities to arm had real limits. The exorbitant construction of fortresses inevitably must have had a negative influence on other "most gigantic projects of all time," such as the construction of the Autobahn system, the building of cities and of facilities for party congresses.

Upon Hitler's insistence, Göring had issued a "decree to secure the strength necessary for projects of particular interest to national policy" on June 22.²⁹¹ This had been nothing less than the proclamation of a general compulsory war conscription in the midst of peace. Workers were pulled out of their factories and transported like modern slaves either to the west to work on the construction of fortifications, or to the northern and eastern parts of Bavaria, where they were needed for the building of strategically important roads.²⁹² Buses were requisitioned, and hut camps were erected. Not only the military was affected by the measures. Within a few weeks' time, civil life in Germany took on a distinct flair strongly reminiscent of wartime. It was already in the summer of 1938 that construction on many *Grossbauten* that were to serve cultural or social purposes came to a premature end. However, Hitler appeared not in the least to be bothered by these developments.

Once he had committed his ideas on the construction of fortifications to paper and had ordered the generals and engineers to charge forward at top speed, he turned his attention back to issues of a cultural nature. From July 8 through July 10, various activities took place in Munich to celebrate the Day of German Art. Hitler took upon himself to stage the first of the events by holding a reception at the Führerhaus, located at the Königsplatz. He had invited numerous renowned artists and other celebrities figuring in the cultural life of Germany.²⁹³

On July 9, Hitler attended a ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of the Fine Arts in the festival hall of the Deutsches Museum. At 12:30 p.m., he delivered a short address²⁹⁴ on the occasion of a ceremonial act in the Glyptothek.

As a personal gift, Hitler presented the museum with Lancelotti's rendition of the *Discobolus* (Discus Thrower) by Myron. The statue had been acquired from an Italian's private collection, and already King Louis I of Bavaria had vied for it. Hitler expressed his joy at having succeeded in its acquisition, and emphasized that its leaving Italy had been made possible only by the close and friendly relations of both countries, stating:

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Without them, we would not be standing here admiring this magnificent work. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my heartfelt thanks to the Italian Government and in particular to its brilliant chief.

At 6:00 in the evening, Hitler attended a gala performance of *Lohengrin* at the National Theater. Afterward, he held a reception at the Künstlerhaus, which he had ordered renovated as “a present to the artists.” On the morning of July 10, Hitler placed a wreath at the grave of Professor Ludwig Troost. Thereafter, he continued on to the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, at which he was scheduled to speak at the opening ceremony at 11:00 a.m. Before he delivered the opening speech on the occasion of the Second German Art Exhibition, he called for his court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. The latter had been in charge of the organizational details of the exhibition. Hitler named Hoffmann Professor “in recognition of his outstanding achievements at the service of the Great Exhibition of German Art” and presented him with a certificate to this effect. Then Hitler began his great ‘culture speech’²⁹⁵ with an unparalleled laudation of himself.

Scarcely six years have passed since the National Socialist Movement, following many years of struggle, was finally entrusted with the leadership of the Reich. Nonetheless, today we can already state that rarely in the history of our Volk has there been a comparably eventful period of peace as in these past five and a half years, an epoch of National Socialist leadership which was inaugurated on that memorable January 30, 1933. How many realms of our lives have witnessed radical change since then, a resurgence of life which had been declared completely impossible just a few years earlier by those who had felt themselves “called upon.” The Party which had been decried as a threat to the inner peace in fact bestowed true inner peace upon the German Volk in the first place.

A regime that supposedly would precipitate economic collapse pulled the German Volk back from the brink of economic ruin and saved it. That very National Socialism, which was assumed to spell a disastrous defeat in matters of foreign policy, has uplifted the German Volk from the most dreadful defeat in its entire historical existence, has restored its proud self-confidence and has led Germany to become a highly-respected force in the world. There is hardly one realm in which the prophecies of our opponents were not revealed as lies.

In the ensuing “party narrative,” Hitler spoke mainly of the cultural and economic decline that had pervaded the years prior to 1933. He used to ridicule Dadaists, Cubists, etc. only to place his own accomplishments in a better light. While lacking any sense of humor himself, Hitler nonetheless was most liberal in his use of sarcasm, cynicism, and mockery.

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During these months, we have borne witness to the fact that the economic philosophy of National Socialism, which ten years ago had been decried as pure stupidity and only five years ago was termed a criminal act or madness at least, that this philosophy is now gradually being adopted by other states as well—albeit in omission of copyright charges. [—]

The cultural program of this new Reich is of an unparalleled grandeur in the history of our Volk. Success will come about as a matter of consequence as it already has in all other realms of our lives. However, we are fully aware that in this instance the initial time period by nature will be a longer one than the ones to date.

Slowly Hitler drew closer to the central point of his speech, consisting of the administrative measures envisioned or already implemented in the domain of art. The core of his arguments was tantamount to a renewed justification of the law effecting the confiscation of products considered as “degenerated art.”

In the twentieth century, the German Volk is a Volk of a resurrected affirmation of life, enchanted in its admiration of the strong and beautiful and hence of what is healthy and capable of sustaining life. Power and beauty are the slogans of our time. Clarity and logic reign supreme in our efforts. Whoever wants to be an artist in this century must wholeheartedly pledge himself to this century.

There is no room for any Neanderthal culture in the twentieth century, no room for it at least in National Socialist Germany. We rejoice that the democracies are opening their progressive doors to these degenerated elements for, after all, we are not vindictive. Let them live, we do not mind! For all we care, let them work—but not in Germany! In 1937, I felt the time to have come for a clear decision in this matter as well. Naturally, this entailed a severe intervention. Whether or not we can today call geniuses of eternal standing our own is as always difficult to judge, but in the end it is of little consequence for our actions. What is of great consequence, however, is the preservation of an environment in which true genius can be nurtured. To this end, it is imperative to uphold the solid and decent underpinnings of the common artistic heritage of a people out of which develops true genius. Genius is not synonymous with insanity, and above all genius is not synonymous with fraud. To the contrary, genius manifests itself through extraordinary accomplishments which are easily differentiated from the common.

In the further course of his arguments, Hitler even made an attempt to defend the much-abused nineteenth century, but quickly returned to his own time and age.

This prejudice threatened to pervade the entire nineteenth century [in the time of decline]. The decent, or let me say well-intentioned naive average of that century, has nonetheless furnished that ground from which arose many

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a great artist. A century that can claim so many great musicians, great poets and thinkers, renowned architects, wonderful sculptors and painters, towers way above the stupid profanities of an epoch of noise-makers in the Dadaist tradition, formers of plaster in the Cubist mode and colorers of futurist screens. Of course, the nineteenth century also brought forth many an average performance and even more performances ranking below average. However, that is the mark of any century of achievement. How many people wander through life and how few of them are able to run a marathon, and how many actually win the race? Yet these victors are but the fastest runners of humankind. However, if these men would hop around crazily instead of walking like ordinary men, then their performance would equal that of our cultural geniuses of the time of disintegration. They would be no better than these because they, too, would lack the basis for the creation and assessment of supreme achievements.

Hence in the course of the past year, I resolved to clear a passage for the honest and decent average performance. Already at the exhibition prior to the last, we warranted the joyful premonition that one or the other artist was well capable of even greater achievement in the future. Developments since then have proven this assessment correct. Our suspicions were, moreover, reinforced by the winter exhibition on German architecture and the products of our arts and crafts.

Close to the end of his speech, Hitler returned to the subject of the newly acquired statue by Lancelotti. For the benefit of the audience, he explained its importance in the following words:

These days I greatly rejoice in having been able to afford the German Volk this magnificent work of eternal beauty to be placed in the capital of its arts thanks to the truly magnanimous permission granted by the Italian Government. May none of you who visit this house fail to go to the sculpture gallery. May you all then realize how glorious man already was back then in his corporeal beauty, and that we can speak of progress only if we have attained like perfection or if we manage to surpass this level.

Above all, may the artists appreciate how great the sight and the artistic ability of this Greek named Myron must have been as it reveals itself to our eyes today. How marvelous an achievement of that Greek who created a statue two and a half millenniums ago, a statue the Roman copy of which still elicits stunned admiration on our part. And may all of you take this to heart as a standard for the tasks and accomplishments of our time. May you all strive for beauty and perfection so that you shall also stand the test of time both before the Volk and the ages. [—]

I have no doubt that you will be moved by the same sensations that moved me when I first saw this unparalleled testimony to eternal beauty and achievement.

You will perhaps then, too, be able to sense what I feel on this day as I declare open this second art exhibition in the Reich and as I compare it to what existed just a few years before we came.

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At the end of the festivities in Munich that afternoon, a great procession passed through the city's streets, celebrating "2,000 years of German culture." Since Hitler was in the city, he received the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Numan Menemencioglu²⁹⁶ who was visiting there.

On the occasion of the signing of a treaty of friendship between Germany and Manchukuo on July 12 in Berlin, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the Emperor of Manchukuo.²⁹⁷ At the House of the Reich President the next day, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Soviet Union, Marekalov, and the recently named new Egyptian Envoy, Sir Ahmad Pasha, called on Hitler to present their credentials.²⁹⁸ Hitler gave the usual addresses, the contents of which were not subsequently published as had been standard procedure up to this point.

On July 13 as well, the Führer's patron, the industrial magnate and Privy Councillor Emil Kirdorf,²⁹⁹ died at the age of ninety-two at his place of residence, the Streithof near Mülheim. Hitler sent his widow the following telegram of condolence:³⁰⁰

Please accept this expression of my sincere heartfelt sympathy at the great loss you and your family have suffered. I shall never forget your husband for the services he has rendered to Germany's economy and the resurrection of our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

On July 16, Hitler attended the mourning service for Kirdorf at the Rhein-Elbe coal mine in Gelsenkirchen.³⁰¹ On July 23, he arrived in Bayreuth, as every year, on the occasion of the Richard Wagner Festival.³⁰² On July 28, Hitler sent a telegram to Mussolini congratulating him on his birthday:³⁰³

Duce!

On your birthday today, I think of you warmly and extend to you my sincere best wishes for both your personal welfare and your work, the latter of which simultaneously serves both the greatness of Italy and peace in Europe. On this day, on which my thoughts are with you in particular, you may proudly reflect upon the greatness of the work accomplished by you as well as upon the greatness of the Fascist Empire. I am most content that, at the end of this most successful year in your life, we have further strengthened the Rome-Berlin Axis and our friendship by meeting on the soil of your empire. *Heil Duce!*

Your Adolf Hitler

On July 31, Hitler made an appearance at the German Athletic Competition games that took place in Breslau. Konrad Henlein was

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present as well. As it had been on the occasion of the German Sängerbund Festival the year before, this city again was used as a setting for National Socialist demonstrations.³⁰⁴ This year, these were quite openly directed against Czechoslovakia. While Hitler did speak on August 1, 1937 in Breslau, he appeared on this occasion merely as a representative of the Reich Government and an honorary guest. The time had not yet come for Hitler to deal a deathly blow to Beneš and his state in a great address. Hitler would wait until the Party Congress in September to settle this account.

On the morning of July 31, Hitler greeted groups of Germans living abroad and also conversed with four German mountaineers who had braved the climb of the Eiger mountain wall. Further, Hitler watched a festive parade moving through the city. Then he observed the athletes line up for an appeal on the Friesenwiese and honored the victorious among them. For once, Hitler refrained from speaking and left the floor to both the Reich Sports Leader von Tschammer and Osten as well as to Gauleiter Josef Wagner.³⁰⁵

On August 1, the first Viennese edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter*³⁰⁶ was published in the same format employed in the Reich. This first Party paper to appear on Austrian soil contained the following prefatory note by Hitler:

In the many years of our struggle for power, the *Völkischer Beobachter* was one of our Movement's most potent weapons. Therefore, with great satisfaction, I rejoice in the fact that this official NSDAP organ now possesses, in addition to its Munich and Berlin editions, a new Viennese edition, an edition which is worthy of our German Ostmark and recognizes its importance.

On the day that witnesses the first publication of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in Vienna, in a format that we have become so accustomed to, I would like to extend my best wishes for the continued success of our eldest Party paper at the service of the Movement of the Greater German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler spent the majority of his unstructured time on the Obersalzberg during August observing maneuvers or inspecting fortresses. On August 5, Hitler received a delegation of British front-line soldiers; led by General Sir Jon Hamilton.³⁰⁷

On August 10, Hitler met for a new conference with the generals at the Berghof.³⁰⁸ A few days previously, Brauchitsch had handed Hitler a memorandum by their Chief of Staff, General Ludwig Beck. In it, Beck maintained that the German Army was by no means ready to enter into an armed conflict.³⁰⁹

August 10, 1938

At the conference of August 10, Hitler held a three-hour marathon talk, in which he maintained what he called his “inalterable decision” to do away with Czechoslovakia before the end of 1938. He then insisted upon his argument that there was no reason to fear military intervention by either Great Britain or France: the line of fortifications to the West by itself precluded such an action.

Several of the generals, however, entertained grave doubts on precisely this part of Hitler’s argument. Speaking for his Group Commander General Adam as well as for his own person, General von Wietersheim maintained that the fortresses to the West could not stave off the French for a time period in excess of three weeks. Such an insubordinate challenge to the authority of the Supreme Commander naturally resulted in a Hitlerian fit of rage. Hitler screamed:³¹⁰

I assure you, General, the position will not only be held for three weeks, but for three years.

Nevertheless, the conference at the Berghof had one tangible result. Given the attitude of the generals, Hitler believed this to be an opportune moment to raise their spirits by rehabilitating the former Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Fritsch.

Thus Hitler appointed Fritsch commander of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment and sent him the following congratulatory note in a telegram, dated August 11:³¹¹

In addition to your promotion to Commander of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment, which I have decreed in the enclosed document, I extend to you my heartfelt best wishes and express my appreciation of your great merit which you have proven in times of war and peace.

On today’s occasion, my thoughts turn in particular to your untiring efforts in the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht.

Extending to you my best wishes for your personal welfare, I remain faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler held a tea party in honor of the Italian Minister of Air, Marshal Italo Balbo, on August 13 at the Berghof.³¹² On August 16, Hitler inspected the progress being made on the Party Congress construction site in Nuremberg. There he discussed preparations for the Reich Party Congress with several Unterführers. Hitler chose the title *Grossdeutschland* for the congress of that year.³¹³

With the Czechoslovakian venture looming on the horizon, August 17 seemed an opportune moment for Hitler to effect a more concrete

separation of the Wehrmacht and the SS Verfügungstruppe, namely, to place the latter exclusively at his own personal disposal. In the course of events in Austria, the SS Verfügungstruppe, in field-gray uniforms, had appeared as a separate entity involved in the occupation of the country. At the time, however, the SS Verfügungstruppe had formed part of the Eighth Army and had, therefore, been placed under the command of Colonel General von Bock. Now the Führer was determined to decisively settle the delegation of responsibility in the Army. He feared that ambiguities in this respect could well endanger the successful conduct of wars in the future. Therefore, on August 17, Hitler decreed that the SS Verfügungstruppe formed a part neither of the Wehrmacht nor police; rather it was "a regular armed troop" and was to be placed at his "exclusive disposal." In case of armed opposition of a general to him, Hitler would have the authority to employ the SS Verfügungstruppe to immediately subdue the uprising. The composition and training of this armed unit closely resembled that of an elite troop. Hitler's decree on the subject read verbatim:³¹⁴

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Berlin, August 17, 1938

I have created the basis for a standardization and administrative reorganization of the German Police Force through the appointment of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police within the Reich Ministry of the Interior on June 17, 1936 (RGL. I, p. 487).

Thereby the Schutzstaffeln of the NSDAP, which previously had already been placed under the supervision of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, have now entered into a closer relationship to the tasks of the German Police.

Hence, in order to accommodate and delimit these mutual tasks, shared by the SS and the Wehrmacht, I order the following principles in summary:

I. General

(1) The SS in its entirety, as a political organization of the NSDAP, requires no military internal organization or training in order to fulfill its political tasks. It shall remain an unarmed force.

(2) For specific tasks connected to matters of domestic policy, tasks that I will assign to the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police on a case-by-case basis, as well as for purposes of mobile deployment, the SS units enumerated below are exempt from the provisions of Article 1:

SS Verfügungstruppe; SS Junkerschulen; SS Totenkopfverbände; reinforcements for the SS Totenkopfverbände (police unit reinforcements).

In peacetime, these units shall be placed under the command of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, who (with the exception of the cases noted in Section II) is solely responsible for their organization, training, equipment and full readiness for deployment for domestic missions

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I shall present to him. In this context, an organizational linkage to the Wehrmacht in times of peace does not exist. Regarding the event of mobilization, the instructions in Section I and II apply.

Provided remuneration, the Wehrmacht shall procure weaponry, ammunition, equipment, gear, and military manuals to the armed SS units.

II. Armed SS Units

A. The SS Verfügungstruppe

(1) The SS Verfügungstruppe forms part of neither the Wehrmacht nor the police. It is a regular armed troop exclusively at my disposal. As such and as a formation of the NSDAP, the Reichsführer SS shall select its members, shall educate them according to the guidelines, instructions of a weltanschaulich and political nature, which I issued for the NSDAP and the Schutzstaffeln. The Reichsführer SS shall supplement the troop's membership from a pool of volunteers. These must have satisfied the two-year labor service requirement and must be of conscription age, and shall serve for four years. This service period may be extended for SS Unterführers. The legal requirement for active and compulsory military service (§ 8 of the Military Service Act) is considered to be satisfied by an equally long tour of service with the SS Verfügungstruppe.

The SS Verfügungstruppe shall be funded through the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Its budget must secure approval by the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

The further sections of the decree pertained to technical details of which only the following are of interest:

The SS Verfügungstruppe shall serve a dual function in the event of mobilization:

1. Within the scope of the wartime army, it shall be headed by the Commander in Chief of the Army. While being subjected exclusively to military laws and regulations, the SS Verfügungstruppe shall remain a political subdivision of the NSDAP.

2. In the event of a domestic emergency, it shall heed my instructions. It shall then be subordinate to the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police.

That same day, August 17, Hitler was present at the autumn maneuvers at the Infantry School in Döberitz.³¹⁵

The next day at the Chancellery, Hitler received the Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, General Vuillemin, who had been invited by Göring to inspect German airplane construction plants and military airfields.³¹⁶ This invitation attempted to sway the French General with a display of German military might not to intervene in the case of a war against Czechoslovakia.

One day later, on August 19, Hitler attended maneuvers of the Second Army Corps at Gross-Born in Pomerania, which he concluded with a review of the soldiers.³¹⁷

The Hungarian Regent, Admiral Horthy, arrived in Germany for a five-day official visit on August 21. During this visit, Hitler attempted to lure Hungary to participate in a war against Czechoslovakia, primarily by tempting Horthy with the offer of his share in the “booty”—as Hitler had phrased the matter in his instructions to “Case Green.”³¹⁸ Hitler offered Hungary the chance to regain most of its territories lost in the aftermath of the First World War, which at the present formed part of the Czechoslovakian state (within the limits of his geopolitical scheme). The pretense for the German-Hungarian conference was the launching of a new German cruiser in Kiel. Horthy attended the launching in his capacity as a former AustroHungarian Admiral. Initially, the ship was to have been christened *Tegetthoff*.³¹⁹ Because of the possible anti-Italian connotations this name might entail, the ship was finally called *Prinz Eugen*.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m. on August 22, Hitler met his Hungarian guest at the main station in Kiel.³²⁰ The Führer presented flowers to Horthy’s wife and kissed her hand. Also accompanying Horthy were his Foreign Minister Kánya and his War Minister von Ratz. Thereafter, the company proceeded to the Germania shipyards, where Seyss-Inquart delivered the address at the baptism, while Mrs. Horthy formally christened the new battle cruiser.

That afternoon in Kiel Bay, Hitler and Horthy observed a great naval display from aboard the light battleship *Grille*. That night, the party journeyed to Brunsbüttelskoog, passing through the Kiel Canal. On the next day, they traveled in the Hapag steamer *Patria* to Helgoland.

At 9:00 a.m. on August 24, Hitler and his guests arrived in Hamburg, where the usual sightseeing and a reception at the City Hall awaited them. Subsequently they traveled to Berlin. In the evening of the same day, Hitler held a dinner in honor of Admiral Horthy and his wife at the Chancellery. Toasting his two guests, Hitler proclaimed the German-Hungarian border to be a final one.³²¹

Your Highness,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to bid Your Highness, the Regent of the Hungarian Kingdom, and Her Highness, Your highly revered wife, welcome in the capital of the German Reich.

In the person of Your Highness I greet the head of the Hungarian nation that is tied to the German Volk by an old and dear friendship. Many-faceted are the relations that formed between our two peoples in the course of centuries and that allowed them to become friends. These relations go back to the times of King Saint Stephen and they have stood fast and become closer throughout the eventful fates of our nations.

August 24, 1938

In more recent years, comradeship in arms during the most difficult times in the great War and the shared struggle for a better future have once more strengthened and sealed our friendship of old. This community, relying as it does on steadfastness and unshakeable trust in one another, will be of even greater value to both our peoples now that, following the recent historic developments, we have delineated the final historical borders separating us as neighbors. I am convinced that this community not only serves the interests of both our peoples, but also that, in cooperation with the Italy we befriended, it will serve as a guarantee of an honorable and just peace worldwide.

I entertain the hope that Your Highness has, in the course of your sojourn in Germany, seen how deeply rooted the warm-hearted sentiments are which the German Volk affords both your own person and your fatherland. Rest assured that Germany and its Government are truly sympathetic to the great work of national resurrection begun under your Highness's wise reign—despite the difficult situation subsequent to the War—a work which continues to be crowned by great success. My own best wishes as well as those of the German Volk accompany this work which has borne great fruits in all realms of Hungary's national life.

I raise my glass to toast the health of Your Excellency and that of Her Highness your wife, as I wish the Hungarian people, who remain bound to us in eternal friendship, prosperity and good fortune.

On Charlottenburg Avenue, one of "the greatest displays of troops that Germany has witnessed since the creation of the new Wehrmacht"³²² took place on August 25. General von Witzleben, as always, read off row after row of figures. Because of bad weather, the planned flight of the Luftwaffe groups had to be canceled. The next day, after additional sightseeing, Hitler accompanied Horthy to the Berlin train station for his 3:30 p.m. departure. The talks of the two statesmen during the few days of Horthy's visit were to bear fruit within a short time period. Subsequent to his return to Hungary, on September 4, Horthy introduced general conscription in his country, defying the Treaty at Trianon.³²³

In order to prove his concern for the interests of the Germans living abroad—particularly in countries to the East—Hitler sent out various telegrams. One greeted the German East Exhibition in Königsberg on August 22. Another was addressed to the Reich Convention of Germans Living Abroad, which took place in Stuttgart on August 28.³²⁴

The Chief of the General Staff, Ludwig Beck, after failing again to affect the Führer's stance with a new memorandum on August 16, stepped down from his post on August 27. In his letter of resignation, Beck plainly stated that he could no longer support the policy of aggression advocated by the Führer and Supreme Commander.

However, Beck was the only one of the generals who stood up to protest and express his opposition to Hitler's designs for war with Czechoslovakia.

After the Second World War, various publications dealt with the attitudes and goals of the German generals during the so-called Sudeten crisis of the summer months of 1938.³²⁵ A reader who is not well acquainted with this particular subject might be misled to conclude that, at the time, the generals had been close to mutiny. It might appear as though their failure to carry out the revolt and to incarcerate Hitler was due only to the positive outcome of the Munich Conference.

A few points should be clarified here. For one, had there been no conference in Munich or had talks failed in September 1938, a declaration of war by Great Britain and France would with absolute certainty have followed: Hitler had set the initial date for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the Western Powers were determined to declare war on him the minute he fired the first shot. In 1939, exactly this happened.

Where was the German general with the courage to imprison the Supreme Commander and Warlord before the deadly struggle began—especially in a situation where a declaration of war by Great Britain and France was imminent? There is no question that in the summer of 1938 such a coup was being contemplated in military circles. But contemplation is far from action.

In this context, the result of the Munich Conference really did not make much of a difference. While there would not be any conference in 1939 like the one at Munich, the generals still reacted to Hitler in precisely the same inactive manner as before. There is no doubt that the German people would have been as overjoyed then, too, had war been avoided, as it was the year earlier when Chamberlain's and Daladier's intervention prevented the outbreak of armed conflict. However, it is not the place of the generals to decide upon either war or peace. Ever since the evolution of organized states in the Middle Ages, this function has been reserved for the heads of states of the nations involved. Further, one cannot compare the German generals to their more revolutionary minded colleagues in South America and in the Balkans. In Germany, the generals trod down the path of legality, even if this meant serving a regime with which they had no sympathy. This behavior has repeatedly been observed in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Germany. Even in 1812, Yorck³²⁶ had intended

neither to become a revolutionary, nor to overthrow his King. Based on his experiences during 1923, the Führer was fully aware of the generals' loyalty and complete subservience to the state.

The persistent rumor that in the years 1933 to 1945 the German generals had seriously contemplated employing force to remove Hitler is only a myth. Of the three thousand generals and admirals³²⁷ who were either appointed or promoted by Hitler, not one dared to face him with gun in hand. Perhaps they discussed the matter, but once Hitler entered the room, they would snap back to stand at attention, as was proper in the presence of the Supreme Commander.

All the reflections, plans and appeals of the generals opposing Hitler, were based on the assumption of his prior demise or on the disintegration of government authority. Those generals who took action on July 20, 1944, did so because they presumed Hitler to have been assassinated by Colonel von Stauffenberg. This mistaken assumption proved to be a fatal tragedy. Nonetheless, they deserve our respect and appreciation, as do so many others murdered by Hitler.

From a legal point of view, no one can blame the generals for not having killed or imprisoned Hitler. After all, the Nuremberg Tribunal did not attempt to judge the generals on this basis. Soldiers must be judged according to different set of rules.

Even though Colonel General Halder once lamented³²⁸ that Hitler demanded complete obedience from his General Staff, the question nonetheless remains how the military could have functioned, if the generals violated the military's set of rules and concept of authority. In addition, they already enjoyed privileges that ordinary officers and soldiers did not. At any time, when a general believed he could not support a specific measure of the supreme leadership, he had the choice to either ask for an early retirement or transfer to the so-called *Führerreserve*.³²⁹

These two options were at the disposal of the generals even in the course of the Second World War! A number of generals did exit by means of these official escape routes. Others who were convinced that it was their duty to stand fast for the love of their fatherland, paid a heavy price for remaining in the presence of Hitler, even before the Third Reich had collapsed. For Hitler was not only liberal in the distribution of medals, promotions, and money to his generals; he was also well versed in harassing, degrading, hanging, shooting, or driving them to commit suicide. The majority of the generals finally suffered a horrible fate—due in part to their Führer's demonic nature, but also

because of ingrained features of the military system itself. In this context, one can truly speak of a “self-sacrifice of the generals.” However, to retroactively elevate the generals to self-sacrificing revolutionaries—as numerous lower-ranking officers truly had been—would not be historically correct.

As mentioned earlier, the resignation of General Beck on August 27, 1938, was a protest against the German policy of aggression with regard to Czechoslovakia. Such an independent stance always impressed Hitler, in particular if its perpetrator took upon himself to suffer the consequences, as Beck in this case by leaving office. Thus, there were no repercussions for Beck in the aftermath of his action, since Hitler had no reason to suspect the general of not remaining loyal to his Führer in the future. Because of the current political situation at the time, Beck’s resignation was kept secret at first. Hitler ordered General Halder to assume the post of Chief of the German General Staff from September onward. Beck’s decision did not bring about any significant changes, however, one must nonetheless give it credit as an effective display of opposition.

As August gave way to September, the French author Alphonse de Châteaubriant visited Hitler at the Obersalzberg, where he was granted an interview. In the wake of the occupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, Hitler had claimed that one of the considerations which had prompted such speedy action on his part, had been the signing of the Franco-Russian Pact. At the time, he had maintained that the Pact proved beyond all doubt that France was securely on its way to becoming a Bolshevik state³³⁰ Such a bold argument seemed inopportune to him now, in light of his upcoming venture against Czechoslovakia. Thus he proclaimed that the French had successfully warded off this danger. Indeed, France and Germany would do better to look at each other with admiration than to insist upon fighting each other on petty arguments. In this elegant turning of phrases, Hitler cloaked his attempt to pull the moral foundation for French assistance to Czechoslovakia from under the feet of the French statesmen. He explained the matter to Châteaubriant:³³¹

The greatest threat to Europe is that of a Bolshevik permeation, a threat similar to that in Germany at the time. I no longer think that such a permeation is possible in countries such as Holland, Belgium, and France. These countries have vanquished the Russo-Asiatic communism. While internal crises may and will take place there yet, France will not, for instance, fall prey to this philosophy of destruction. As long as each European state is concerned

exclusively with the conduct of its affairs to its own advantage, the economic situation in Europe will continue to breed discontent and discord. The nations of Europe were created to work together in the interest of the welfare of their peoples. We must regard those wars, such as the last one in particular, which split Europe up in an arbitrary assignment of territory and peoples, these wars we must regard as baneful errors committed by the said nations. In the realm of economic policy, as well as in all other realms, peoples should think primarily of productive cooperation.

Germany is being accused of severing its ties to the world and of becoming a recluse in the pursuit of its economic interests. Apparently no one considers that Germany was far more severely affected by the collapse of the international economy than others because of its restricted economic space and its overpopulation. Moreover, it was not until we had realized that comprehensive trade agreements with other nations were not possible that we resolved to fashion Germany's economic system to be independent of foreign economies. New ways had to be found. It is because of this that our Four-Year Plan endeavors to attain self-sufficiency for Germany. It is not our goal to isolate ourselves. In the course of our history we fought many a battle with France: nonetheless, we remain peoples of one family. I turn to all of Germany to say: bonds exist between us, bonds we cannot simply erase from our memory.

We have exchanged ideas, set examples for one another, and learned lessons from each other. Let us be honest: we have little reason to hate each other and all the more reason to admire one another.

On September 2, Hitler received Konrad Henlein on the Obersalzberg. At the request of Lord Runciman, Henlein was to inform the German Führer on the progress in the negotiations with the Prague Government. The British had already on June 14 pronounced themselves in favor of the right to self-determination of the Sudeten Germans.³³² Early in August, they had assigned Lord Runciman to function as mediator at the Prague talks between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechoslovakian Government.

Lord Runciman had done his utmost to settle the conflict by according equality of rights to Czechs and Sudeten Germans within the framework of the existing Czechoslovakian state. However, little progress was made. On the one hand, in accordance with the instructions he had received from the Führer, Henlein continuously voiced new demands. On the other hand, the Czechoslovakian Government did not want to succumb completely to his demands either.

It was against this background that Henlein and Hitler met on September 2, 1938, to exchange views. Immediately prior to the meeting, Hitler decreed the mobilization of reservists throughout

Germany. He was preparing to leave for the Nuremberg Party Congress, where he intended to deal his final blow to Czechoslovakia. Most certainly, he was not, at the time, in a mood to discuss theoretical issues at great length.

Naturally, it was not Henlein who dominated the conversation on that second day of September, 1938. When Hitler heard Beneš' suggestions to resolve the Sudeten German question in Henlein's report, he saw them as nothing more than "little presents to appease in the fashion of Geneva."³³³ And, Hitler felt, it should not be left to Beneš to distribute "presents" among the Sudeten Germans; rather, the Sudeten Germans should demand what was theirs by right. One had best not imagine where things would end up, if one allowed Germans and Czechs to live side by side, being treated equally. This would come close to precipitating the creation of a "second Palestine in the heart of Germany." Hitler was not willing to stand for such a development. He sent Henlein back to Czechoslovakia that very same day.

The official press release reporting on the meeting of the two men described it in the following terms:³³⁴

Berchtesgaden, September 2

The Führer received the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein, at the Obersalzberg on Friday [September 2]. Lord Runciman had requested Henlein to report on the present developments at the negotiations with the Government in Prague. The Führer received the information with great interest and agreed completely with Henlein's appraisal of the current situation. Konrad Henlein stayed for lunch at the Führer's house and then left the Berghof in the afternoon.

6

The Party Congress *Grossdeutschland* began on September 5 in Nuremberg. The imminent conflict with Czechoslovakia dominated the rally. Since early August, an intensified press campaign had been directed against this state.³³⁵ The headlines in the newspapers reported alleged atrocities against individuals and entire groups of Sudeten Germans nearly every day. Gruesome details were reported on bloody assaults, shooting, and bludgeoning of innocent onlookers, women, children, and elderly people. Supposedly, there had been raids on Reich German customs and border police posts. The campaign was not only intended to feed hatred in the German people, but also to prepare foreign opinion for the upcoming German military move against Czechoslovakia.

Right at the beginning of the Party Congress, the news of a call-up of French reservists reached Nuremberg and caused great consternation. This French response to the secret mobilization of troops in Germany revealed signs of strain in Hitler's thesis on the weakness of the French and the senility of the British. The assumption that neither France nor Great Britain would actively oppose a German assault upon Czechoslovakia seemed at least doubtful, and Hitler reacted in a subdued fashion to the news. On September 6, the German News Agency published the following official statement:³³⁶

The report on the French military measures along our Western border is rendered all the more conspicuous since it comes at a time in which there is talk of a general relaxation of tensions. Germany has never challenged the right of any other country to take all the precautionary steps it deems necessary to its defense. Germany assumed this attitude as well with regard to the fortress construction of the Maginot Line.³³⁷ On the other hand, Germany has a claim as well to exercise this right as a preventive measure, and has, therefore, ordered similar defensive measures to be implemented along its Western border.³³⁸ Since Germany did not regard the precautionary

steps taken by France as a direct and conscious threat to its safety, it follows that France cannot derive a threat to its safety on the basis of Germany's measures, precautions which merely correspond to France's own actions. It would be in the self-interest of France not to allow its measures to transgress these boundaries.

Hitler saved his "final reckoning with Czechoslovakia" for his last speech at the Party Congress on September 12. Although he had not mentioned the subject up to that point, the presence of Konrad Henlein at the Party Congress reminded the audience of the matter's unflinching currency. Apart from the customarily long-winded "party narratives," Hitler's other speeches primarily addressed the Party's Austrian comrades who were attending the Nuremberg Congress for the first time. Hitler had returned the ancient insignias of the Holy Roman Empire³³⁹ to the Franconian city from Vienna, where they had been in safekeeping ever since the late eighteenth century. From 1424 to 1796, however, the Reich insignias had resided in the Nuremberg fortress. In reference to these historical facts, Hitler stated the following in his address at the City Hall of Nuremberg on September 5:³⁴⁰

In no other German city do past and present of the Greater German Reich symbolically unite as happily as in Nuremberg, the Reich capital of past and present. The ancient German Reich entrusted this most worthy city with the insignias of the Reich. Nuremberg shall once again take possession of these silent witnesses to the power and glory of the Old Reich. Today Nuremberg stands as the city of the Reich Party Congresses, a rock of German strength and German greatness within a new German Reich!

On September 6, 1938, as in the previous years, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner read Hitler's proclamation to the Party Congress audience:

Party Comrades! National Socialists!

Moved more deeply than ever, we marched to Nuremberg. In the past years, the Reich Party Congresses have developed from being an occasion of great rejoicing and celebration and of great pride to being an occasion for somber inner reflection. The Old Fighters come here in the anticipation of finding many old acquaintances once more, acquaintances made in the long years of the struggle for power. And hence in this city old comrades in arms greet one another again and again as veterans of the greatest of all German revolutions.

For the first time, our circle has been extended infinitely this year. The National Socialist Reich has taken in new German Volksgenossen. Many of them are in our midst today for the very first time. Many others flowing along in the stream of the Movement, lose themselves to the magic of this city and of these uplifting hours. Others—as members of the fighting organizations—will march for the first time with their brothers from all over the German Reich

and in their hearts they will once more pledge themselves to never again let go of this greatest of all communities.

These remarks were followed by the “party narrative.” In it, Hitler declared that the “gigantic turn of fate” which had taken place in the years since 1933, had been due to a change in “German leadership.”

Germany’s leadership has changed. National Socialism has built it up through a relentless process of selection. However, insofar as it still consists of members from the times of struggle, it represents a pinnacle which cannot be replaced by either external or material value or by political or military might. And this leadership has become the bearer of the German uprising. The miracle that took place between 1805 and 1813 was no different. The Prussian men and women of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig were no different from those Prussian men and women of the days of Jena and Auerstedt. Then, too, a weak leadership of state and armed forces was replaced by a heroic one in the span of a few years. Names such as vom Stein and Blücher, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Yorck and Clausewitz, and of countless others, alone suffice to explain the miracle of Prussia’s great rise. There is no other way of looking at the miracle of Germany’s rise today. The National Socialist Party has been the creative force behind this ascent. It has done the enormous work required so that Germany could once again find the strength to resume its position in the world. It had to break down and eliminate the other parties.

It had to make war relentlessly on a world filled with prejudices of class and social standing. It had to assure that each German of willpower and ability could make his way to the top in disregard of his birth and origin. It had to cleanse Germany of all those parasites who drank at the well of the despair of Vaterland and Volk. It had to acknowledge the eternal values of blood and earth, and it had to elevate these principles to become the leading imperatives in our lives. It had to begin the fight against the greatest enemy which threatens to destroy our Volk: the international Jewish world enemy!

Hitler then emphasized the creation of Greater Germany:

Just a few weeks ago, one English newspaper wrote that I harbored the burning desire to arrive at some sort of pact with various states on various topics or else I would not be able to step before this year’s Reich Party Congress. I never had this intention nor do I have it now. I step before you today, my old Party Comrades, with no pact in hand, but I bring you my homeland—the seven new Gaus of Germany. It is Greater Germany that steps into the limelight for the first time here in Nuremberg. When the insignias of the Old Reich have returned to this old German city, then they have done so because they were carried back by six and a half million Germans who accompanied them in spirit and whose spirit unites them today with all of the men and women of our Volk. These days all of them are all the more conscious of the great happiness of being part of a great indissoluble community. What one amongst them bears, all of them bear. Therefore, that which must be borne by all is all the more easily borne by the individual.

Speaking on the subject of the “Ostmark,” Hitler turned to economic issues. He announced the elimination of unemployment in Austria, and proclaimed that he sought the guarantee of sufficient nutrition “under all circumstances.” He argued that, in the case of war, an economic blockade of Germany would be “a dead issue”:

The unemployment crisis in the Ostmark of the Reich will, as well, have been completely resolved by the end of next year. Today, we have only two real economic concerns:

a) the concern over manpower, in particular that of skilled laborers for industrial work, and

b) the concern over manpower in the countryside.

If other states regard these concerns as certain evidence for a supposedly persistent economic weakness of the Third Reich, then we shall gladly compare the criticism of our lack of manpower at home to the unemployment in the democracies.

If today I can point to the lack of manpower as the sole economic concern in Germany, then this is so because of two facts:

1. The grace of the Lord has bestowed upon us a bountiful harvest this year. Despite crop failures during the past years, it was possible nonetheless to stock up considerable reserve supplies for the new year—thanks to the unrelenting steps taken by our Party Comrade Göring. We shall not have to fear for our food stocks for many years to come thanks to these reserve supplies and thanks to this year’s bountiful harvest. Nevertheless, we will proceed with economy. It is our will to accumulate large reserves in wheat so that we shall be spared destitution under any and all circumstances.

2. The fruits borne by the Four-Year Plan are becoming increasingly noticeable. What I believed and forecasted in earlier years has come true: once the national economic prerogatives were pointed out to the leaders of Germany’s economy and to our inventors in particular, the ingenuity and expertise of our chemists, physicists, mechanical engineers, technicians, foremen, and organizers have achieved a success which no one had anticipated and which—I may assuredly say—has been simply astounding.

Here, too, Hitler entertained the deluded notion that, with the assistance of German inventors, he could achieve anything, perform miracles, and overcome all boundaries imposed by nature upon man. He continued:

We are building up Germany’s economy in such a fashion that it can, at any given time, function independently of other countries and stand on its own feet. And this we have achieved. An economic blockade against Germany has become a dead issue. With its own peculiar energy, the National Socialist State has drawn the ultimate consequence from the World War. We will remain true to our principle rather to limit ourselves in one domain or another, should this be necessary, than to ever again become dependent upon other countries. Above all, one resolution will reign supreme in all our

September 6, 1938

economic enterprises: the security of our nation has priority. Hence its material existence must be completely secured within the confines of our Lebensraum and our capacity for self-sufficiency. Only then can the German Wehrmacht guarantee the protection of the Reich, its interests, and freedom of action, under any and all circumstances. And only then does Germany become of interest and value to others as a friend and ally.³⁴¹

When I pronounce this on the occasion of the tenth Reich Party Congress, then I do this in the confident knowledge that the time of Germany's political and economic isolation has come to an end. The Reich has befriended strong and great world powers.

Naturally, he loaded his speech with platitudes on the Bolshevik threat to the world, and heaped praise upon Italy's new anti-Semitic stance:³⁴²

Party Comrades! More threatening than ever, the danger of Bolshevik destruction of all peoples looms on the horizon. A thousand times over we have witnessed the activities of the Jewish agitators prodding this global pestilence.

I believe that this is the time and place to, on my own behalf and the behalf of you all, pronounce with great inner movement how we rejoice at the fact that another great European power has realized this, too. On the basis of its own experiences, its own reflections, and its own approach, it has arrived at the same conclusions as we have, and has drawn the consequences with a truly admirable determination.

Hitler concluded his proclamations with an expression of gratitude to all fighters, men, women, and soldiers, and, most of all, to the "Almighty" who had allowed that "the banner of the new Reich be carried across the border on March 12." He declared:

Above all, let us thank the Almighty for the successful union of the old Ostmark and the new Reich. Through this He bestowed upon the German Volk a great happiness and upon the Reich a great success. It was He who allowed for this without us having to place at risk the life and limb of any of our Volksgenossen. Without the aggregate forces of the entire nation contained in National Socialism this would never have been possible: may all Germans never forget this! It was no longer a symbol of conquest, the banner of the new Reich which was carried across the border in the morning hours of March 12, rather it had become a symbol for the age-old union encompassing all Germans.

This banner which our Wehrmacht carried forth into our new Gaus had become an icon of belief in victory for our brothers in the course of a most difficult struggle. And so it was that in this case, it was foremost an idea that conquered and unified the Volk!

From this day onward, to all of us and to all coming generations, this Reich of Germans will forever be known as *Grossdeutschland!*

At the Culture Convention that same day, Hitler once again presented his views on the essence of culture and art at great length. He spoke of the “culturally completely unproductive Jews” and of the “blasé attitude” of the pseudo-intellectual upper class. The latter he referred to with great disdain in the following stark words:

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

There was nothing new about his use of such terminology. In this instance as well, it was clearly Hitler’s intent to put an end to the preposterous ideas of Rosenberg³⁴³ and Himmler. Their importunate efforts to revive a Wotan cult had long been a thorn in the side of Hitler. Their attempts consisted of constructing sites for the worship of mystical Germanic cults with the goal of exchanging Christian rituals for “Nordic” consecration ceremonies—including different marriage and burial rites. Such aspirations could only detract from what Hitler believed to be the crucial mission of National Socialism: to expand upon and maintain its power base.

Starting from the assumption of the pernicious “mysticism of Christianity,” he announced that the “cultural work of the German Volk” strove to fulfill “one mission” [Hitler’s]. This undertaking must perforce be achieved in the pursuit of the commands issued by “one spirit”—which, of course, was again that of Hitler. The “subversion by occult mystics in search of an afterlife” could not be tolerated. Cult facilities, cult sites, cult performances and rituals were dangerous. There must be only one teaching of a “*völkisch* and political” nature and the “brave fulfillment of the duties entailed.”

While Hitler did not mention the names Rosenberg or Himmler, everyone knew that the admonishment was aimed specifically at these two adherents of mysticism. Hitler detailed the following considerations:

In this period of the most inward orientation, Christian mysticism demanded an approach to the solution of structural problems and hence to an architecture whose design not only ran contrary to the spirit, of the time, but which also helped produce these mysterious dark forces which made the people increasingly willing to submit themselves to cosmopolitanism. The germinating resistance to this violation of the freedom of the spirit and the will of man which lasted for centuries immediately found an outlet in the force-

ful expression of a new form of artistic design. The cathedrals' mystical narrowness and somberness gave way to more generous room and light, reflecting the increasingly free spirit of the time. More and more the mystical twilight gave way to light. The uncertain and probing transition to the twentieth century finally led to the crisis we face today and which will find its resolution in one way or another. [—]

And in this manner the cultural evolution of a Volk resembles that of the Milky Way. Amongst countless pale stars a few suns radiate. However, all suns and planets are made of the same *one* material, and all of them observe the same laws. The entire cultural work of a Volk must not only be geared toward fulfillment of one mission, but this mission must also be pursued in *one* spirit. National Socialism is a cool and highly-reasoned approach to reality based upon the greatest of scientific knowledge and its spiritual expression. As we have opened the Volk's heart to these teachings, and as we continue to do so at present, we have no desire of instilling in the Volk a mysticism that transcends the purpose and goals of our teachings.

Above all, National Socialism is a Volk Movement in essence and under no circumstances a cult movement! Insofar as the enlightenment and registration of our Volk demands the use of certain methods, which by now have become part of its traditions, these methods are rooted in experience and realizations that were arrived at by exclusively pragmatic considerations. Hence it will be useful to make these methods part of our heritage at a later date. They have nothing to do with other borrowed methods or expressions derived from other viewpoints which have to this date constituted the essence of cults. For the National Socialist Movement is not a cult movement; rather, it is a *völkisch* and political philosophy which grew out of considerations of an exclusively racist nature. This philosophy does not advocate mystic cults, but rather aims to cultivate and lead a Volk determined by its blood. [—] Therefore we do not have halls for cults, but halls for the Volk. Nor do we have places for worship, but places for assembly and squares for marches. We do not have cult sites, but sports arenas and play areas. And it is because of this that our assembly halls are not bathed in the mystical twilight of cult sites but rather are places of brightness and light of a beautiful and practical nature. In these halls, no cult rituals take place, they are exclusively the site of Volk rallies of the type which we conducted in the years of our struggle, which we have become accustomed to, and which we shall preserve in this manner.

Hence the National Socialist Movement will not tolerate subversion by occult mystics in search of an afterlife. They are not National Socialists but something different, and in any event, they represent something that has nothing to do with us. At the heart of our program you will not find any mysterious presentiments, rather you will find succinct realization and hence open avowal. Since we place the sustenance and securing of a creature created by God at the center of this realization and avowal, we sustain God's creation, and it is in this manner that we serve this will. We do not do so at a new cult site bathed in mysterious twilight, but rather, in the open, for the Lord to see.

There were ages when twilight was the prerequisite for the propagation of certain teachings. In this day and age, however, light is the prerequisite if

our work is to succeed. God have mercy on him who attempts to subvert our Movement and our State by insisting upon convoluted orders or introducing vague mystical elements to them. It suffices for this lack in clarity to be contained in words only.

It is already dangerous to order the construction of a so-called cult site because this already entails the necessity of coming up with cult games and rites at a later date. The only cult we know is that of a cultivation of the natural and hence of that which God has willed. We stand in complete and unconditional humility before the divine laws as revealed to man. These laws we respect and our prayer is one of brave fulfillment of the duties entailed. We cannot be held responsible for acts of worship; after all, that is the domain of the churches! [—]

Therefore, truly great solutions to the problems of architecture today can only be found if architecture is charged with great and timely tasks. To abandon this principle would render the undertaking hideous. The attempts at resolution would become artificial, dishonest, and wrong and hence would lose their significance for present and future.

In the same manner, one cannot ask music to resolve problems the fulfillment of which transcends its domain. Music as a form of pure art continues to obey laws unknown to us. [—]

Finally, it is absolutely impossible to express a *Weltanschauung* scientifically in terms of music.

After Hitler had shown the deviant cult followers of Rosenberg and Himmler who was their true master in his “culture speech,” he delivered an address before bluecollar workers (*Arbeitsmänner*) the following day. In this rhetorical outpouring, he employed short but equally grotesque words, culminating:

We are proud of you! All of Germany loves you! For you are not merely bearers of the spade, but rather you have become bearers of the shield for our Reich and Volk!

You represent the most noble of slogans known to us: “God helps those who help themselves!”

I thank you for your creations and work! I thank your Reich Leader of Labor Service for the gigantic build-up accomplished!

As Führer and Chancellor of the Reich, I rejoice at this sight, standing before you, and I rejoice in recognition of the spirit that inspires you, and I rejoice at seeing my Volk which possesses such men and maids! *Heil Euch!*

That afternoon, Hitler held a reception for the diplomatic corps³⁴⁴ in Nuremberg at the Deutscher Hof Hotel. Even the representative of Czechoslovakia attended. The only states that were still missing were the Vatican and the Soviet Union. Hitler gave a welcoming address in which he pointed out that increasing numbers of heads of diplomatic missions participated in the Party Congresses of the NSDAP. The

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French Ambassador François-Poncet expressed the gratitude of the diplomatic corps.

Hitler's speech before the Political Leaders on September 9 was rather short compared to other years. While greeting "among the ranks of our old loyal revolutionary guard, our comrades in arms from our Ostmark," he touched upon the topic of the tense atmosphere at the time. He maintained that the present (foreign policy) situation of Germany corresponded to the domestic struggle of former times, and thus was bound to develop along similar beneficial lines. Once again, he found himself expounding upon the applicability of domestic policy to the international realm.

You all certainly feel how strong we are in this community. At a time like this when there are clouds on the horizon, I rejoice doubly at seeing myself surrounded by a guard of millions of undeterred, zealous National Socialists whose spiritual leaders you are!

Just as I used to rely upon you blindly in the long years of struggle for power in Germany, I am certain that Germany and I can rely upon you today. All those who for fifteen years anticipated the collapse of our Movement, all those were wrong. The Movement emerged all the stronger from every trial and tribulation! And all those who today hope for a weakening of Germany, they will be proven wrong, too!

As I speak to you today, I do not see 140,000 Political Leaders standing before me; no, you are the German nation. A Volk is worth no more and no less than its leadership. Our leadership shall be of a benign nature—it is this that we promise the German Volk!

On September 10, Hitler spoke before the German youth and announced the following:

A new movement had to come along, a movement that would educate and, therefore, prepare our Volk. And even if March 12 and March 13, 1938, were all that National Socialism had achieved in its historical existence, that alone would suffice to justify its existence for the millennium! [—]

You were placed in the middle of this community of fate. In it you shall grow and one day you shall support it yourselves. One day, your steadfastness shall be used as a rod for the steadfastness of Germany. I have confidence in you, and I count upon you blindly.

Once Providence chooses to take me from my Volk, then I will bequeath upon the coming Führer a Volk of iron, steadfast in its unity that can never again be separated or torn apart. It will stand together without yielding; it will be happy in times of rejoicing and spiteful in times of need.

In my eyes, each of you boys and each of you girls are a life guarantee for this.

Throughout the German lands, those who rely upon the united German Volk fare the best. And you are the German Volk!

On September 11, Hitler addressed the “fighting formations” of the Party. Naturally, he greeted the SA and SS men from the Ostmark first. He deliberately avoided using the word Austria and made no mention of the “Austrian Legion,” a group which he had on April 3 promised to present with a statement of appreciation and an assessment of their new function at this Party Congress.³⁴⁵ Instead, Hitler referred to the sports competitions which he wanted to place at the center of the SA’s work. He then repeatedly alluded to other future battles and to those Germans (the Sudeten Germans) who did not yet enjoy the privilege of living within the boundaries of the Reich. He declared:

What stands here today is the best political fighting troop of the German Volk ever. At times like these, we must remind ourselves that National Socialism did not rise to power as a result of some vague hope but as a result of a concrete battle. And National Socialism stands determined to preserve its present position and the position of the Reich which it has created under any and all circumstances! [—]

And so this time the champions of the games stand amongst you. I greet them in particular, and I expect that, over the next few years, these competitive games will develop into a gigantic event. This event will be crowned by the completion of an enormous stadium to the right of the new congress hall, a stadium for the German Volk. [—]

This Germany stands before us now and we have the great fortune to live in it. Other Germans are not this fortunate right now. Our hearts reach out to them, and we know that in their hearts they are with us at this hour!

Before he could proceed to reckon with the Czechs on September 12 at the final congress, Hitler delivered an address to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht. In a preface to the customary military reviews, Hitler stepped upon the stone rostrum on the Zeppelin Field, turned to the soldiers, and proudly declared that all military victories up to this point had been attained not through conferences, negotiations or agreements, but by means of the “power of our own weapons!”³⁴⁶ The verbatim content of the speech is reprinted below:

Soldiers of the German Wehrmacht!

As in years past, you have assembled in Nuremberg for this year’s Reich Party Congress. For the first time, you stand here as soldiers of the Greater German Reich! We owe it to two facts that this age-old dream has become reality:

First, the highly successful creation of a truly German Volksgemeinschaft. It was the prerequisite for the realization of this dream.

Second, the build-up of the new German Wehrmacht whose soldiers finally realized the dream through their invasion. We can draw two conclusions from this:

First, we acknowledge the necessity of the existence of the Movement, the Movement which in less than two decades' time succeeded in liberating the German Volk from its greatest inner confusion and chaos and leading it to the unity which we see today. The teachings of National Socialism and of the Party are guarantors of this inner German Volksgemeinschaft.

Second, the lesson we have learned from this is how important it is that the internally restructured German Volksgemeinschaft be outwardly protected. This depends exclusively on the power of our own weapons and, therefore, depends upon the carriers of those weapons themselves.

No negotiations, no conferences and no other agreement has accorded us Germans the natural right to unity. We had to take justice into our own hands, and we were able to do so thanks to your existence, my soldiers!

And it is thus that the two greatest institutions of our Volk must fulfill two identical missions. National Socialism has to educate our Volk within to form this Volksgemeinschaft. The Wehrmacht has to instruct this same Volk to defend this Volksgemeinschaft outwardly. So it is you, my soldiers, who were immediately charged with the fulfillment of a mission in this new Reich. And this fulfillment has earned you the love of the German Volk. It relied upon you and it has realized that it can rely upon its sons in uniform. For you carry the best weapons available today, you receive the best training, and I know that you also possess the best of character.

You fit in well with the eternal, everlasting front constituted by Germany's soldiers. In the past months, I repeatedly had the opportunity to convince myself of this. I saw it at the maneuver sites, shooting stands, and training camps, and it was with great contentment that I realized that the German nation can once more look to its soldiers with great pride. And it is that for which I thank you!

Yet, we do not serve for the sake of gratitude, praise, or recompense unless this gratitude, praise and recompense is at the service of what we value the most in this world: our Volk and our German Reich!

Deutschland—Sieg Heil!

On the last meeting of the Party Congress, Hitler began his tensely awaited address with a lengthy "party narrative." His reminiscence of the early fighting days concluded:

And yet we look back upon these times with the greatest feeling of pride. Today we feel doubly close to those times because first of all, in our midst we see the fighters of the eldest German Ostmark who until recently were subject to a like persecution because of their National Socialist conviction. They stand amongst us today as Volksgenossen and citizens of the German Reich. What have they not had to go through, suffer through?! How many of their comrades were slain, how many injured in body and spirit, how many lost their livelihoods for many years, and how many ten thousands were imprisoned in jails, penitentiaries and Anhaltelagers?!

The second reason for which we reflect upon these times with particular emotion is the fact that the events we experienced and suffered in our own

nation at the time are precisely those we are witnessing on the world stage today. And above all: our enemies today remain *weltanschaulich* the very same ones.

Next Hitler drew parallels between these enemies of the past and their present respective counterparts. He equated the German Nationalists and the Center Party with the Western democracies. Then he likened German Communism to the Soviet Union:

Almost every year, we could step before the nation with quiet confidence and await its judgment.³⁴⁷ The greatest approval ever granted the leadership of a Volk became ours on April 10 of this year.³⁴⁸ The Volk acknowledged and confirmed that it regards the new form of state and its leadership as institutions that strive to the best of their abilities to serve the Volk and to lead it once more to freedom and greatness and to ensure its economic well-being.

And still, what we are witnessing today on a larger scale is precisely the same we experienced in the decades of internal struggle. Ever since the day we assumed power, we have been surrounded by a hostile environment. The connivance between the gilded, capitalist democratic movement in our parliament on the one hand and with Marxism on the other in their war on National Socialism is today mirrored in a like conspiracy, albeit on a larger scale, involving the democracies and the Bolshevists as they make war on the state constituted by the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft.

Perhaps the most persuasive evidence of the insincerity of their fight against the National Socialist Party as it struggled for power at the time is the fact that no matter whether they were bourgeois nationalists, capitalist democrats, or Marxist internationalists, they formed a unitary front against us in all decisive battles. At the time, many of our Volksgenossen were forced to realize just how dishonest the political battle was and of how little import morals were in this fight as they saw those parties fighting us on nationalist grounds, yet were not reluctant to conspire with Marxist internationalists to that end.

And vice versa, our Volksgenossen had to realize just how dishonest and fraudulent those parties were who claimed to persecute us for socialist reasons and then went to ally themselves with the worst proponents of capitalism prior to entering into the unitary front against us. The Center Party claimed to be fighting us because we were hostile to the Church, and yet to this end it entered into a holy alliance with atheist Social Democrats and did not shrink from uniting with the Communists. And on the other hand, Communists fought us because, as they claimed, we represented the Reaktion in their eyes. Yet they cast their ballot together with the true reactionaries against the vote of the National Socialist Party in the Reichstag.

It was indeed a display of such duplicity that one could only turn from it in disgust. Today we feel equally repelled as we watch the so-called international world democracies who supposedly advocate liberty, fraternity, justice, the right to self-determination of the peoples, etc., as we see these states ally themselves with Bolshevist Moscow.³⁴⁹ One day, perhaps someone

will ask why we concern ourselves so much with the democracies and why we treat them in so negative a manner. This is the case because:

First, as those attacked we are forced to counter.

Second, the conduct of these phenomena is so revolting.

Dishonesty sets in the minute these democracies claim to represent government by the people and decry authoritarian states as dictatorships. I believe that I can confidently state that today there are only two world powers who can honestly claim to have 99 percent of their people backing the government. What in other countries goes by the name of democracy is in most cases little other than the apt manipulation of public opinion by means of money and the press, and the equally apt manipulation of the results hereby achieved. How easily, however, are these supposed democracies stripped bare of their pretenses when one takes a close look at their stance in matters of foreign policy which constantly change to suit the purpose of the moment. There we witness how truly repressive regimes in small countries are actually being glorified by these democracies if it suits their needs. Yes, they even go so far as to fight for them, while on the other hand, they themselves actively repress inconvenient rallies in those states where such protest does not suit them. They fail to acknowledge this activism, attempt to subvert it or simply misinterpret its significance. And this is not all: these democracies even glorify Bolshevik regimes if it happens to suit their purpose, and this in spite of the fact that the latter style themselves as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In other words, these supposed democracies decry regimes that are backed by 99 percent of their constituents as dictatorships, while at the same time they praise other countries as highly respectable democratic institutions even though these call themselves dictatorships and even though these can only subsist on the basis of mass executions, torture, etc. Is it not one of the greatest ironies in history that in the midst of upright prototype democrats in Geneva, the blood-drenched proponent of one of the cruelest tyrannies of all time moves about freely as a highly respected member of the Council?³⁵⁰

We in Germany have already witnessed the alliance of Jewish capitalism with an abstract version of communist anti-capitalism, and we have seen the *Rote Fabne*, the *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* march hand in hand here. It is the same all over the world. Bolshevik Moscow has become the highly revered ally of capitalist democracies! [—]

For fifteen years, they have acted in gruesome defiance of the most natural interests of their peoples, yes, acting contrary to any standards of human dignity. Indeed, they drew up *Diktats* with a pistol in hand only to, at a later date, lament the “unilateral” transgression of holy rights and the breach of all the more holy contracts. Without so much as a thought for the opinion of the natives, they have led a drive for the bloody subjugation of entire continents. However, the minute that Germany mentions the return of its colonies, they declared that—out of concern for the indigenous people there—one could not possibly abandon the natives to so horrid a fate. At the same time, they did not distance themselves from dropping bombs out of planes onto their own colonies. And all this to use the force of reason to persuade the dear colored compatriots to submit to the foreign rule a hit longer. Of course, the

bombs thus employed were bombs with civilizing warheads which one must absolutely not confuse with those brutal ones Italy used in Abyssinia.

Throughout the democratic countries, one laments the unimaginable cruelty with which first Germany, and now Italy as well, are striving to rid themselves of the Jewish element. However, all these great democratic empires have altogether little more than a few persons per square kilometer. In Italy and in Germany this number exceeds 140 persons. For decades, Germany nevertheless took in hundreds of thousands upon hundreds of thousands of Jews without batting an eyelid.

Now that the burden has become overbearing and the nation is no longer willing to have its life blood sucked out of it by these parasites, it is now that there is great lament abroad. However, not a word is heard in these democratic countries about replacing this hypocritical lamentation with a good deed and assistance. No, to the contrary, all one hears is cold reasoning claiming that in these states there is regretfully no space either! Evidently, they expect us to bear up under this burden of Jewry despite our 140 persons per square kilometer, while the democratic world empires with their few people per square kilometer could not possibly shoulder this burden. Alas, no help. But morals!

And thus we find the National Socialist Reich faced with the same phenomenon and forces that we had fifteen years to get to know as a party. Insofar as this is indicative of the hostile attitude of the democratic states toward Germany, this matters little to us. Besides, why should we fare any better than the Reich before us? On a side note, I will admit quite openly that I find it easier to bear insults from someone who can no longer rob me than to be robbed by someone who praises me for letting it happen. Today we are insulted. Yet we are in a position—praise the Lord—to prevent Germany from being ravaged and raped. The state before us was blackmailed for fifteen years. For this, admittedly, it received compensation—the somewhat sparse recompense, at least in my eyes—of praise for having been a good little democratic state.

This comportment becomes unbearable for us the minute a major part of our Volk is placed at the mercy of impertinent abusers, ostensibly without any means of defending itself, while the brunt of democratic rhetoric pours forth as a threat to our Volksgenossen. I am speaking of *Czecho-Slovakia*.³⁵¹

Now Hitler had finally reached the central part of his speech. As was to be expected, he showered the Czechoslovakian state with accusations, but did not spare Western statesmen either:

This state is a democracy, that is to say it was founded on democratic principles. The majority of its people was simply forced to submit to the structure construed at Versailles without any one asking for its opinion. As a true democracy, this state immediately began to suppress the majority of its people, to abuse there and to rob them of their inalienable rights. Gradually, one attempted to impress upon the world that this state had a special military and political mission to fulfill.

The former French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot,³⁵² has explained this to us recently. According to him, Czechoslovakia exists for the purpose of providing a base, in the event of war, for launching aerial attacks and dropping bombs upon German cities and industrial plants. Needless to say, we may assume that these will once again be equipped with those warheads of the famed civilizing variety.

However, this mission stands in opposition to the desires of the majority of the inhabitants of this state, and is alien to their philosophy of life and contrary to their vital interests. That is why the majority of its citizens were silenced. Any protest against this fate would have been an assault upon the aims incarnate in this state and hence would have been in violation of its constitution. Drawn up by the democrats, this constitution was less suited to realizing the rights of the people affected and was instead more tailored toward accommodating the political expediencies of the people's oppressors. Political expediency necessitated as well that a structure be construed that accorded the Czech people a position of preeminence in this state. Whoever protested against this usurpation became an "enemy of the state" and hence, in accordance with democratic norms, he was outlawed. Providence has thus called upon the so-called people of the Czech state—admittedly voicing its intent through the good offices of the architects at Versailles—to stand guard lest someone rise in opposition to this ultimate purpose of the state.

Should someone nevertheless venture to step forth from amongst the majority of the oppressed peoples in this state and voice opposition to this end, then it is naturally permissible that he be beaten hack with the full force at the state's disposal and, if so desire or need be, he could also simply be murdered. If this now did not concern us, if this were some foreign affair, we, like so many others, might take note of it simply as a most interesting display of the democrats' understanding of the rights of peoples to self-determination. However, the nature of the affair involves an obligation of us Germans.

Amongst the suppressed minorities in this state, there are also three and a half million Germans, roughly as many people of our race as Denmark has in inhabitants.³⁵³ These Germans are God's creatures as well. The Almighty has not created them so that the construction arrived at in Versailles might place them at the mercy of an alien power they hate. And He has not created seven million Czechs either so that they may reign over these three and a half million, keep them in tutelage, and even far less did He create them to ravage and torture.

The situation in this state has become unbearable, as is well known. In a political context, three and a half million people there are robbed of their right to self-determination in the name of the right to self-determination as construed by a certain Mister Wilson. In an economic context, these people are being ruined methodically and hence are subject to a slow but steady extermination. The misery of the Sudeten Germans defies description. One desires to destroy them. In a humanitarian context, they are being oppressed and humiliated in an unprecedented fashion.

When three and a half million members of a Volk of eighty million may not sing a song they like because the Czechs dislike it, when they are beaten

until they bleed simply because they wear stockings which the Czechs care not to see, when they are terrorized and abused because they greet one another in a fashion the Czechs cannot bear even though they were merely greeting one another and no Czech, when they are persecuted because of every little detail connected to the expression of their nationality, and when they are hunted down as though animals, yes, then this may leave those renowned representatives of democracy cold, who knows, they might actually enjoy it since those affected are a mere three and a half million Germans. All I can say to these representatives of democracy is that this does not leave us cold, no, if these tortured creatures can find neither justice nor help by themselves, then they will receive both from us. There must be an end to the injustice inflicted upon these people!

I have already stated this quite openly in my speech of February 20. It was a short-sighted enterprise which the architects of Versailles conceived when they gave birth to the abnormal structure of the Czechoslovakian state. It could pursue its mission to ravage and rape a mass of millions of other nationalities only as long as the brother nations themselves suffered from the abuse inflicted upon the world at Versailles.

However, to believe that such a regime could continue to sin eternally and endlessly means to succumb to an inconceivable delusion. In my speech before the German Reichstag on February 20, I had pointed out that the Reich will no longer stand for any further oppression and persecution of these three and a half million Germans. And I implore all foreign statesmen not to think this mere rhetoric.

For the sake of peace in Europe, the National Socialist State has made enormous sacrifices, enormous sacrifices for the entire nation. It did not harbor any thoughts of so-called revenge; rather, it has banished all such thoughts from all private and public spheres of life. In the course of the seventeenth century, France slowly penetrated Alsace-Lorraine and took it from the Old German Reich in the midst of peacetime.

Following a dreadful war in 1870–71 which had been forced upon Germany, the Reich reclaimed these territories, and they were returned to it. They were lost once more after the World War. To us Germans, the cathedral in Strasbourg means a lot. And when we did not pursue the matter any further, we refrained only in the service of a lasting peace for Europe. No one could have forced us to cede these claims voluntarily had we not wished to give them up in the first place!

We gave them up because we willed an end to this constant argument with France once and for all. The Reich has espoused a similar stance and has taken similarly determined steps along its other borders as well. Here National Socialism acted highly responsibly and set an example. We made the greatest of sacrifices and distanced ourselves voluntarily from any further demands so that Europe might enjoy a peaceful future and so that a passage might be cleared, at least on our part, for reconciliation of all peoples worldwide. We acted in an exceedingly loyal fashion.

Neither press, silver screen, nor stage were allowed to propagate a diverging opinion. Not even in literature did we allow for an exception. In

a related spirit, I offered solutions for a reduction of tensions in Europe, an offer that was refused for reasons we still fail to comprehend. We voluntarily restricted our power in this important realm in the hope that we should never again be forced to use arms against this one other state in question.³⁵⁴ This did not happen because we would not have been able to produce 55 percent more ships; it occurred because we wished to contribute to a final reduction of tensions and to a pacification of the situation in Europe. Since we found a great patriot and statesman in Poland willing to enter into an agreement with Germany, we immediately seized the opportunity, and arrived at a treaty that no doubt is of far greater import to peace in Europe than all the talk in the halls of the League of Nations' temple in Geneva.

Germany today possesses many a completely pacified border and Germany is determined, and has stated as much, to accept these borders as inviolable and unchangeable in order to give Europe a feeling of security and peace. Apparently, however, this self-denial and self-discipline on the part of Germany has been misinterpreted as a sign of weakness. Hence today I would like to set things right:

I do not believe that we would be rendering peace in Europe a great service if we pronounced our disinterest in all European affairs. In particular, Germany would not be doing anyone a great service if it remained unmoved by the suffering and plight of three and a half million Volksgenossen and if it did not take an interest in their fate. We understand when England and France pursue their interests in the world.

I wish to point out to the statesmen in Paris and London that there are German interests as well and that we are determined to pursue these under all circumstances. At this point I would like to remind them of my speech before the Reichstag in 1933, in which I openly avowed before all the world that there were questions of national concern in which our path was clearly predetermined. I would rather submit myself to any ordeal, danger, or torment than to fail in the fulfillment of such prerogatives.

No European state has done as much as Germany in the service of peace! No one has made greater sacrifices! One must bear in mind, however, that there is a limit as to how much one can sacrifice, and one should not confuse National Socialist Germany with the Germany of Bethmann-Hollweg and Herding.³⁵⁵

Now Hitler addressed the issue of the Czechoslovakian partial mobilization of May 20 and 21. He maintained that this move had been intended as a "brutal policy of intimidation" towards the Sudeten Germans during the local elections. In addition, it had been "an encroachment" on the sovereignty of the German Reich.

When I make this declaration, I do so because of an event that occurred in the course of this year, an event that forces all of us to reconsider our stance to date. As you well know, my Party Comrades, Czechoslovakia has finally announced local elections to be held this year after infinitely postponing any form of plebiscite. Even Prague has finally admitted to the untenable nature

of its present position. It fears the unity of the Germans and of the other nationalities. It is convinced that it has to resort to extraordinary measures in order to exert pressure in the election process and thus to manipulate the outcome of the election. Evidently, the Czechoslovakian Government has concluded that this can be achieved only through a brutal policy of intimidation. Apparently, the Czech state felt that a display of its military might was particularly well suited to this end.

This was especially geared toward the Sudeten Germans to serve as a warning not to speak up for their national interests and to vote accordingly. In order to somehow justify this attempt at intimidation before the eyes of the world public, the Czech Government, i.e. Herr Beneš, fabricated the lie that German troops had been mobilized for an invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In this context, let me today state the following: the creation of such lies is nothing new. About a year ago, the press in a certain country invented a story according to which 20,000 German soldiers had landed in Morocco.³⁵⁶

The Jewish proponent of this lie in the press hoped to thereby cause a war. At the time, it had sufficed to address a short statement to the French Ambassador to resolve the situation. And in this instance as well, we immediately assured the ambassador of another great power of the falsehood of the Czech allegations. The statement was issued once more, and the Prague Government was immediately informed of its content. Nevertheless, the Government in Prague exploited this deception as a pretext for its terrorist blackmail and manipulation of the election.³⁵⁷

All that I can do in retrospect is to assert that, for one, not one German soldier had been called up other than those serving anyway at this point in time. Secondly, not one regiment, not one additional unit, had marched to the border. Indeed, not one soldier served in a garrison other than the one assigned to him for peacetime during this period.

To the contrary, orders were issued to avoid taking any steps that might be construed as a means for exerting pressure on Czechoslovakia on our part. Nonetheless, a base and vile campaign against us was launched in which all of Europe was organized in the service of a government in pursuit of criminal goals. This government's sole ambition lay in the manipulation of the election by the exertion of military pressure in an effort to intimidate its citizens and thus rob them of their right to vote. And all this was merely a means of obtaining moral legitimacy which this government felt it needed. Indeed, it had no scruples to cast suspicion on one great state, to alarm all of Europe and to, if need be, plunge Europe into a bloody war.

The Reich Government undertook no such steps, and, in fact, Germany had no such intentions; quite to the contrary, it was convinced that the local elections would do justice to the Sudeten German cause. This lack of activity was then construed as a sign that the German Government stepped down because of the determined stance of the Czechs and of the early intervention by England and France.

You will understand, my Party Comrades, that a great power cannot tolerate such a base incursion [the partial mobilization of Czechoslovakian troops on May 20/21] a second time. As a consequence, I have taken the

necessary precautions. I am a National Socialist and as such I am accustomed to strike back at any attacker. Moreover, I know only too well that leniency will not succeed in appeasing, but will merely encourage the arrogance of so irreconcilable an adversary as the Czechs.

Let the fate of the Old German Reich be a warning to us. Its love for peace drove it to the brink of self-destruction. Nonetheless, the Old Reich could not prevent the war in the end. In due consideration thereof, I took steps on May 28 which were very difficult:

First, I ordered a far-reaching intensification and the immediate implementation and execution of the reinforcements announced for Army and Luftwaffe. Second, I ordered the immediate expansion of our fortifications to the West. I can assure you that ever since May 28, the construction of one of the most gigantic fortresses of all time has been underway there.

To this end, I entrusted Dr. Todt, the Generalinspekteur for road construction in Germany, with a new commission. Within the framework of the projects undertaken by the fortress construction inspectorate, he has achieved one of the greatest accomplishments of all time, thanks to his extraordinary organizational talents.

Hitler's boasts about the barely three-month-old fortifications in the West were quite ill-founded. The military men in the audience were not the only ones to realize that within such a short time, no fortifications of the enormous proportions Hitler claimed could possibly have been built. Nevertheless, Hitler thought he could bluff both his listeners at home and those abroad, in particular the "senile" British.

In cases such as this, Hitler enjoyed presenting awesome figures to his audience, the mere sound of which intoxicated both the masses and himself. On September 12, he recounted the numbers of the workers employed in the construction effort, the daily train loads and the amount of gravel used in the West Wall construction.

Let me point out a few figures to you. At present at work on the fortification of our Western frontier, a project actually begun over two years ago, are:

278,000 laborers in the Todt organization in addition to 84,000 [other] laborers, in addition to 100,000 men of the Reich Labor Service and numerous pioneer battalions and infantry divisions. Besides the materials that are brought to the construction sites via different transportation routes, the German Reichsbahn alone transports 8,000 freight cars a day.

The daily consumption of gravel amounts to over 100,000 tons. The fortification of Germany's western border will be completed prior to the onset of winter. Its defensive capacity is already assured as of this day. Once completed, it will consist of over 17,000 armored plates and concrete structures. The German Volk in arms stands behind this front of steel and concrete made up of three fortified lines and in some locations actually consists of four fortified lines up to fifty kilometers deep. I have made this

greatest effort of all time in the service of peace. Under no circumstances, however, am I willing to quietly stand by and observe from afar the continued oppression of German Volksgenossen in Czechoslovakia.

It's all tactics. Herr Beneš talks, wants to organize negotiations. He wishes to resolve the question of procedure in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and hands out little favors to placate the people. Things cannot go on this way! This is not a question of empty diplomatic phrases. This is a question of right, the question of a right not granted. What we Germans demand is the right to self-determination, a right every Volk possesses, and not an empty phrase. Herr Beneš is not supposed to grant the Sudeten Germans any favors. They have a right to their own way of life, just as any other people do.

The consequences will be grave ones should, perchance, the democracies persist in their conviction that they must continue to, by any and all means, accord their protection to the oppression of German men and women! I believe it to be in the service of peace, if I leave no doubts as to this fact.

I am asking neither that Germany be allowed to oppress three and a half million Frenchmen, nor am I asking that three and a half million Englishmen be placed at our mercy. Rather I am simply demanding that the oppression of three and a half million Germans in Czechoslovakia cease and that the inalienable right to self-determination take its place.

We would truly regret if this were to cloud or damage our relations to the other European states. Yet the fault would not be ours. It is the business of the Czechoslovakian Government to come to terms with the true representatives of the Sudeten Germans and, in one way or another, to reach some form of understanding with them. Nevertheless, it is my business and, my Volksgenossen, it is the business of all of us to take care that justice not be perverted into injustice. After all, this matter involves our German Volksgenossen. I am not in the least willing to allow foreign statesmen to create a second Palestine right here in the heart of Germany. The poor Arabs are defenseless and have been abandoned by all. The Germans in Czechoslovakia are neither defenseless nor have they been abandoned. Please note this fact.

I feel compelled to broach this topic at that Party Congress in which the representatives of our German-Austrian Gaus participate for the first time. Better than anyone else they know how painful it is to be separated from the mother country. Easier than anyone else they will grasp the full import of my exposition on this day. With greater enthusiasm than any, they will agree with me when I state before the entire Volk that we would not deserve to be Germans if we were not willing to take such a stance, and to bear up under the consequences one way or another.

What Hitler obviously meant when he spoke of the "consequences in one way or another" was the use of brute force and military might. To make things perfectly clear, Hitler again spoke of the "intolerable impertinence," that the small Czechoslovakian state had perpetrated against Germany by effecting the partial mobilization of May 20 and

21. That such an insult had been possible was probably due, as Hitler argued, to the mistaken impression that Germany was merely a “peace-loving upstart” country. However, now that the “resurrection” of the German Volk had been attained, there was “no power on earth” that could ever erase the “Germanic-German Reich” from the map. Hitler’s peroration of September 12 is reproduced below.

When we bear in mind the intolerable impertinence with which even a small state dared to approach Germany in the last months, then we realize that the only explanation possible is revealed in the unwillingness to recognize that the German Reich is more than just a peace-loving, upstart state.

Standing in Rome in the springtime, I felt deep inside that we assess historic developments in far too restricted a manner, investigating time periods far too short to be revealing. One thousand or fifteen hundred years are no more than a few dynastic successions.

What exhausts itself in a certain period, can rise again in the same time period. Today’s Italy and today’s Germany are living proof of this. Both are nations that have regenerated, indeed, that might be regarded as new nations in this context. However, their roots spring not from the grounds of more recent ages but rather they reach back into ancient history. The Roman Empire breathes once more. The phenomenon of Germany as a state is not new either, although it has made its appearance more recently.

I had the insignias of the Old German Reich brought to Nuremberg for a reason. I wish to call to mind, and this not only for the benefit of the German people but also for that of all peoples, that more than half a millennium prior to the discovery of the new world, a gigantic Germanic-German Reich³⁵⁸ stood on these grounds. Dynasties came into being and dissipated. Outward forms changed. Yet while the Volk has been rejuvenated, its essence has remained the same it has always been. The German Reich has long been dormant.

Now the German Volk has awakened and once more bears its crown of 1,000 years high on its head. All of us who bear witness to this historic resurrection feel great pride and happiness. We stand before the Almighty in humble gratitude.

For the rest of the world this should be an inspiration as well as a lesson learned, an inspiration to reflect upon history from a more elevated point of view, and a lesson not to succumb to the same mistakes as in the past.

In truth the new Roman-Italian empire and the Germanic-German Reich are ancient structures. You need not love them and yet no power on earth shall ever again remove them.

Party Comrades! National Socialists! The first Reich Party Congress of Greater Germany ends at this hour. All of you are still under the spell of the great historic events of these past days. This demonstration of our Volk’s power and determination has reinforced the nation’s pride and your confidence in it. Return to your homes now and carry in your hearts that same faith which you have cherished throughout almost two decades as Germans and as National Socialists.

September 12, 1938

You now have the right to proudly carry your heads high again as Germans. It is the duty of all of us to never again bow our heads to any alien will. To this let us pledge ourselves, so help us God!

Hitler's speech not only marked the end of the "First Reich Party Congress of Greater Germany," but also proved to be the last such speech, for the NSDAP was not to hold a party congress ever again. Although the next annual congress had already been scheduled for September 1939, bearing the most appropriate title of "Reich Party Congress of Peace," the outbreak of the Second World War precluded its convocation.

7

After Hitler's final address, peace and quiet returned for a day. The Western part of the world was reflecting upon the options at its disposal. It was obvious that Hitler contemplated initiating a war within a very short time. This had not only been betrayed by his speech, but could also be felt in the tense atmosphere in the streets of Germany. Although no official mobilization order had been issued, final preparations were proceeding at top speed. Reservists reported for duty at barracks and assembly sites, while the normal life of the ordinary citizen took on a distinctly military character—not to mention the constant air-raid drills and blackouts. It seemed to be a replay of the military measures the citizens of Bavaria had experienced prior to the invasion of Austria on March 11, this time on a national level. Civilian trucks and cars were requisitioned to form part of military convoys. Peasants brought the horses and wagons which had been confiscated in rural areas to the military assembly sites in the cities. Troops fully equipped for battle and prepared for the move against Czechoslovakia left their garrisons in the cities to proceed to their points of concentration.

Hitler undoubtedly would give the signal to invade Czechoslovakia under the pretext of rushing to the aid of the Sudeten Germans to force the accordance of their right to self-determination. This would lend the most convenient moral justification to his venture, since there was no doubt that this right had been denied the Sudeten Germans ever since 1919. However, the question the Western Powers still faced was whether Hitler honestly cared about the Sudeten Germans' right to self-determination, or whether he coveted the Sudetenland only to enable him to carry out a later conquest of the remainder of the Czechoslovakian state. Indeed, its territory would represent a most crucial and highly welcome base from which to launch future military attacks in the East.

Hence, it is not surprising that in the course of the following weeks, British statesmen strove to discern Hitler's true intentions. They attempted to prevent him from moving against Czechoslovakia by binding him with an international treaty. But it was not a pleasant task, nor an easy one. To this end, it was necessary for a British politician to confront Hitler in person in an effort to unearth his true designs. Even if Hitler were successfully persuaded to enter into a treaty settlement of the Sudeten German issue, this would nonetheless be tantamount to the complete destruction of Czechoslovakia as a viable political entity. After all, cession of the Sudeten German territories not only meant the loss of a significant part of its territory but also of its most formidable defenses. The Czechs would then be at the complete mercy of Hitler's Germany.

Notwithstanding these certainties, such a treaty settlement as the British pursued would force Hitler's hand. It would remove all doubt as to his ambitions. It would reveal whether the right to self-determination of a people truly held any meaning for him or whether this right was applicable only to Germans. In spite of the fact that Hitler had clamored vigorously for the right to self-determination in Germany, the West needed to clarify whether he would uphold this principle in the Czech case as well. Later events would justify the British actions during September 1938, even though at the time they were incomprehensible to many. The following official press release was published on September 14:³⁵⁹

Berlin, September 14

The British Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, today forwarded the following communication to the Führer and Reich Chancellor via the British Ambassador in Berlin:

"In view of the increasingly critical situation I propose to come over at once to see you with a view to trying to find a peaceful solution. I propose to come across by air and am ready to start tomorrow.

Please indicate earliest time at which you can see me and suggest place of meeting. I should be grateful for a very early reply.

Neville Chamberlain."

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has replied to the above communication saying that he is quite ready to meet the British Prime Minister on the 15th of this month. Mr. Neville Chamberlain is accordingly expected on the Obersalzberg tomorrow, Thursday afternoon.

The German public was greatly surprised at the news and the speculation immediately arose. Was this conference intended to bring results similar to both the January 4, 1933, von Papen-Hitler talks and

Hitler's February 12, 1938, summons of Schuschnigg? Was Chamberlain about to submit to Hitler, or would the British statesman come to give Hitler a timely last warning not to precipitate a general war?

The man who had been the most surprised at this step on the part of the British Prime Minister was, without a doubt, Hitler himself—he was thunderstruck.³⁶⁰ Hitler had always been a firm believer in the “senility” of the British, but he did not believe they were so decrepit that they would actually assist him. To Hitler, this visit meant only one thing: a repetition on the international stage of the capitulation of the German Nationalists in 1933. Finally, his bluffs of the Bolshevist threat and the insurmountable military might of Germany had borne fruit!

Hitler agreed to the meeting on September 15, while at the same time resolving to treat Chamberlain no better than he would a German Nationalist Privy Councillor, and making certain to lecture him. He was not willing to travel as far as one kilometer to greet the British statesman, who was old enough to be his father. No, it was to the remotest corner in the southeast of Germany that the Prime Minister would have to come to meet him. Now the sixty-nine-year-old Englishman would, for the first time in his life have to make an arduous airplane journey, to meet the terms of the Führer. Wearing by the flight, Hitler believed Chamberlain would not be able to resist his verbal onslaught.

In addition, Hitler called for General Keitel to come to the Berghof for the duration of the visit, certain that the General's presence would be a trump card to play at a later point in the negotiations. Hitler refrained from ordering other generals of martial appearance, such as Sperrle and Reichenau, whom he had relied upon for the psychological tormenting of Schuschnigg.³⁶¹ Evidently, the Führer believed that General Keitel would suffice to instill fear in the elderly Chamberlain.

At 8:35 on the morning of September 15, Chamberlain boarded a Lockheed aircraft at the Heston Airport near London. He arrived at the Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich at 12:30 p.m. In his company were Sir Horace Wilson, his political adviser, and William Strang, the head of the Central European Department in the Foreign Office. On his drive through Munich, en route to the train station, the citizens burst into spontaneous applause and greeted Chamberlain with genuine enthusiasm. The interpreter Schmidt accompanied Chamberlain on the three-hour train ride to Berchtesgaden. From the window of the train, it would have been difficult for them not to notice the incessant transports of troops by rail and military vehicles.

Around 5:00 p.m., Chamberlain's party finally arrived at the Obersalzberg. Hitler did not even deem it worth his while to come down farther than to the bottom of the stairs to greet the British Prime Minister. Following the customary greetings and introductions, tea was served in the great hall where General Keitel came to join the guests.³⁶² The scene was nearly identical to the staging of Schuschnigg's reception in February.

However, Chamberlain requested to speak to Hitler alone, and the Führer graciously consented. Hitler, Chamberlain and the interpreter ascended to his study on the second floor, where they conferred in private.³⁶³ Keitel, Ribbentrop, Wilson, and Strang stayed below. In his office, Hitler immediately set out to deliver a "party narrative" to tire his visitor.

In full length, he expanded upon the idea of German-British cooperation, a subject which had preoccupied him ever since his youth. Then he recounted his accomplishments from 1933 onward: the attainment of equality of rights, the settlement with Poland, the naval agreement, his resolution of the Alsace-Lorraine problem, and his persistent appeals for peace. Finally, he came to speak of the issue at hand and categorically stated that the Sudeten Germans simply had to be returned home to the Reich. In spite of the long and tedious journey and subjection to Hitler's oratory, Chamberlain did not in the least appear to be tired. He immediately countered Hitler's statement by insisting that he was willing to consider any possible solution to the problem, as long as such a proposal excluded the use of force.

"Who is talking about force?" boasted Hitler, "Herr Beneš uses force against my countrymen in the Sudetenland. Herr Beneš mobilized in May—not I. I am not putting up with this any longer," Hitler cried out, utterly excited. "I will take the initiative in resolving this matter shortly, one way or another."

At this instance, Hitler dropped his mask: he wished to act independently and did not wish to be bound by any international agreements. He wanted all the spoils of victory with no obligation to thank the League of Nations, as he had in the case of the Saar. He had employed the phrase "one way or another" so frequently in his speeches before that there remained no doubt as to its meaning: it signaled that Hitler would use force. At this point, Hitler appears to have expected Chamberlain to react as had the German Nationalists and Schuschnigg had done, by faltering and capitulating. In response to Hitler's "one way or another," however, the British Prime Minister retorted:

September 15, 1938

If the Führer is determined to settle this matter by force without waiting for a discussion between ourselves to take place, what did he let me come here? I have wasted my time.

Now Hitler found himself cornered and had to backtrack in order not to be held responsible later for the failure of the talks. After hesitating a few moments, Hitler proposed:

If you are willing to recognize the principle of self-determination of the peoples as the basis for the treatment of the Sudeten German question, then we can subsequently talk about how to apply this principle to this case.

Needless to say, Hitler of course was convinced that such a voluntary cession of the Sudeten German territories by the Czechoslovakian Government was utterly impossible and that such an act could never be achieved either through negotiation or through the offices of an international body. Ever since 1919, Hitler had cherished the belief that Germany could only make territorial gains by shedding blood.³⁶⁴ In Chamberlain's presence, however, Hitler maintained the appearance of a true believer in the right of a people to self-determination. He aimed to have Chamberlain engage in fruitless negotiations with the Czechoslovaks, so that Chamberlain would then have to bear the responsibility for the failure of the talks.

The British Prime Minister agreed to discuss with his cabinet the issue of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans and the cession of all areas in which the German inhabitants made up more than half of the population. Thereafter, he was willing to meet again with Hitler to inform him of the situation. Before he left, however, he procured Hitler's word of honor that he would not enter into any armed conflict with Czechoslovakia in the interim. The meeting, which had not developed as Hitler had envisioned, ended around 8:00 p.m. Chamberlain then returned to the Grand Hotel in Berchtesgaden, where he granted a short interview on his meeting with Hitler to the *Daily Mail* correspondent Wilson Broadbent:³⁶⁵

Our conversation was a very friendly one. I will return to London tomorrow to report to my cabinet. I hope to return to Germany to meet again with Herr Hitler in the near future. I reckon that would be in a few days, maybe in a week or so.

At 5:30 p.m. on September 16, Chamberlain arrived safely back at Heston Airport and upon arrival stated the following :³⁶⁶

I have returned earlier than I had thought. I would have enjoyed the journey had I not been so very busy. Yesterday afternoon, I consulted with

Herr Hitler at great length. It was an open, yet friendly, conversation and I am most satisfied that now each of us fully comprehends what the other wants. Of course, you cannot expect me to make any comments on the outcome of our talks at the present time. All I need to do now is to confer with my colleagues on the issue. I advise you not to hastily accept as truth any unauthorized reports on the content of the talks. Tonight, I will discuss the conversation with my colleagues and others, above all with Lord Runciman. Later, perhaps in a few days, I will have another talk with Herr Hitler. He has assured me that this time he will meet me halfway. Herr Hitler wishes to save an old man such a long journey.

Hitler himself had the following official note published on the meeting:³⁶⁷

The Führer 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 British Prime Minister is returning to England tomorrow to confer with the British Cabinet. In a few days a new conversation will take place.

Two days after Chamberlain's visit to the Obersalzberg, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price for the *Daily Mail*. Hitler declared that no one in Germany was even considering a war with the Western Powers. It would be insane for such a war to break out on account of Czechoslovakia. To facilitate visualizing the full extent of such "insanity" to the Western Powers, Hitler maintained that "half a million workers are building a gigantic fortification line in record time." At the same time, he drew attention to Polish and Hungarian claims to Czechoslovakian territory. The interview was reproduced in the following manner:³⁶⁸

"The Czechs say they cannot conduct a plebiscite, since there are no provisions for such a measure in their Constitution. But to me it seems as though their Constitution provides for one thing only, that seven million Czechs shall oppress eight million members of minority peoples. This Czech illness must be dealt with once and for all, immediately. It is like a cancer in the entire organism of Europe: if allowed to grow, it will infect international relations until they finally break down.

"This situation has lasted for twenty years. No one can estimate how much it has cost the peoples of Europe in this time. As an ally of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia points like a dagger at the heart of Germany. It has reinforced my determination to create a mighty German Luftwaffe. This in turn drove Great Britain and France to build up their own air forces. Recently, I have doubled the Luftwaffe forces because of the present situation in Czechoslovakia. If we do not succeed in resolving the crisis now, Field Marshal Göring would soon be asking me to double the German Luftwaffe's forces once again, and

then, in turn, Great Britain and France would double theirs as well, and so the insane race would go on.

“Do you believe that I enjoy having to halt my great building and job creation plans throughout the country, to send half a million workers to the Western Front, to build a gigantic fortification line in record time? I would prefer to deploy them in the construction of workers’ quarters, superhighways, new schools, and social institutions, instead of in the construction of unproductive fortifications. However, as long as Czechoslovakia is responsible for the European fever caused by the oppression of a German minority, I must be prepared for all eventualities.

“I have studied the Maginot Line, and I have learned much in the process. Nonetheless, we have built something according to our own ideas which is even better and which will resist any power in the world should we, when attacked, actually choose to remain on the defensive.

“However, all of this is insanity since no one in Germany thinks of attacking France. We do not harbor any resentments against France; to the contrary, there is a strong feeling of sympathy for the French people in Germany. Neither does Germany want a war with Great Britain.

“Good Lord, all the things I could do in Germany and for Germany, if it were not for this Czech oppression of millions of Germans, which must end. And it will end!”

The promise that French ministers have made to stand by Czechoslovakia up to this point, Herr Hitler continued, starkly contradicts their own deeds in the past. France has allowed the Saar to disassociate itself from French control, and this in spite of the fact that the Saar was of great economical, political and strategic importance to France.

“However, now some people in France are talking about unleashing the dogs of war for a country in which they have neither economic nor any other direct interests at stake.

“And they are doing this simply to allow the Czechs to refuse the Sudeten Germans the right they themselves have accorded the Saarlanders. In the same manner, Great Britain granted complete autonomy to Southern Ireland, and guaranteed the full independence of Holland and Belgium a hundred years earlier. “The Czechs have never been an autonomous people:³⁶⁹ it was not until peace treaties raised them to an unmerited and artificial supremacy over minorities which are more numerous than they themselves. Bohemia was a German electorate in the Middle Ages. The first German university was founded in Prague two hundred years before the days of Queen Elizabeth. The modern German language itself was derived from the language of the diplomats who served in the governmental offices of that city, the site that the German Emperor had made his capital for a time. Only in the course of the Hussite wars were the Czechs independent for any period of time. They made use of their independence in the same manner the Bolsheviks do, plundering and pillaging until the Germans roused themselves and fought back.

“The creation of this heterogeneous Czechoslovakian Republic after the war was complete insanity. It does not have any characteristics of a nation, either from an ethnological or linguistic point of view, or from an economic or strategic one.

“It was a deed of insanity and ignorance to have a handful of obviously inferior Czechs rule over minorities which belong to the German, the Polish and the Hungarian people, people who can look back upon a culture one thousand years old. The Sudeten Germans have absolutely no respect for the Czechs and will not submit to their rule.

“Following the War, the Allies declared the Germans not worthy to rule over blacks, while at the same time placing a second-rate people like the Czechs in control of three and a half million Germans, people of a most noble character and culture.

“Had there been a strong Germany at that time, this would never have been possible, and as soon as Germany regained its strength, the Sudeten Germans began to speak out. The Czechoslovakian Government is making a desperate attempt to pit the European superpowers against one another—else the Czech state would no longer exist. But it is impossible to maintain such an unnatural configuration through political and diplomatic trickery!”

Herr Hitler spoke bitterly and indignantly of the hatred the Czech Government had for Herr Henlein.

“If Henlein is imprisoned, I will be the leader of the Sudeten Germans, and then let us see for how long Dr. Beneš will manage to issue his decrees. Hopefully, he will not have me jailed as well! Had the Czechs a great statesman, he would long have permitted the Sudeten Germans to link up with the Reich and would have been glad to have secured continued autonomy for the Czechs themselves. But Dr. Beneš is a politician, not a statesman.”

In reply to the question of whether the visit of the Prime Minister had succeeded in rendering a peaceful resolution of the Sudeten German problem more likely, Hitler stated: “I am convinced of the honesty and good will of Mr. Chamberlain.”

The military preparations for war against Czechoslovakia continued. On September 17, Hitler facilitated the constitution of a “Sudeten German Freikorps,” made up of refugees that had come across the border.³⁷⁰ That same day, Henlein issued the appropriate appeal hereto.³⁷¹ On the 18th, five German armies were instructed to position themselves along the Czechoslovakian border.³⁷²

On September 20, Hitler received the Hungarian Minister President Imrédy at the Obersalzberg, along with his Foreign Minister Kánya and the Hungarian Chief of the General Staff, General Keresztes-Fischer. With them, he discussed the possibilities of Hungarian participation in a strike against Czechoslovakia. The German News Bureau made a revealing comment when it reported that “the visit served the purpose of discussing the intolerable situation in Czechoslovakia.”³⁷³

That same day, Hitler received the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, Josef Lipski, for a conference, again at the Obersalzberg.³⁷⁴ Poland had

been enticed by the prospect of obtaining the Teschen region, which presently belonged to Czechoslovakia—despite the fact that the majority of its population was Polish-speaking.

In September of 1938, the military relations between Poland and Germany were extraordinarily friendly. On September 1, for instance, a delegation of Polish Front-Line Soldiers had come to Berlin to place a huge wreath at the memorial Unter den Linden. The German Wehrmacht saw to the appropriate military ceremonies for the occasion.

Hitler's September 20 meeting with the Polish Ambassador resulted very quickly in concrete measures. Already the next day, the Polish demanded allowance for a plebiscite in the Teschen region. The Slovaks began to rummage at this point as well. On September 20 yet, they demanded complete autonomy within the confederation of states.

On September 21, the former Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, celebrated his fortieth service anniversary. As part of his effort to keep the generals in good spirits for the planned war against Czechoslovakia, Hitler sent Fritsch the following congratulatory telegram:³⁷⁵

I wish to extend to you my heartfelt best wishes on this day on which you celebrate the fortieth anniversary of your entry into the Armed Services. I wish to express both my sincere gratitude for your accomplishments in the rebuilding of the Wehrmacht and my best wishes for your future personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

In the interim, Chamberlain had not only conferred with his colleagues on the topic of his conversation in Berchtesgaden, in London on September 18, he had also consulted with the French Premier Daladier³⁷⁶ and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bonnet,³⁷⁷ on the subject. The next day all parties agreed to counsel the Czechoslovakian Government to accept Hitler's demands to cede the Sudeten German territories to Germany. In return, the Great Powers would guarantee the newly established Czechoslovakian borders.

At 5:00 p.m. on September 21, the Hodža government decided to accept the Anglo-French proposals and published an official declaration:³⁷⁸

The Czechoslovakian Government has yielded to the insupportable pressure exerted upon it by the British and French Governments, and has been forced to accept the proposals drafted in London, even though it is very painful for it to do so.

Now that Germany's desires appeared to be satisfied, Chamberlain's second visit, which was to resolve pending details, was officially announced.³⁷⁹

The Führer and the British Prime Minister have agreed to resume their talks, initially held on the Obersalzberg, on Thursday, September 22, at 3:00 p.m. in Godesberg.

As Hitler himself admitted³⁸⁰ he had not thought it possible that Prague would submit to ceding the Sudeten German territories. But he was confident that he would find some pretext for proceeding with the envisioned military move against Czechoslovakia. All he needed was some simple means of sabotaging a peaceful international settlement.

In Godesberg on September 22, the new round of talks between the British Prime Minister and Hitler took place at the Rheinhôtel Dreesen, as had been announced earlier.³⁸¹ Chamberlain flew into Cologne at 12:30 p.m. From there he proceeded to the health-resort hotel on Petersberg Mountain near Königswinter, where he resided during the conference. While only the Rhine river separated the two hotels, it soon became evident that the opinions of the two statesmen were further apart than the banks of the mighty river.

After Chamberlain crossed the river on a ferry and arrived at the Dreesen Hotel at 4:00 p.m., he was met by a most congenial Hitler. They ascended to a conference room on the second floor, where the British Prime Minister presented Hitler with a very detailed plan for the cession of the Sudeten German territories by Czechoslovakia. The procedure for districts in which more than half of the population was of German descent was straightforward. In the remainder of the territory, plebiscites under international supervision would be conducted to determine whether such a return was desired in these regions, too. The new borders of the Czechoslovakian state would then be guaranteed by Great Britain, France, and Italy. Chamberlain had already secured approval of the plan from both the French and the Czechoslovakian Governments. Should Hitler not deign to agree to the plan, the Englishman had labored upon so diligently, the British statesman at the very least expected to be presented with a different proposal. However, Hitler had decided not to have his great designs disturbed by any pretty British ideas. In a completely calm manner, Hitler replied:

I am truly sorry, Mr. Chamberlain, that I cannot comment on these matters any longer. The development of these last few days has made such a solution impossible.

September 22, 1938

This brusque insult was too much even for Chamberlain. He was willing to withstand a great deal—as long as he succeeded in getting Hitler to sign an agreement in the end. Now his face flushed with anger, he stared at Hitler with flashing eyes. Forcing himself to remain calm, he demanded the reason for this sudden rejection of the proposals. At first, Hitler's reply was evasive. He referred to the Hungarian and Polish territorial claims³⁸² which would have to be accounted for in any type of settlement. Finally he proclaimed:

“The occupation [by German troops] of the Sudeten German areas to be ceded must take place immediately.”

Chamberlain objected that this was a completely new demand. The atmosphere grew increasingly icy. However, this was precisely what Hitler intended. The time had come for him to stage another great scene. He began to voice various accusations regarding the behavior of the Czechoslovakians. “The oppression of the Sudeten Germans and the terror instigated by Beneš against them allow no further delay,” he cried in a hoarse voice with rolling “r’s.”

At 7:50 p.m. after Hitler was done with his theatrical performance, agreement was reached to continue discussions the next morning. At this point, however, it was questionable that there indeed would be another session at all. The next morning, the following letter arrived instead of the British Prime Minister:³⁸³

As from Hotel Petersberg, Godesberg
My dear Reichskanzler!

September 23, 1938

I think it may clarify the situation and accelerate our conversation if I send you this note before we meet this morning.

I am ready to put to the Czech Government your proposal as to the areas, so that they may examine the suggested provisional boundary. So far as I can see, there is no need to hold a plebiscite for the bulk of the areas, i.e. for those areas which (according to statistics upon which both sides seem to agree) are predominantly Sudeten German areas. I have no doubt, however, that the Czech Government would be willing to accept your proposal for a plebiscite to determine how far, if at all, the proposed new frontier need be adjusted.

The difficulty I see about the proposal you put to me yesterday afternoon arises from the suggestion that the areas should in the immediate future be occupied by German troops. I recognize the difficulty of conducting a lengthy investigation under existing conditions and doubtless the plan you propose would, if it were acceptable, provide an immediate easing of the tension. But I do not think you have realized the impossibility of my agreeing to put forward any plan unless I have reason to suppose that it will be considered by public opinion in my country, in France and, indeed, in the world gen-

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erally, as carrying out the principles already agreed upon in an orderly fashion and free from the threat of force. I am sure that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle, and very shortly afterward by formal delimitation, would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force.

Even if I felt it right to put this proposal to the Czech Government, I am convinced that they would not regard it as being in the spirit of the arrangement which we and the French Government urged them to accept and which they have accepted. In the event of German troops moving into the areas as you propose, there is no doubt that the Czech Government would have no option but to order their forces to resist, and this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force.

It being agreed in principle that the Sudeten German areas are to join the Reich, the immediate question before us is how to maintain law and order pending the final settlement of the arrangements for the transfer. There must surely be alternatives to your proposal which would not be open to the objections I have pointed out. For instance, I could ask the Czech Government whether they think there could be an arrangement under which the maintenance of law and order in certain agreed Sudeten German areas would be entrusted to the Sudeten Germans themselves—by the creation of a suitable force, or by the use of forces already in existence, possibly acting under the supervision of neutral observers.

As you know, I did last night, in accordance with my understanding with you, urge the Czech Government to do all in their power to maintain order in the meantime. The Czech Government cannot, of course, withdraw their forces nor can they be expected to withdraw the State Police so long as they are faced with the prospect of forcible invasion; but I should be ready at once to ascertain their views on the alternative suggestion I have made and, if the plan proved acceptable, I would urge them to withdraw their forces and the State Police from the areas where the Sudeten Germans are in a position to maintain order.

The further steps that need be taken to complete the transfer could be worked out quite rapidly.

I am, Yours faithfully,

Neville Chamberlain

As is well known, Hitler had a masterful command of the fine art of composing political letters. After having received Chamberlain's notice, he dictated a lengthy reply immediately. He took up the topic of Wilson's Fourteen Points, and maintained that theoretical assurances could not be relied upon. He insisted upon immediately according his "protection" to the areas in question. The Sudeten Germans "are not coming back to the German Reich in virtue of the gracious or benevolent sympathy of other nations, but on the ground of their own

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will based on the right of self-determination of the nations, and of the irrevocable decision of the German Reich to give effect to this will.” It would have been close to impossible for Hitler to voice his contempt for international agreements in more trenchant terminology. He had determined to use force, no matter what the circumstances. He wanted to possess all of Czechoslovakia, and the “insincerity of Czech assurances” was to serve as his pretext. Hitler’s letter in response to Chamberlain read as follows:³⁸⁴

Bad Godesberg, September 23, 1938

Your Excellency!

A thorough examination of your letter, which reached me today, as well as the necessity of clearing up the situation definitely, leads me to make the following communication:

For nearly two decades the Germans, as well as the various other nationalities in Czechoslovakia, have been maltreated in the most unworthy manner, tortured, economically destroyed, and, above all, prevented from realizing for themselves also the right of the nations to self-determination. All attempts of the oppressed to change their lot failed in the face of the brutal will to destruction of the Czechs. The latter were in possession of the power of the State and did not hesitate to employ it ruthlessly and barbarously. England and France have never made an endeavor to alter this situation. In my speech before the Reichstag of February 22,³⁸⁵ I declared that the German Reich would take the initiative in putting an end to any further oppression of these Germans. I have in a further declaration during the Reich Party Congress given clear and unmistakable expression to this decision.

I recognize gratefully that at last, after 20 years, the British Government, represented by Your Excellency, has now decided for its part also to undertake steps to put an end to a situation which from day to day, and, indeed, from hour to hour, is becoming more unbearable. For if formerly the behavior of the Czechoslovak Government was brutal, it can only be described during recent weeks and days as madness. The victims of this madness are innumerable Germans. In a few weeks the number of refugees who have been driven out has risen to over 120,000. This situation, as stated above, is unbearable, and will now be terminated by me.

Your Excellency assures me now that the principle of the transfer of the Sudeten territory to the Reich has, in principle, already been accepted. I regret to have to reply to Your Excellency that, as regards this point, the theoretical recognition of principles has also been formerly granted to us Germans. In the year 1918 the Armistice was concluded on the basis of the Fourteen Points of President Wilson, which in principle were recognized by all. They were, however, in practice broken in the most shameful way. What interests me, Your Excellency, is not the recognition of the principle that this territory is to go to Germany, but solely the realization of this principle, and the realization which both puts an end in the shortest time to the suffering of the unhappy victims of the Czech tyranny, and at the same time corresponds to the dignity

of a Great Power. I can only emphasize to Your Excellency that these Sudeten Germans are not coming back to the German Reich in virtue of the gracious or benevolent sympathy of other nations, but on the ground of their own will based on the right of self-determination of the nations, and of the irrevocable decision of the German Reich to give effect to this will. It is, however, for a nation an unworthy demand to have this recognition made dependent on conditions which are not provided for in treaties nor are practical in view of the shortness of the time.

I have, with the best intentions and in order to give the Czech nation no justifiable cause for complaint, proposed—in the event of a peaceful solution—as the future frontier, the nationalities frontier which I am convinced represents a fair adjustment between the two racial groups, taking also into account the continued existence of large language islands. I am, in addition, ready to allow plebiscites to be taken in the whole territory which will enable subsequent corrections to be made, in order—so far as it is possible—to meet the real will of the peoples concerned. I have undertaken to accept these corrections in advance. I have, moreover, declared myself ready to allow this plebiscite to take place under the control either of international commissions or of a mixed German-Czech commission. I am finally ready, during the days of the plebiscite, to withdraw our troops from the most disputed frontier areas, subject to the condition that the Czechs do the same. I am, however, not prepared to allow a territory which must be considered as belonging to Germany, on the ground of the will of the people and of the recognition granted even by the Czechs, to be left without the protection of the Reich. There is here no international power or agreement which would have the right to take precedence over German right.

The idea of being able to entrust to the Sudeten Germans alone the maintenance of order is practically impossible in consequence of the obstacles put in the way of their political organization in the course of the last decade, and particularly in recent times. As much in the interest of the tortured, because defenseless, population as well as with regard to the duties and prestige of the Reich, it is impossible for us to refrain from giving immediate protection to this territory.

Your Excellency assures me that it is now impossible for you to propose such a plan to your own Government. May I assure you for my part that it is impossible for me to justify any other attitude to the German people; since, for England, it is a question at most of political imponderability, whereas, for Germany, it is a question of primitive right of the security of more than 3 million human beings and the national honor of a great people.

I fail to understand the observation of Your Excellency that it would not be possible for the Czech Government to withdraw its forces so long as they were obliged to reckon with possible invasion, since precisely by means of this solution the grounds for any forcible action are to be removed. Moreover, I cannot conceal from Your Excellency that the great mistrust with which I am inspired leads me to believe that the acceptance of the principle of the transfer of Sudeten Germans to the Reich by the Czech Government is only given in the hope thereby to win time so as, by one means or another, to bring about

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a change in contradiction to this principle. For if the proposal that these territories are to belong to Germany is sincerely accepted, there is no ground to postpone the practical resolution of this principle.

My knowledge of Czech practice in such matters over a period of long years compels me to assume the insincerity of Czech assurances so long as they are not implemented by practical proof. The German Reich is, however, determined by one means or another to terminate these attempts, which have lasted for decades, to deny by dilatory methods the legal claims of oppressed peoples.

Moreover, the same attitude applies to the other nationalities in this State. They also are the victims of long oppression and violence. In their case, also, every assurance given hitherto has been broken. In their case, also, attempts have been made by dilatory dealing with their complaints or wishes to win time in order to be able to oppress them still more subsequently. These nations, also, if they are to achieve their rights, will, sooner or later, have no alternative but to secure them for themselves. In any event, Germany, if she—as it now appears to be the case—should find it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation, is determined to exhaust the other possibilities which then alone remain open to her.

Yours sincerely,

Adolf Hitler

No time remained to translate the letter. Thus the interpreter Schmidt was assigned to personally hand the letter to Chamberlain at 3:00 p.m. and to translate it orally. Chamberlain agreed to send a written reply. Already at 6:00 p.m., Sir Horace Wilson and Ambassador Henderson delivered the relatively short response:³⁸⁶

As from Hotel Petersberg, Godesberg

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My dear Reichskanzler!

I have received Your Excellency's communication in reply to my letter of this morning, and have taken note of its contents. In my capacity as intermediary, it is evidently now my duty—since Your Excellency maintains entirely the position you took last night—to put your proposals before the Czechoslovak Government.

Accordingly, I request Your Excellency to be good enough to let me have a memorandum which sets out these proposals, together with a map showing the area proposed to be transferred, subject to the result of the proposed plebiscite. On receiving this memorandum I will at once forward it to Prague and request the reply of the Czechoslovak Government at the earliest possible moment. In the meantime, until I can receive their reply, I should be glad to have Your Excellency's assurances that you will continue to abide by the understanding, which we reached at our meeting on September 14³⁸⁷ and again last night, that no action should be taken, particularly in the Sudeten territory, by the forces of the Reich to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible.

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Since the acceptance or refusal of Your Excellency's proposal is now a matter for the Czechoslovak Government to decide, I do not see that I can perform any further service here, while on the other hand it has become necessary that I should at once report the present situation to my colleagues and to the French Government. I propose, therefore, to return to England.

Yours faithfully,

Neville Chamberlain

It was an easy task for Hitler to do Chamberlain that favor and compose the requested memorandum. He simply had to find the appropriate combination of demands which would both appear to be workable and justified to posterity and yet be practically unworkable in the present. He could assure that his demands would not be accepted by imposing upon them impossibly stringent exigencies. The impossibility of executing his requests was the most crucial aspect of the memorandum, for it afforded him a pretext for proceeding by the use of force in the Czechoslovakian issue. One year later, he employed the same tactics as he drafted a memorandum to Poland.³⁸⁸ Hitler, however, was not aware of the British pressure forcing Czechoslovakian acceptance of his terms in the Munich Agreement. Once he learned of this adverse development, his fury knew no bounds.

Hitler's paper of September 23 read verbatim:³⁸⁹

Memorandum

Reports which are increasing in number from hour to hour regarding incidents in the Sudetenland show that the situation has become completely intolerable for the Sudeten German people and, in consequence, a danger to the peace of Europe. It is therefore essential that the separation of the Sudetenland agreed to by Czechoslovakia should be effected without any further delay. On the attached map (the map will be brought along by the delegation) the Sudeten German area which is to be ceded is shaded red. The areas in which, over and above the areas which are to be occupied, a plebiscite is also to be held are drawn in and shaded green.

The final delimitation of the frontier must correspond to the wishes of those concerned. In order to determine these wishes, a certain period is necessary for the preparation of the voting, during which disturbances must in all circumstances be prevented. A situation of parity must be created. The area designated on the attached map as a German area will be occupied by German troops without taking account as to whether in the plebiscite there may prove to be in this or that part of the area a Czech majority.

On the other hand, the Czech territory is occupied by Czech troops without regard to the question whether, within this area, there lie large German language islands, the majority of which will without doubt avow their German nationality in the plebiscite. With a view to bringing about an immediate and final solution of the Sudeten German problem the following proposals are now made by the German Government:

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1. Withdrawal of the whole Czech armed forces, the police, the *gendarmerie*, the customs officials, and the frontier guards from the area to be evacuated as designated on the attached map, this area to be handed over to Germany on October 1.³⁹⁰

2. The evacuated territory is to be handed over in its present condition (see further details in appendix). The German Government agrees that a plenipotentiary representative of the Czech Government or of the Czech Army should be attached to the headquarters of the German military forces to settle the details of the modality of the evacuation.

3. The Czech Government discharges at once to their homes all Sudeten Germans serving in the military forces or the police anywhere in Czech State territory.

4. The Czech Government liberates all political prisoners of German race.

5. The German Government agrees to permit a plebiscite to take place in those areas, which will be more definitely defined, before at latest November 25. Alterations to the new frontier arising out of the plebiscite will be settled by a German-Czech or an international commission. The plebiscite itself will be carried out under the control of an international commission. All persons who were residing in the areas in question on October 28, 1918, or who were born there prior to this date will be eligible to vote. A simple majority of all eligible male and female voters will determine the desire of the population to belong to either the German Reich or to the Czech State. During the plebiscite both parties will withdraw their military forces out of areas which will be defined more precisely. The date and duration will be settled by the German and Czech Governments together.

6. The German Government proposes that an authoritative German-Czech commission should be set up to settle all further details.

Godesberg, September 23, 1938

Appendix

The evacuated Sudeten German territory is to be handed over without destroying or rendering unusable in any way military, commercial, or traffic establishments (plants). These include the ground organization of the air service and all wireless stations.

All commercial and transport materials, especially the rolling stock of the railway system, in the designated areas, are to be handed over undamaged. The same applies to all public utility services (gas works, power stations, etc.).

Finally, no foodstuffs, goods, cattle, raw material, etc. are to be removed.

Hitler named September 26 as the date for the Czechoslovakian Armed Forces to begin evacuation of the Sudeten German territories. This evacuation was to be completed by September 28, leaving the Prague Government less than forty-eight hours to effect the operation—a time frame which, from a technical point of view, was nearly impossible to keep.

In response to Hitler's invitation, Chamberlain, accompanied by Wilson, Henderson and Kirkpatrick, reached the Dreesen Hotel after

10:30 p.m. that same night. Here he was presented with the memorandum, addressed to the Czechoslovakian Government, which he was to forward to Prague. The interpreter Schmidt translated the document sentence by sentence for the British Prime Minister. Chamberlain was aghast. He declared that it was too much to ask of him to present the Czechoslovakian Government with such an "ultimatum," a "Diktat," as Henderson assisted. Even if it were willing, by no means could it ever carry through such an action within the indicated time period.

To my great disappointment and profound regret, I must conclude, Herr Reichskanzler, that you have not made any attempt to assist me in my efforts to preserve peace in Europe.

Hitler countered feebly that the document did not contain an ultimatum, since its heading read "Memorandum."

At this juncture, a written message was brought to the men in the conference room. Earlier, at 10:22 p.m., the Prague radio station had aired the mobilization order by President Beneš. His true motivation may never be known, because already at the time there were various versions of the rationale behind this announcement.³⁹¹ Nevertheless, for Hitler, the Czechoslovakian mobilization decree furnished a most opportune affirmation of his claim that the Prague Government had never seriously considered a voluntary cession of the Sudeten German territories. He was completely certain now that he would be in a position to carry out his plan as scheduled and also have a good pretext for the launch of his military assault: the Czechs had proved to be unyielding and had unilaterally mobilized. This gave Hitler the chance to revert to a genial bearing, acting the part of a man prepared to make concessions—now that concessions would no longer be accepted and could therefore have no meaning. He declared:³⁹²

As a favor to you, Mr. Chamberlain, I will make concessions on the issue of time. You are one of the few men for whom I have ever done anything of the sort.³⁹³ October 1 as the date of the evacuation is fine with me.

Hitler set his own hand to changing the date in the memorandum. Chamberlain changed course and consented to present it to the Czechoslovakian Government. Hitler was in high spirits; he was certain that the invasion would be launched on time, that is on October 2. The fault for such a development would without a doubt be placed with the Prague Government. This would force the hand of the British and they would have to assume a neutral stance in the affair. Indeed, they

would even have to admit that the German action was justified. Perhaps the two meetings with Chamberlain marked the beginning of a new era, that would bring about the German-British alliance that Hitler had always dreamed of—provided that he could dominate the relations!

Hence Hitler's parting words in Godesberg, as he bid farewell to the British Prime Minister at 1:30 a.m. on September 24, resounded of a future harmony between the two states, as Hitler envisioned it:

There need be no controversy between us. We will not stand in the way of the pursuit of your interests outside of Europe and, if you give us a free hand in Central and Southeastern Europe, it will not be to your detriment.

At one point, the colonial question will need to be resolved, but there is time yet, and I do not see any reason why this should lead to war.

He had the following official press release published on the subject of the talks in Godesberg:³⁹⁴

The talks between Hitler and the British Prime Minister, which had been conducted in a cordial fashion, ended today with the presentation of a German memorandum containing Germany's final stance on the situation in the Sudetenland. The British Prime Minister has assumed the task of forwarding this memorandum to the Czech Government.

Prior to his departure from Königswinter, Chamberlain himself declared the following on this topic:³⁹⁵

Within the next few days, responsibility will weigh heavily upon all of those concerned, who will have to tend with great care to the questions that were discussed. There are still mighty tasks ahead of us in an effort to secure peace in Europe.

For Hitler, all was in order for the upcoming campaign against Czechoslovakia. In addition, the first steps had been taken toward a future alliance with the British.

Hitler now envisioned the following course of events within the next days: first, he would return to Berlin to see to the last preparations for the operation "Green" himself. Then he would stage a great speech at the Sportpalast on the 26th of September, offering Beneš one last ultimatum with which the Czechoslovakian leader naturally could not comply. Hitler would then let October 1 pass quietly, to demonstrate to the world once again his unparalleled restraint and love of peace. At 8:00 a.m. on October 2,³⁹⁶ he would order German troops to begin the invasion of Czechoslovakia, coming from the north, west, and south. Within a few weeks' time, he would march into Prague as the victorious warlord.

However, later events would prevent Hitler from abiding by this timetable. But on September 25, everything remained on schedule. The Bulgarian King Boris III called on him, displaying his steadfast loyalty to Germany—particularly when it found itself in a critical position.³⁹⁷

Early on September 26, the Führer received the head of the British Legion, Sir Frederick Maurice. Having secured Chamberlain's prior approval, Hitler's guest offered the Legion's services as an impartial observer in the Sudeten German territories, where it would oversee the conduct of the plebiscites.³⁹⁸ Although Hitler was in no mood to again submit to a process similar to that of the Saar, he nonetheless assured his visitor that he assented to the proposal.

The next visit by an Englishman later that day was far less to Hitler's liking. Shortly before 5:00 p.m., Sir Horace Wilson appeared at the Chancellery to present Hitler with a personal letter addressed to him by Chamberlain.³⁹⁹ In it, Chamberlain informed Hitler that the Czechoslovakian Government had sent him word that it considered the German proposals, as enumerated in the memorandum, to be completely unacceptable. To prevent the outbreak of open hostilities, Chamberlain suggested that German-Czechoslovakian negotiations be initiated immediately, perhaps presided over by the British.

One can easily imagine how angry Hitler must have been upon receipt of the letter. The Czechoslovakians had simply refused—and nothing more could be said! Hitler could not comprehend why the British insisted upon further discussion, he bolted out of his chair and cried: "There is no sense at all in negotiating any further!" He started for the door as though he intended to exit the room, leaving Wilson and his colleague Kirkpatrick behind.⁴⁰⁰ However, Hitler reconsidered, returned to his seat and listened to the remainder of the letter, which closed with the words:

Convinced that your passionate wish to see the Sudeten German question promptly and satisfactorily settled can be fulfilled without incurring the human misery and suffering that would inevitably follow on a conflict, I most earnestly urge you to accept my proposal.

Now Hitler delivered a veritable barrage of abuse against Beneš and Czechoslovakia. In a sense, this was the dress rehearsal for the imminent speech at the Sportpalast. He was outraged when Wilson hinted that any military action directed against Czechoslovakia would be certain to entail a declaration of war by both Great Britain and France. He challenged Wilson to attend the speech at the Sportpalast

so that he could observe first hand what the Germans really felt.⁴⁰¹ “Now it is no longer the Führer, nor any single man speaking; it is the German Volk that speaks out now.” This phrase epitomized what Wilson was to hear at the Sportpalast.

After the British diplomats had left, Hitler began to get ready for his speech. In it, he would announce to the German people that events were coming to a head, and then make the most momentous statement of the day: “Now I march before my Volk as the first of its soldiers!” Hitler already felt himself to be a soldier. In all likelihood, he had the field-gray uniform tunic already at hand in his closet, the one which he had always claimed to be the “holiest and dearest” to him.⁴⁰² Naturally, the tunic was not the same he had worn as a corporal up to the years 1918 and 1920. For one, the cut was different, and further, he was to wear it as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. One of the most significant distinctions of this tunic was the national emblem on the left sleeve⁴⁰³ which adorned the otherwise plain uniform. By wearing it the same way as did the SS Verfügungstruppe, Hitler wanted the generals to take note that there was no doubt on whose side he stood in the event of any domestic trouble between the Army and the SS.

In any case, Hitler was planning to wear the new field-gray uniform tunic on the first day of the war, completely dedicating himself to his role as warlord. For the speech at the Sportpalast, he still wore his brown double-breasted uniform tunic and black pants, a suit he always wore at social occasions. He did not want to appear before his audience in the same knee breeches, straps and belts, an attire he always sported at reviews and demonstrations at party congresses. Rather he would clad himself in a modest fashion in order to emphasize in his outward appearance the most “moderate” stance he espoused. Everyone should clearly see how peace-loving he actually was and how much he regretted having to recourse to the sword.

Once he had arrived at the Sportpalast around 8:00 p.m., he was greeted by Goebbels in an address. The latter knew this to be the last occasion on which Hitler would speak publicly prior to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. He put much effort into assuring Hitler that the German Volk was prepared for war and proclaimed:

You can rely upon your Volk, just as it relies upon you. It stands behind you as one man. We are aware that no threat and no pressure, from whatever source, can keep you from pursuing your and our inalienable rights. The

entire German Volk shares this spirit and firm conviction. Many times we have stated and pledged ourselves to this in the historic hours of our nation. Now in this hour of difficult decisions, we repeat it before you with all our heart, full and strong: *Führer befehl, wir folgen.*

We greet you, mein Führer, with our old battle cry: Adolf Hitler, *Sieg Heil!*—The Führer speaks.

That evening, Hitler was fully aware of the importance of this particular appearance. He knew that numerous foreigners, diplomats and journalists were present in the hall. He summoned all of his rhetorical talent and acting ability to convincingly play the part of a man who was filled with holy zeal and determination to be prepared for anything, while nonetheless radiating a firm belief in the justice of his cause. He began his speech with the following words:⁴⁰⁴

German Volksgenossen!

Speaking before the German Reichstag delegates on February 20, I pronounced, for the first time, a demand based on an irrevocable principle. Back then the entire nation heard me and understood me! *One* statesman did not understand. He has been removed, and I have made true my promise given at the time! At the Reich Party Congress, I spoke on the topic of this demand for the second time. And once more the nation heard this demand. Today I step before you to speak directly to the Volk for the first time just as in the days of our great struggles, and you know well what that means! The world may no longer have any doubts: it is not one Führer or one man who speaks at this point, rather it is the German Volk that speaks!

As I now speak for this German Volk, I know that this Volk of millions joins in the chorus of my words, reaffirms them, and makes them a holy oath in its own right. Some of the other statesmen might do well to consider if this is the case with their people as well.

The question which has moved us so profoundly within the last few months and weeks is an old one. It reads not so much “Czecho-Slovakia,” but rather “Herr Beneš.” This name unites all that moves millions of people today and which lets them either despair or instills in them a zealous determination. How could such a question rise to such supreme importance? I wish to reiterate before you, my Volksgenossen, a short summary on the essence and goals of Germany’s foreign policy.

As one can tell, not even on the eve of war, on a most crucial occasion, was Hitler willing to do without his “party narrative.” It began with the Treaty of Versailles and ended with Hitler’s numerous “peace proposals.” When he spoke of the armament he had undertaken, he claimed that none like it had yet been seen on the face of the earth.

After two years of having made offer upon offer to the world and receiving rejection upon rejection, I gave orders to rearm the German Wehrmacht and to bring it to the highest level possible. Today I can openly admit: we rearmed

to an extent the like of which the world had not yet seen. I offered to disarm as long as this was possible. After yet another rejection, I decided to go all the way. I am a National Socialist and an old German front-line soldier!

If the world does not want disarmament, so be it: now German Volk carry your weapons as well. Germany can be proud of its Wehrmacht!

Indeed, I did rearm within the past five years. I spent billions on it.⁴⁰⁵ That the German Volk has a right to know. I took care that the new army carried the newest, most modern weapons that exist. I ordered my friend Göring: now build up a Luftwaffe for me capable of protecting Germany against any onslaught conceivable.

And so we built up a Wehrmacht of which the German Volk can be proud today and which the world will respect whenever it shall be introduced. We have created for ourselves the best anti-aircraft defense and the best anti-tank defense ever seen on the face of this earth!

Once Hitler believed he had done justice to the task of frightening the Western Powers by describing the military might of Germany, he praised his friendship pact with Poland. He claimed that it was worth more than “all the idle talk in the League of Nations’ Palace in Geneva.” He continued:

We worked night and day during these five years. On one topic only did I succeed in bringing about an understanding. I shall speak of this later. Nevertheless, I continued to pursue the ideas of limiting armament and of a disarmament policy. In these years, I truly pursued a pragmatic policy for peace. I approached any and all topics, firmly determined to resolve them peacefully—even if this should involve great sacrifices on the part of Germany. I myself am a front-line soldier and know the hardships of war. I wished to spare the German Volk this experience. I approached each and every problem firmly determined to attempt anything to bring about its peaceful resolution.

The most pressing problem I was faced with was the relationship between Germany and Poland. The danger was present that the idea of a “hereditary enmity” would take hold of our Volk as well as of the Polish people. I wanted to avoid this. I know only too well that I should not have succeeded had Poland had a democratic constitution at that point in time. For these democracies dripping all over with their peace rhetoric, they are the most blood-thirsty of all warmongers. Democracy did not reign in Poland, one man did! With him we reached an accord within one year’s time, an accord that, for the time being, eliminates a clash between both countries in principle for the duration of ten years. All of us are convinced that, in time, this accord will prove to be one of substance. All of us realize that these are two peoples that need to exist side by side and that neither can eliminate the other.

A state of thirty-three million will always strive for an outlet to the sea. Hence, we had to arrive at some sort of settlement. And we did arrive at a settlement which is constantly being improved upon. What is decisive in this instance is that both governments and all reasoned and rational people in both

countries have the firm will to increasingly improve relations. This deed was truly in the service of peace, worth substantially more than the idle talk in the League of Nations' Palace in Geneva.

Then Hitler addressed the topic of Great Britain. After a few friendly remarks upon the Naval Agreement, Hitler expressed his displeasure at the British threat of war should Germany employ force. He wished never again to hear the like of what Great Britain had told him through the offices of Wilson that afternoon. Hence he proclaimed:

In this time period, I also attempted to improve relations to other nations and to make these durable.

We gave guarantees to all Western states and have assured all countries bordering on us that Germany will respect their territorial integrity. This is not just empty talk. This is our holy will. It is not in our interest to disturb their peace. These offers on the part of Germany encountered increasing good will.

Gradually, more and more states divorce themselves from the insanity produced in Geneva which, if I may say so, does not serve the interests of peace, but rather entails an obligation to war. These states divorce themselves from it and begin to reflect upon problems in a more rational manner. They are willing to negotiate, and they desire peace.

I went even further and offered my hand to England! In order to afford the British Empire a feeling of security, I voluntarily renounced entering into a naval armament race with Great Britain. I did so not because I would not have been capable of producing additional ships—let no one be deceived. Rather, I did so for the sole reason of wishing to secure peace between the two peoples, a peace of permanence.

Of course, certain conditions have to be met. It is simply not possible for one side to say: "I will never again lead a war, and to this end I offer you the voluntary reduction of my weapons to 35 percent," while the other side declares: "Whenever I feel like it I may lead a war on occasion." Impossible! Such an agreement is morally tenable only then if both peoples pledge never to make war on each other again. Germany has that will! We all hope that among the British people those will prevail who share that will!⁴⁰⁶

Having dealt with Great Britain, Hitler now spoke of France and Italy:

Again I went further. Immediately subsequent to the return of the Saar to Germany by way of the plebiscite, I approached France and informed it that there were no longer any differences between us. The question of Alsace-Lorraine no longer existed as far as we were concerned. It is a border area. The people there have never really been asked their opinion during the past decades. It is our impression that the inhabitants of the area would be the most happy if all the fighting about them ended. We do not wish for war with France. We want nothing of France! Nothing at all! And once the Saar had returned to the Reich, thanks to the integrity of France in interpreting the contracts which I must give it credit for, I solemnly declared: now all

differences on territorial matters between France and Germany have been resolved. I do no longer see any differences between us today. All that is there are two great peoples both wishing to work and live. And they will live best once they work together.

After this unprecedented and irrevocable renouncement I turned to yet another problem, one easier to resolve than others because a shared *weltanschaulich* belief facilitates mutual understanding: the relationship between Germany and Italy. Of course, the resolution of this problem is only in part my own achievement because the other part is the achievement of a great man whom the Italian people have the great fortune to call their leader.

This relationship long ago transcended the boundaries of economics and politics as such, and, after countless contracts and alliances had been concluded, it has developed into a friendship from the heart. Two peoples with shared ideals, *Weltanschauung*, and politics have formed a friendship and an axis, the strength of which defies separation. In consideration of my responsibility to my *Volksgenossen* here, too, I have carried through a unique and final measure. I have solved a problem which henceforth no longer exists. No matter how bitter this might be for the individual: the common interest of the *Volk* ranks above all of us. And this interest means: to be able to work in peace. This work in the service of peace, my *Volksgenossen*, it is not an empty phrase, rather this work is supported by facts which no liar can deny.

Now that Hitler felt he had proven his policy to be one of pure restraint, he turned to more contemporary subjects, declaring that he must now once and for all end his eternal "leniency."

Two problems remained to be solved. Here I had some reservations, however. Ten million Germans found themselves outside of the boundaries of the Reich in two principal areas of settlement; Germans who wished to return to their homeland! Ten million is not a negligible figure. In France, ten million make up a quarter of its total population.

Given that for over forty years, France never relinquished its claim to the few million Frenchmen in the Alsace-Lorraine region then, before the eyes of God and of the world, we also had a right to maintain our claim on these ten million Germans.

My *Volksgenossen*! Leniency had reached its limits, any further leniency would have been construed as a most fatal weakness. I would not have had the right to appear in the annals of German history, had I nonchalantly abandoned these ten million to their fate. I would not have had the moral legitimacy to be the Führer of this *Volk*. I had made sacrifices, and I had shown great restraint. Now I had reached the point beyond which I could not have gone. The plebiscite in Austria proved me right. A most fervent avowal was made then, an avowal that the rest of the world had most certainly not anticipated. Have we not witnessed it time and time again how in the eyes of democracies a plebiscite becomes irrelevant and even detrimental to their cause the moment it does not produce the desired results? Despite all this, the problem was resolved to the benefit of the entire great German *Volk*.

Hitler followed this introduction with the vow that the Sudeten German question was the last that required an immediate solution. He was brazen enough to make the unguarded statement that "it is the last territorial demand that I shall make in Europe." He continued with a spiteful tirade against Beneš, the "father of the lie."⁴⁰⁷ He accused the Czechoslovakian of having "slaughtered thousands of Germans," and lambasted his partial mobilization of May 20 and 21. Neither could Hitler resist taking sideswipes at Great Britain and the United States. On the other hand, he had much praise for Mussolini:

And now we face the last great problem that must be resolved and that will be resolved! It is the last territorial demand I shall make in Europe. It is a demand which I shall insist upon and a demand which I will satisfy so God will!

A short history of this problem: Waving the banner of the right to self-determination of the peoples, Central Europe was torn apart in 1918 as certain crazed statesmen set to redraw the political landscape. Atomized and divided, new states were arbitrarily created in Central Europe in complete disregard of the origins of their peoples, their national desires, and of economic necessities. It is to this process that Czechoslovakia owes its existence.

The Czech state was born a lie. The name of the father of the lie was Beneš. He made his great appearance in Versailles, claiming that there was such a thing as a Czechoslovakian nation. He resorted to this lie to make his own people sound, despite their meager numbers, more important and to lend credence to its demand for greater influence. At the time, the Anglo-Saxon powers, renowned for their great lack of knowledge in geographic and *völkisch* matters, did not deem it necessary to investigate Beneš' claim. Otherwise they most certainly would have realized that there is no such thing as a Czechoslovakian nation.⁴⁰⁸ All there is are Czechs and Slovaks and the Slovaks have little desire of being with the Czechs, rather . . .⁴⁰⁹

In the end, thanks to the efforts of Herr Beneš, the Czechs annexed Slovakia. Since this state did not appear to be a viable structure, they simply took three and a half million Germans in clear defiance of the rights and desires of the Germans for self-determination. Since that evidently did not suffice, the Czechs took another million of Magyars, adding a number of Carpatho-Russians and several hundreds of thousands of Poles.

That is the state that would later call itself Czechoslovakia. It exists contrary to the clear desire and will of the nations thus raped and in clear defiance of their right to self-determination. As I speak to you today, I naturally have pity on the fate of these oppressed peoples. I am touched by the fate of these Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, and Ukrainians. Yet I can only be the voice of the fate of my Germans.

As Herr Beneš was busily cementing this state on a foundation of lies, naturally he promised to construct a state on the Swiss canton model, for after all there were a few among the democratic statesmen who were plagued by a guilty conscience. All of us know how Herr Beneš resolved the matter of

cantons. He built up a regime of terror! Back then already, a number of Germans attempted to protest against this arbitrary rape of their people. They were summarily executed. Ever since, a war has been waged to exterminate the Germans there. Nearly 600,000 Germans were driven from their homes during these years of "peaceful development" in Czechoslovakia. The reason for this is a fairly simple one—they would have starved otherwise!

The entire development since 1918 is proof of one thing only: Herr Beneš is determined to exterminate *Deutschum* slowly but surely. He has been successful to a certain degree. He has plunged countless numbers into unspeakable despair. He managed to make millions shy and afraid. Thanks to his unceasing terror campaign, he has managed to silence these millions while at the same time leaving no doubt as to the "international" mission of his state. There was little effort to conceal the fact that, if necessary, it was to be used against Germany. One man who expressed this in a rather frank manner was the French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot, who said: "We need this state as a base from which to launch bombs with greater ease to destroy German's economy and its industry." And now Bolshevism resorts to this state as a means of entry. It was not us who sought contact with Bolshevism, rather it was Bolshevism that used this state to open venues to Central Europe.

And it is at this point that we bear witness to the greatest brazenness imaginable. This state, resting upon a minority as support for its regime, forces the various nationalities to partake in a policy which one day will force them to shoot at their own brothers. Herr Beneš demands of the German man: "If I go to war with Germany, then you will have to shoot at Germans. If you should not be willing to do this, then you become a traitor, and I will have you shot." He demands the same of the Hungarian and of the Polish man. He demands of the Slovaks to defend policies which are completely irrelevant to Slovakia's situation. The Slovak people wish to live in peace, they have no wish to become involved in adventures. Herr Beneš, however, manages to portray these people either as traitors to their state or as traitors of their people's cause. Either they agree to shoot at their compatriots and to betray their people, or Herr Beneš tells them: "You are traitors to your country, and because of that I will shoot you."

Can you imagine greater brazenness than to demand of other people to shoot their own compatriots if the circumstances warrant this? And all this simply because a rotten, disgusting, and criminal regime demands this of them? Let me assure you that as we occupied Austria, the first order I issued was that no Czech need to, that no Czech be allowed to serve in the German Army. I did not want to place him in this predicament.

Whoever opposes Herr Beneš will always be silenced by the application of economic pressure. This is a fact those democrats and apostles of a better world cannot lie about. In this state of Herr Beneš the consequences for the various nationalities have been dreadful ones. I speak for the Germans only. Amongst them, infant mortality is the highest, and the lack of progeny is the greatest among all of Germany's Volk tribes. The unemployment rate affects them terribly. How long is this to go like this? For twenty years, the Germans in Czechoslovakia as well as the German Volk in the Reich have had to stand

by and watch. They did not do so because they accepted this state of affairs. No, they did so because they were powerless and helpless faced with their torturers, abandoned in this world of democracies. Yes, if there is a traitor locked up here or someone is placed under surveillance cursing down from his pulpit, then the English are outraged, and the Americans are incensed. These are the same prototype world democrats (*Patentweltdemokraten*) who utter not a word when hundreds of thousands are driven from their homes, when tens of thousands are thrown into prison or when thousands are slaughtered. We learned a great lesson in the course of these past years. We have only disdain for them now.

We see merely one great power in Europe headed by one man who understands the despair of the German Volk. It is my great friend, I believe I may call him this, Benito Mussolini. What he has done for us in these difficult times and how the Italian people stands to us, we shall never forget! And if there is ever an hour of equal need in Italy, then I will stand up before the German Volk and demand that it do the same. And then, too, it will not be two states defending themselves, but one single block defending itself.

In my speech before the Reichstag on February 20 of this year, I declared that there had to be a change in the lives of the Germans living outside of the borders of the Reich. Indeed, Herr Beneš has changed their lives in the meantime. He launched an even more repressive campaign against them, terrorizing the German minority to an even greater extent. He heralded a time of dissolution, prohibition, confiscation, and the like. And things went on like this until May 21 came along. My Volksgenossen, you cannot deny that we displayed exemplary patience. But this May 21 was insupportable. At great length, I reiterated its history at the Reich Party Congress. At long last, there was to be a plebiscite in Czechoslovakia, a plebiscite that could not be put off any more.

Undaunted, Herr Beneš, came up with a way of intimidating the Germans there: the military occupation of the territories in question. And he plans to persevere with this military occupation in the hope that no one can be found to stand up to him as long as his henchmen are around. It was that unbelievably brazen lie of May 21, which claimed that Germany had mobilized on that day, that now had to serve as an excuse, to gloss over and to serve as a disguise for the Czech mobilization.

You all know what came then: a virulent international campaign. Germany had not called up one man. It was not even contemplating resolving this matter militarily. I still entertained hopes that, at the last minute, the Czechs would realize that this tyranny could not go on any longer. Herr Beneš was still convinced that, supported by France and Great Britain, he could do whatever he wished with Germany. What could happen to him? And after all, he could still turn to the Soviet Union, should all else fail.⁴¹⁰

Thus he was encouraged in his reaction to all those he did not fancy: shoot them, jail them, lock them up. It was then that I made my demand in Nuremberg. For the first time, I demanded clearly that, now twenty years after President Wilson's pledges, the right to self-determination must become reality for these three and a half million as well. And once more Herr Beneš

responded in his customary manner: more dead, more imprisoned, more incarcerated. Germans were forced to flee.

And along came England. I was perfectly open with Mr. Chamberlain as to what we considered the sole solution possible. It is the most natural there is. I know that none of the various nationalities wish to remain with Herr Beneš. Yet, I am but the speaker of the Germans. For them I spoke, as I asserted that I was no longer willing to stand by silently without intervening as this crazed man continues to believe that he can maltreat three and a half million people as he sits there in Prague.

I left no doubts as to the fact that Germany's patience had reached its limit. I left no doubt that while it may be a characteristic trait of us Germans to bear up under something for a long time and with great patience, once our patience has reached an end, that is the end!

And it is now that England and France have finally demanded of Czechoslovakia what is the sole solution possible to this situation, to release the German areas and to cede them to the Reich.

Today we have intelligence of what Herr Beneš discussed during this time. Faced with England's and France's declared intent to divorce themselves from the fate of Czechoslovakia should not the fate of these peoples be changed and these areas be ceded, Herr Beneš found yet another loophole. He ordered the cession of these territories. That he declared! Yet what did he do? He is not ceding the territories, rather he is driving the Germans from them. This is the point at which his game is up!

Barely had Herr Beneš finished his declarations when yet another campaign of oppression by the military was launched, the only difference being that its nature was intensified this time around. We see the gruesome figures: one day there might be 10,000 refugees; the next day 20,000; yet another day later 37,000; and yet another two days later 41,000; then 62,000; and then 78,000; now that amounts to 90,000; 107,000; 137,000; and today we count 214,000. Entire regions are depopulated, villages burnt to the ground, and with grenades and gas the Germans are driven out. Beneš, however, sits in Prague and is comfortable believing: "Nothing can happen to me. England and France will always back me."

And now, my Volksgenossen, I believe the time has come to tell him what's what. You simply cannot deny that someone truly loves peace when he has borne up under such shame, such disgrace, and so pitiful a fate for twenty long years, as we have done. When someone displays such unending patience as we have demonstrated, then truly you cannot accuse him of being a warmonger. After all, Herr Beneš may have seven million Czechs, but here there is a Volk of seventy-five million.

Hitler's arguments betrayed his conception of "heroism" and revealed the true basis of his "credentials as a warlord" as he pitted seventy-five million Germans against seven million Czechoslovakians. In this misconceived spirit of fairness, he challenged Beneš to a "duel" and divulged that the "secret" of his military success consisted of

nothing other than brute numerical superiority. When dealing with the greater powers, he would proceed with moderation until he felt he had attained numerical superiority over them as well.

In his speech, Hitler then turned to the topic of his September 23 memorandum. He endeavored to prove to his audience what enormous restraint he had exercised in making one last proposal for the maintenance of peace, the same tactic he would employ eleven months later in Poland. However, Beneš had insisted that he could not withdraw from the territory in question. "That's over now," cried Hitler. The time had come for the duel between Herr Beneš and Hitler:

I have placed a memorandum at the disposal of the British Government, a memorandum representing the last and the final proposal on the part of Germany. This memorandum demands nothing other than the implementation of what Herr Beneš already promised. The contents of this memorandum are quite simple: any territory which is German according to its populace and which wants to come to Germany belongs to Germany. And we shall not wait until after Herr Beneš has had a chance to drive one or two million Germans from it; it shall come to Germany now and immediately! The border I have redrawn does justice to the realities of the decade-old distribution of ethnic and linguistic groups in Czechoslovakia. Yet, I am a man more just than Herr Beneš, and I do not wish to abuse the power at present in our hands. That is why, from the very beginning, I made it clear that a territory will come under the sovereignty of the Reich only if the majority of its inhabitants are German. The final demarcation of the border I leave to the vote of our Volksgenossen there! I have, therefore, decided to conduct a plebiscite in the area in question. And just so no one can come and claim that this is not fair, this plebiscite will be held in accordance with the statutes of the Saar plebiscite.

I have always been willing, and I am still willing, to conduct plebiscites in the entire region if need be. However, Herr Beneš and his friends were opposed to this. They desired that plebiscites were to be held in certain regions only. All right, here I showed leniency. I even agreed to having an international commission survey the conduct of the plebiscites. I went even further and agreed to having a Czech-German commission draw the border. Mr. Chamberlain asked if this could not be done by an international commission instead. I agreed to that as well. I was even willing to withdraw our troops from the region for the duration of the plebiscite. Today I even agreed to invite the British Legion to these territories as it had offered to ensure law and order there in the interim period.⁴¹¹ I was willing to go further and to have the final course of the border determined by an international commission and to have the details negotiated by a commission made up of Germans and Czechs alike.

This memorandum is nothing other than the implementation of what Herr Beneš promised, calling upon the most formidable of international guarantees. Now Herr Beneš claims that this memorandum places him in a completely

“new situation.” And of what does this “new situation” consist in reality? The only thing new about this situation is what Herr Beneš has promised is to be kept for a change. That is, indeed, a completely “new situation” for Herr Beneš. The promises that man has made in his life—none of which he kept! Now for the first time, he will have to keep a promise.

Herr Beneš says: “We cannot withdraw from the area.” Evidently, Herr Beneš understood the cession of the area to imply that the Reich assumed the legal title of the land while it continued to be raped by the Czechs.

That’s over now!

Now I demand that Herr Beneš be forced to honesty after twenty years. He will have to give over the territories on October 1.

Herr Beneš now places his last hopes in the world, and he and his diplomats do little to disguise this. They declare: “It is our only hope that Chamberlain be overthrown, that Daladier be done away with, that there are overthrows all over.” They place their hope with the Soviet Union. He still believes he can escape fulfillment of his obligations.

All I can say to this: “There are two men facing each other down. Over there stands Herr Beneš. And here I stand!” We are two entirely different men. While Herr Beneš danced on the world stage and hid himself there from his responsibilities, I was fulfilling my duties as a decent German soldier. And as I face this man today, I am but a soldier of my Volk.

After Hitler had introduced himself in his capacity as a soldier, he added a few polite words of thanks to Chamberlain. He solemnly assured that he had no intention of laying hold of the remainder of the Czechoslovakian state in the process of resolving the Sudeten German issue. “We do not want any Czechs at all,” he exclaimed.

I have little more to add. I am grateful to Mr. Chamberlain for his efforts. I have assured him that the German Volk desires nothing but peace. Yet, I have also told him that I cannot retreat behind the lines drawn by our patience.

I have assured him further that, and this I repeat here before you, once this issue has been resolved, there will no longer be any further territorial problems for Germany in Europe!

I have assured him further that I will take no more interest in the Czechoslovakian state once that country has resolved its internal problems, that is once the Czechs have dealt with the other minorities there in a peaceful manner and not by means of oppression. And I will guarantee this for him! We do not want any Czechs at all. Yet I do declare before the German Volk that my patience is at an end with regard to the Sudeten German problem! I have put forth an offer to Herr Beneš, an offer that is nothing other than the realization of his promises. The decision is his now! Be it war or peace!

He can either accept my offer and give the Germans their freedom, or we Germans will go get it for ourselves.

The world must avow that in my four and a half years in the War, and in the long years of my political life, no one could ever have accused me of one thing: I have never been a coward!

Without a doubt, Hitler's remark that he had never "been a coward" aimed to impress both the German people and international public opinion. He reassured his listeners that he would lead their march as Germany's "first soldier."

Now I march before my Volk as the first of its soldiers. And behind me, let it be known to the world, marches a Volk, a Volk that is a different one than that of 1918! Even though, at the time, a wandering scholar⁴¹² succeeded in poisoning the Volk with democratic phraseology, let it be known that the Volk of today is not the Volk of that time! Such phraseology touches us no more than stings of bees; we have become immune to them. At this hour, the entire German Volk unites itself with me.

It will regard my will as its will, just as I regard the Volk's future and fate as the mandate of my actions. And we now want to strengthen this common will so that it might stand as strong as in the fighting times, a period in which I strode forth as a simple, unknown soldier and set out to conquer a Reich, a time in which I did not doubt the certain success and the final victory. Then a group of brave men and women congregated around me. And they marched with me. And today I implore you, my German Volk: stand behind me man by man, woman by woman.

At this hour, let all of us resolve a common will. It shall be stronger than any despair and danger imaginable. And once this will has become stronger than any despair and danger, then one day it will vanquish despair and danger.

We stand determined! May Herr Beneš now make his choice.

Towards the end of his speech, Hitler's words left him in a veritable state of ecstasy. He repeatedly gazed to the heavens, overwhelmed by the historic greatness of the moment and his own words. Nearly every one of his sentences was followed by roars of applause. When he stopped speaking, the frenzied crowds burst out in prolonged storms of thunderous applause. The crowd reverberated Goebbels' introductory chant: "*Führer befehl, wir folgen.*"

Hitler then returned to his seat and left the floor to Goebbels, who declared:

Mein Führer!

In this historic hour I shall speak in the name of the entire German Volk, as I solemnly declare: the German nation is solidly behind you to carry out your orders loyally, obediently, and enthusiastically. The German Volk has once again a feeling of national honor and duty. It will know how to act accordingly. Never again will a November 1918 be repeated. Whoever in the world counts on this, has miscalculated. Once you call upon it, our Volk will move strongly and unrelentingly into battle in order to defend the life and the honor of the nation to its very last breath.

This we swear to you, so help us God!

September 26, 1938

Actually, what Goebbels repeated was nothing other than Hitler's own words in the guise of a loyalty oath. Nonetheless, Hitler believed that he would have to once again prove his theatrical abilities. William L. Shirer who was in Berlin as a radio journalist at the time, has rendered us the following description of Hitler's acts:⁴¹³

Goebbels . . . shouted: "One thing is sure: 1918 will never be repeated!" Hitler looked up to him, a wild, eager expression in his eyes, as if those were the words which he had been searching for all evening and hadn't quite found. He leaped to his feet and with a fanatical fire in his eyes that I shall never forget brought his right hand, after a grand sweep, pounding down on the table, and yelled with all the power in his mighty lungs: "Ja." Then he slumped into his chair exhausted.

When Hitler finally left the Sportpalast, the crowd began to chant the nearly forgotten patriotic song from the wars of liberation against Napoleon: "*Der Gott, der Eisen wachsen liess, der wollte keine Knechte!*" (The God who made iron grow did not want any servants.)⁴¹⁴ Those who had staged this "spontaneous" outburst wanted to recreate the war enthusiasm of 1914. However, the 20,000 ecstatic listeners from Berlin whom Goebbels had called together, in no way represented the entire German Volk. The majority of Germans were of a completely different compartment, which Hitler would discover the very next day.

For the time being, Hitler was very content with his appearance at the Sportpalast. Because of the radio broadcast of his speech reached so many people, he was convinced that he had created great enthusiasm for war throughout the Reich. It was in this exalted mood, that Hitler composed his reply to Chamberlain. He wished to have it ready to present to Sir Horace Wilson during his second visit the next morning. The note summarized the arguments he had expounded upon at the Sportpalast. Toward the conclusion, Hitler intimated that Chamberlain's efforts in Prague would be completely naught:⁴¹⁵

Berlin, September 27, 1938

Dear Mr. Chamberlain!

I have in the course of the conversations once more informed Sir Horace Wilson, who brought me your letter of September 26, of my final attitude. I should like, however, to make the following written reply to certain details in your letter: The Government in Prague feels justified in maintaining that the proposals in my memorandum of September 23 went far beyond the concession which it made to the British and French Governments and that the acceptance of the memorandum would rob Czechoslovakia of every guarantee for its national existence. This statement is based on the argument that

Czechoslovakia is to give up a great part of her prepared defensive system before she can take steps elsewhere for her military protection. Thereby the political and economic independence of the country is automatically abolished. Moreover, the exchange of population proposed by me would turn out in practice to be a panicstricken flight.

I must openly declare that I cannot bring myself to understand these arguments or even admit that they can be regarded as seriously put forward. The Government in Prague simply passes over the fact that the actual arrangement for the final settlement of the Sudeten German problem, in accordance with my proposals, will be made dependent, not on a unilateral German decision or on German measures of force, but rather, on the one hand, on a free vote under no outside influence, and, on the other hand, to a very wide degree on German-Czech agreement on matters of detail to be reached subsequently. Not only the exact definition of the territories in which the plebiscite is to take place, but the execution of the plebiscite and the delimitation of the frontier to be made on the basis of its result, are in accordance with my proposals to be met independently of any unilateral decision by Germany. Moreover, all other details are to be reserved for agreement on the part of a German-Czech commission.

In the light of this interpretation of my proposals and in the light of the cession of the Sudeten population areas, in fact agreed to by Czechoslovakia, the immediate occupation by German contingents demanded by me represents no more than a security measure which is intended to guarantee a quick and smooth achievement of the final settlement. This security measure is indispensable. If the German Government renounced it and left the whole further treatment of the problem simply to normal negotiations with Czechoslovakia, the present unbearable circumstances in the Sudeten German territories, which I described in my speech yesterday, would continue to exist for a period, the length of which cannot be foreseen. The Czechoslovak Government would be completely in a position to drag out the negotiations on any point they liked, and thus to delay the final settlement. You will understand after everything that has passed that I cannot place such confidence in the assurances received from the Prague Government. The British Government also would surely not be in a position to dispose of this danger by any use of diplomatic pressure.

That Czechoslovakia should lose part of her fortifications is naturally an unavoidable consequence of the cession of the Sudeten German territory agreed to by the Prague Government itself. If one were to wait for the entry into force of the final settlement, in which Czechoslovakia had completed new fortifications in the territory which remained to her, it would doubtless last months and years. But this is the only object of all the Czech objections. Above all, it is completely incorrect to maintain that Czechoslovakia in this manner would be crippled in her national existence or in her political and economic independence. It is clear from my memorandum that the German occupation would only extend to the given line, and that the final delimitation of the frontier would take place in accordance with the procedure which I have already described. The Prague Government has no right to doubt that

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the German military measures would stop within these limits. If, nevertheless, it desires such a doubt to be taken into account, the British and, if necessary, also the French Government can guarantee the quick fulfillment of my proposal. I can, moreover, only refer to my speech yesterday in which I clearly declared that I regret the idea of any attack on Czechoslovak territory and that, under the condition which I laid down, I am even ready to give a formal guarantee for the remainder of Czechoslovakia. There can, therefore, be not the slightest question whatsoever of a check to the independence of Czechoslovakia. It is equally erroneous to talk of an economic rift. It is, on the contrary, a well-known fact that Czechoslovakia, after the cession of the Sudeten German territory, would constitute a healthier and more unified economic organism than before.

If the Government in Prague finally evinces anxiety also in regard to the state of the Czech population in the territories to be occupied, I can only regard this with surprise. It can be sure that, on the German side, nothing whatever will occur which will preserve for those Czechs a similar fate to that which has befallen the Sudeten Germans consequent on the Czech measures. In these circumstances, I must assume that the Government in Prague is only using a proposal for the occupation by German troops in order, by distorting the meaning and object of my proposal, to mobilize those forces in other countries, in particular in England and France, from which they hope to receive unreserved support for their aim, and thus to achieve the possibility of a general warlike conflagration. I must leave it to your judgment whether, in view of these facts, you consider that you should continue your effort, for which I should like to take this opportunity of once more sincerely thanking you, to spoil such maneuvers and bring the Government in Prague to reason at the very last hour.

Adolf Hitler

When Wilson called on Hitler on the morning of September 27, he carried with him Chamberlain's new proposal,⁴¹⁶ which had arrived the night before. It contained the British guarantee of the timetable schedule for the evacuation of the Sudeten German territories. Hitler laconically replied that the Czech Government now had only two alternatives, either to accept or to refuse the German memorandum.

In the latter case, I will smash Czechoslovakia (*werde ich die Tschecho-Slowakei zerschlagen*). If the Czech will not fulfill my demands until Wednesday, September 28, 2.00 p.m., I shall march into the Sudeten German territories with the German Army on October 1.

Hitler took Wilson's objection, that this would inevitably result in a declaration of war by Great Britain and France, for a bluff. He replied:

If France and Great Britain insist upon striking, then let them. It's all the same to me. I am prepared for all eventualities. I can only take note of the situation. Well, then all of us will find ourselves at war next week.

In order to reinforce his words, Hitler repeated his ultimatum that the memorandum be accepted by the Government in Prague at the latest at 2:00 p.m. on September 28. That date still was entrenched in his mind, even though he himself had crossed out the date and changed it to October 1. When Wilson had left, Hitler composed a reply to Roosevelt.⁴¹⁷ The day prior, the President of the United States had sent an identical telegram to the Heads of State of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, and France and called for peaceful negotiations to resolve the crisis. At the same time he indicated that, should open hostilities ensue, the United States could not guarantee remaining neutral in the long run.

Roosevelt's telegram read verbatim:

Washington, September 26, 1938

To His Excellency Adolf Hitler,
Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich, Berlin.

The fabric of peace on the continent of Europe, if not throughout the rest of the world, is in immediate danger. The consequences of its rupture are incalculable. Should hostilities break out, the lives of millions of men, women, and children in every country involved will most certainly be lost under circumstances of unspeakable horror. The economic system of every country involved is certain to be shattered. The social structure of every country involved may well be completely wrecked.

The United States has no political entanglements. It is caught in no mesh of hatred. Elements of all Europe have formed its civilization. The supreme desire of the American people is to live in peace. But in the event of a general war they face the fact that no nation can escape some measure of the consequences of such a world catastrophe.

The traditional policy of the United States has been the furtherance of the settlement of international disputes by pacific means. It is my conviction that all people under the threat of war today pray that peace may be made before, rather than after, war.

It is imperative that peoples everywhere recall that every civilized nation of the world voluntarily assumed the solemn obligations of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 to solve controversies only by pacific methods. In addition, most nations are parties to other binding treaties obligating them to preserve peace. Furthermore, all countries have today available for such peaceful solution of difficulties which may arise treaties of arbitration and conciliation to which they are parties.

Whatever may be the differences in the controversies at issue, and however difficult of pacific settlement they may be, I am persuaded that there is no problem so difficult or so pressing for solution that it cannot be justly solved by the resort to reason rather than by the resort to force.

During the present crisis the people of the United States and their Government have earnestly hoped that the negotiations for the adjustment

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of the controversy which has now arisen in Europe might reach a successful conclusion. So long as these negotiations continue, so long will there remain the hope that reason and the spirit of equity may prevail and that the world may be thereby escape the madness of a new resort to war.

On behalf of the 130 millions of people of the United States of America and for the sake of humanity everywhere, I most certainly appeal to you not to break off negotiations looking to a peaceful, fair, and constructive settlement of the questions at issue.

I earnestly repeat that so long as negotiations continue differences may be reconciled. Once they are broken off, reason is banished and force asserts itself. And force produces no solution for the future good of humanity.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Such appeals and warnings meant little to Hitler, and he verbosely replied with a telegraphic outpouring twice as long as Roosevelt's initial telegram:

Berlin, September 27, 1938

To His Excellency the President of the United States of America,
Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, Washington.

In your telegram received by the on September 26 Your Excellency addressed an appeal to me in the name of the American people, in the interest of the maintenance of peace, not to break off negotiations in the dispute which has arisen in Europe, and to strive for a peaceful, honorable, and constructive settlement of this question. Be assured that I can fully appreciate the lofty intention on which your remarks are based, and that I share in every respect your opinion regarding the unforeseeable consequences of a European war. Precisely for this reason, however, I can and must decline all responsibility of the German people and their leaders, if the further development, contrary to all my efforts up to the present, should actually lead to the outbreak of hostilities.

In order to arrive at a fair judgment regarding the Sudeten German problem under discussion, it is indispensable to consider the incidents in which, in the last analysis, the origin of this problem and its dangers had its cause. In 1918 the German people laid down their arms in the firm conviction that, by the conclusion of peace with their enemies at that time, those principles and ideals would be realized which had been solemnly announced by President Wilson, and just as solemnly accepted as binding by all the belligerent Powers. Never in history has the confidence of a people been more shamefully betrayed than it was then. The peace conditions imposed on the conquered nations by the treaties concluded in the *faubourgs* of Paris have fulfilled none of the promises given. Rather they have created in Europe a political regime which made of the conquered nations world pariahs without rights, and which must have been recognized in advance by every discerning person as untenable.

One of the points in which the character of the dictates of 1919 was most clearly revealed was the founding of the Czechoslovak State and the

establishment of its frontiers without any consideration for history or nationality. The Sudetenland was also included therein, although this area had always been German and although its inhabitants, after the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy, had unanimously declared their desire for Anschluss to the German Reich. Thus the right of self-determination, which had been proclaimed by President Wilson as the most important basis of national life, was simply denied to the Sudeten Germans.

But that was not enough. In the treaties of 1919 certain obligations with regard to the German people, which according to the text were far reaching, were imposed on the Czechoslovak State. These obligations too were disregarded from the first. The League of Nations has completely failed in the task assigned to it of guaranteeing the fulfillment of these obligations. Since then the Sudetenland has been engaged in the severest struggle for the maintenance of its German character.

It was a natural and inevitable development that, after the recovery of strength of the German Reich and after the reunion of Austria with it, the desire of the Sudeten Germans for preservation of their culture and for closer union with Germany increased. Despite the loyal attitude of the Sudeten German Party and its leaders, differences with the Czechs became ever stronger. From day to day it became more evident that the Government in Prague was not disposed seriously to consider the most elementary rights of the Sudeten Germans. On the contrary, they attempted by increasingly violent methods to enforce the Czechization of the Sudetenland. It was inevitable that this procedure should lead to ever greater and more serious tension.

The German Government at first did not intervene in any way in this development and maintained its calm restraint even when, in May of this year, the Czechoslovak Government proceeded to a mobilization of their army, under the purely fictitious pretext of German troop concentrations. The renunciation of military counter-measures in Germany at that time, however, only served to strengthen the uncompromising attitude of the Prague Government. This was clearly shown by the course of the negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten German Party with the Government. These negotiations produced the conclusive proof that the Czechoslovak Government was far removed from treating the Sudeten German problem in a fundamental manner and bringing about an equitable solution.

Consequently, conditions in the Czechoslovak State, as is generally known, have in the last few weeks become completely intolerable. Political persecution and economic oppression have plunged the Sudeten Germans into untold misery. To characterize these circumstances it will suffice to refer to the following:

We reckon at present 214,000 Sudeten German refugees who had to leave house and home in their ancestral country and flee across the German frontier, because they saw in this the last and only possibility of escaping from the revolting Czech regime of force and bloodiest terror. Countless dead, thousands of wounded, tens of thousands of people detained and imprisoned, and deserted villages, are the accusing witnesses before world opinion of an outbreak of hostilities, and as you in your telegram rightly fear, carried out

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for a long time by the Prague Government, to say nothing of German economic life in the Sudeten German territory systematically destroyed by the Czech Government for 20 years, and which already shows all the signs of ruin which you anticipate as the consequence of an outbreak of war.

These are the facts which compelled me in my Nuremberg speech of September 13 to state before the whole world that the deprivation of rights of 3 million Germans in Czechoslovakia must cease, and that these people, if they cannot find justice and help by themselves, must receive both from the German Reich. However, to make a last attempt to reach the goal by peaceful means, I made concrete proposals for the solution of the problem in a memorandum delivered to the British Prime Minister on September 23, which in the meantime has been made public. Since the Czechoslovak Government had previously declared to the British and French Governments that they were already agreed that the Sudeten German settlement area should be separated from the Czechoslovak State and joined to the German Reich, the proposals of the German memorandum aim at nothing else than to bring about a prompt, sure, and equitable fulfillment of that Czechoslovak promise.

It is my conviction that you, Mr. President, when you realize the whole development of the Sudeten German problem from its inception to the present day, will recognize that the German Government have truly not been lacking either in patience or in a sincere desire for a peaceful understanding. It is not Germany who is to blame for the fact that there is a Sudeten German problem at all and that the present untenable conditions have arisen from it. The terrible fate of the people affected by the problem no longer admits of a further postponement of its solution. The possibilities of arriving at a just settlement by agreement are therefore exhausted with the proposals of the German memorandum. It now rests, not with the German Government, but with the Czechoslovak Government alone, to decide if they want peace or war.

Adolf Hitler

After receiving this message, Roosevelt sent another telegram, now directed to Hitler alone, on 10.00 p.m. of September 27, 1938. He reinforced his appeal for a settlement by negotiation, stressing that "the question before the world today is not the question of errors of judgment or of injustices committed in the past; it is the question of the fate of the world today and tomorrow."

Unmoved, Hitler began to prepare for the review of a demonstration of military might in front of the Chancellery. The march down Wilhelmstrasse was to offer proof of the enthusiasm for war among the German population. On that morning of September 27, Hitler ordered the High Command of the Wehrmacht in Berlin to publish an announcement that in the afternoon, the Second Motorized Division would drive through the Reich Capital and that the division would

come from Stettin en route to Saxony (i.e. heading in the direction of Czechoslovakia!). On its way through Berlin, the convoy was scheduled to pass along Wilhelmstrasse, in front of the Chancellery building.

Hitler had been convinced that such an announcement would suffice to bring throngs of enthusiastic people to the front of the Chancellery. He had awaited a frenzy similar to the incredible war enthusiasm of August 1914. Without doubt, he had been prepared to step upon the balcony of the Chancellery to deliver a last rousing appeal to his Volk, as Emperor William II had done from the balcony of his Berlin palace.

However, he had forgotten to include public opinion in his calculations. The atmosphere that day was completely different from the night before at the Sportpalast. The man in the street was ill pleased with the political situation, and Hitler's envisioned war on Czechoslovakia was decidedly unpopular both in the Old Reich and in Austria. In the beginning of Hitler's rule, the people had rallied to him because the heads of the Weimar Republic had failed to resolve the young republic's economic distress. Later, by eliminating unemployment, Hitler had managed to greatly improve the lot of the common man. However, the people were not enthused to exchange the economic despair of unemployment for the even greater despair of war.

At 4:00 p.m., only a very small crowd gathered in front of the Chancellery to observe the several-hour defile of troops. They stood in silence, barely greeting the troops: not the faintest "*Heil!*" broke the silence nor were any nationalistic songs to be heard. Even Berndt, the deputy of the Reich Press Chief, had to concede:⁴¹⁸ "The people in the street raise their arms in greeting, but they are silent and grave. What is going through their minds?"

It is easy to imagine, on the other hand, what was going through Hitler's mind as, half hidden behind a curtain, he peered out to the street.

8

In principle, the amount of enthusiasm of a people at the outset of a war does not determine its outcome. People do not decide upon issues of war or peace themselves, rather they can only accept the decisions of their leaders. Since these ideas run contrary to Hitler's own conception, the poor showing that day infuriated him. He wondered whether the failure of the rally was the result of his speech at the Sportpalast the night before. After all, for over five years he had labored to instill in the German Volk "blind obedience" and "bravery."

It was characteristic for Hitler not to reflect for very long upon his own conduct as a possible source of his failures. Rather, he would quickly redirect the blame upon the Jews. In his mind, the secret world conspiracy of Jews, Freemasons, Illuminates, etc. must have employed some mysterious means to exert a pernicious influence upon the German Volk. Hitler also believed that they had, through their hideous influence on the Western governments, in particular the English and the Crown, affected their stance. He felt himself reaffirmed in this suspicion by the latest news from abroad:⁴¹⁹ contrary to his predictions, the Western Powers had indeed mobilized and renounced neutrality.

A great number of Jews in Germany had blatantly displayed their satisfaction over Hitler's difficulties. To Hitler, this imprudence was sufficient cause to seek revenge. In reaction to the "shameful" display on the Wilhelmstrasse that day, Hitler swore that he would take new repressive action at the earliest possible date, action which would tighten the thumbscrews on the Jews.

September 27 was not a day to Hitler's liking. It is probable that Chamberlain, as well, looked apprehensively to the future that day. His policy of pursuing an international agreement through maximal appeasement of Hitler had not shown any success to date. The situation was no different from prior to his hurried visit to Berchtesgaden. There

was no doubt that Hitler would launch his assault on Czechoslovakia on either October 1 or 2, and would be in a position to justify his action through international law and by accusing the Czechoslovakians of intransigence. France was obligated to enter the conflict because of the Franco-Czechoslovakian Mutual Assistance Pact. Britain's relationship with France would draw it as well into the conflict, even though no mutual assistance treaty existed between the United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia.⁴²⁰ For the time being, Hitler held all the cards. Great Britain was not in a position to resolve the "larger issues" (i.e. the final reckoning with Hitler) at this particular point.

Nevertheless, Chamberlain had not completely abandoned hope on realizing his ambitions. At 8.00 in the evening of that September 27, he delivered a radio address, in the course of which he declared:⁴²¹

It seems still more impossible that a quarrel which has already been settled in principle should be the subject of war ... However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in a war simply on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that ... but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted.

In a situation that offered little hope, Chamberlain continued his diplomatic efforts. He planned to ask the French Ambassador in Berlin, François-Poncet, to intervene on his behalf in an attempt to sway Hitler to abandon his unyielding attitude. If this should fail, he would ask the same of Mussolini. On September 28, François-Poncet called upon Hitler at 11:00 a.m., pointing out the following:⁴²²

You are mistaken, Herr Reichskanzler, if you believe you can constrain the conflict with Czechoslovakia to a local level. Once you attack this country, you will have set aflame all of Europe. Why do you wish to place yourself at such great risk when your demands could, in essence, be satisfied without recourse to a war?

François-Poncet brought with him a well-drawn map of the various phases of the withdrawal of Czechoslovakia from the areas in question which appears to have impressed Hitler.

One hour prior to the meeting, Lord Perth, the British Ambassador in Rome, appeared at the Palazzo Venezia to ask Mussolini to function as a mediator. Lord Perth requested that the Italian head of state counsel Hitler to accept the British proposal for a conference.

As usual, Hitler had neither informed Mussolini on his true intentions, nor even consulted with him on the matter. The Duce,

through frequent repetition of this type of treatment, had become accustomed to this procedure, and was little affected. He remained so eager to assist Hitler in the crisis that he had delivered speeches nearly every day since the middle of September,⁴²³ in which he emphasized that “Italy’s place had already been chosen.” But these words appear to have been the extent of his efforts. Mussolini would claim later⁴²⁴ that he had undertaken gigantic military precautions in the month of September. However, his reactions to the Polish crisis a few months later provide ample reason to doubt his assertions.

Mussolini was unquestionably relieved when Lord Perth called on him on September 28 to ask for his assistance in an enterprise to prevent the outbreak of war, a war for which Italy was not prepared. Immediately, Mussolini phoned the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico, and instructed him to venture to change Hitler’s mind.

When Attolico reached the Chancellery, it was already noon. He called Hitler out of his conference room, where the Führer had still been discussing matters with François-Poncet, and reported completely out of breath:

Just now the British Government has instructed its Ambassador in Rome to relay that it accepts the Duce’s mediation in the Sudeten German question. Differences have been reported to be minimal. The Duce wants you to know that whatever you shall resolve, Führer, Fascist Italy will back you. The Duce, however, believes that acceptance of this proposal would be advantageous and asks you to refrain from mobilizing.⁴²⁵

Hitler stared at the Italian Ambassador, wondering if the entire world had conspired to prevent him from starting his war! However, if even his friend Mussolini preferred peace—so be it, for goodness’ sake. In response to Attolico, he said: “Tell the Duce that I accept his proposal.” It is likely that he nonetheless still entertained the hope that the conference would collapse only to reopen the doors that led to the military enterprise.

The further course of events was predictable. François-Poncet, who was still waiting to continue his talks, was informed of the Führer’s decision. The British Ambassador Henderson was also informed. Shortly thereafter, Henderson presented Hitler with a new letter from Chamberlain in which the Prime Minister made detailed suggestions to prepare for the conference.

That afternoon, Mussolini again phoned Berlin, instructing Attolico to ask for the Führer’s approval of the British proposals for the conference. As Mussolini further stated, he was “convinced that Hitler

will succeed this time, scoring a success which, both in light of the present situation and considering worldwide prestige, I would not hesitate to call splendid.⁴²⁶

Attolico returned Mussolini's call around 3:00 p.m. to say that Hitler would agree to the conference only if the Duce would attend as well. Hitler would leave it to Mussolini's discretion whether the meeting was to take place in either Frankfurt am Main or in Munich. Mussolini opted for the Bavarian capital.

Meanwhile, Chamberlain briefed the House of Commons on the latest developments. During his address, a slip of paper was handed to him, and he interrupted himself to say:⁴²⁷

That is not all. I have something further to say to the House yet. I have now been informed by Herr Hitler that he invites me to meet him at Munich tomorrow morning. He has also invited Signor Mussolini and Monsieur Daladier. Signor Mussolini has accepted, and I have no doubt Monsieur Daladier will accept. I need not say what my answer will be.

At 7:40 p.m., the following official notice was issued:⁴²⁸

Berlin, September 28, 1938

The Führer has invited Benito Mussolini, the Head of the Italian Government; Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain; and Daladier, the French Prime Minister, to a conference. The statesmen have accepted the invitation. The discussion will take place in Munich on the morning of September 29.

Both the Government of Great Britain and the French Government have today submitted new proposals for the solution of the Czechoslovak crisis. In this connection Mr. Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, has offered to meet the Führer again for a personal discussion.

At the same time Mussolini has offered his assistance in the search for an immediate solution. In view of the inevitable German reaction to the terror in the Sudeten German territory, the Czechoslovak crisis allows of no further delay; on the contrary, the position categorically demands an immediate solution. Having regard to this state of affairs and to the fact that the proposals to date do not meet the situation as regards justice, prompted by the desire to make a last effort to bring about the peaceful cession of the Sudeten German territory to the Reich, the Führer has invited the Heads of Government of Italy, France, and Great Britain to a personal conference.

It is to be hoped that, even at the eleventh hour, this conference will lead to an agreement on the measures to be put into effect immediately for the transfer of the Sudeten territory promised by the Czechoslovak Government.

The stilted wording of this official note betrayed Hitler's not-yet-abandoned hopes that the conference would end in failure.

At 9:30 a.m. on September 29, Hitler stood at the platform of the Kufstein train station, awaiting the arrival of his friend Mussolini. When Mussolini and Ciano stepped off the train, they greeted Hitler in their new uniforms, which were cut in the Nazi German style. Already in May, Mussolini had presented Hitler with the Italian version of the German goosestep, the "Passo Romano." Mussolini and his entire entourage now sported the peaked cap which Hitler so cherished.⁴²⁹

Mussolini boarded Hitler's special train, allowing the two friends to converse at leisure and without interruption on their trip to Munich. Ciano later recalled⁴³⁰ that it was at this point that they agreed "not to allow the conference to drift off to the problematic realm of dialectics and procedure, but rather to advocate a quick resolution."

Similar to his 1937 sojourn in Munich, Mussolini resided at the Prince Carl Palace. Daladier's plane touched down at Munich shortly after 11:00 a.m. Thereafter, he was chauffeured to the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel. A few minutes before noon, Chamberlain arrived and immediately set out for the Führerbau at the Kbnigsplatz, the site of the Munich Conference.

Although four statesmen took part in the conference, Hitler and Chamberlain dominated it, leaving Mussolini and Daladier in the background, like seconds in a duel. The negotiations, with several interruptions, continued until dusk. Most of the discussion concerned technical aspects of subjects such as the various phases of the Czechoslovakian evacuation, the determination of the zones, etc. Hitler and Chamberlain differed on the question of property rights, but, as in other questions, the issue was resolved through acquiescence to Hitler's demands.

Shortly before midnight, the Four-Power Agreement was signed in the Führerbau, crushing any hopes Hitler may have still entertained that an international agreement could be avoided. The contractual settlement was similar to the resolution applied to the Saar. Again international commissions were set up and plebiscites held under international supervision. The Saar experience, which had infuriated Hitler, showed that he despised such measures. His dilemma was that he had no option other than to sign. He had ventured too far by playing along with the conference to retreat now.

Adolf Hitler was the first to put his signature beneath the agreement, followed by Neville Chamberlain, Édouard Daladier, and Benito Mussolini. The verbatim text of the Munich Agreement and its additional declarations read as follows:

Agreement reached on September 29, 1938,
between Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy

Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, taking into consideration the agreement, which has been already reached in principle for the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory, have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the said cession and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfillment.

- 1) The evacuation will begin on October 1st.
- 2) The United Kingdom, France, and Italy agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by October 10th, without any existing installations having been destroyed, and that the Czechoslovak Government will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to the said installations.
- 3) The conditions governing the evacuation will be laid down in detail by an international commission composed of representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia.
- 4) The occupation by stages of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on October 1st. The four territories marked on the attached map will be occupied by German troops in the following order: the territory marked number I on the 1st and 2d of October, the territory marked number II on the 2d and 3d of October, the territory marked number III on the 3d, 4th, and 5th of October, the territory marked number IV on the 6th and 7th of October. The remaining territory of preponderantly German character will be ascertained by the aforesaid international commission forthwith and be occupied by German troops by the 10th of October.
- 5) The international commission referred to in paragraph 3) will determine the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. These territories will be occupied by international bodies until the plebiscite has been completed. The same commission will fix the conditions in which the plebiscite is to be held, taking as a basis the conditions of the Saar plebiscite. The commission will also fix a date, not later than the end of November, on which the plebiscite will be held.
- 6) The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by the international commission. This commission will also be entitled to recommend to the four Powers, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, in certain exceptional cases, minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite.
- 7) There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within 6 months from the date of this agreement. A German-Czechoslovak commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.
- 8) The Czechoslovak Government will, within a period of 4 weeks from the date of this agreement, release from their military and police forces any

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Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and the Czechoslovak Government will within the same period release Sudeten German prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for political offenses.

Adolf Hitler
Ed. Daladier
Mussolini
Neville Chamberlain
Munich, September 29, 1938

Annex to the Agreement

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have entered into the above agreement on the basis that they stand by the offer, contained in paragraph 6 of the Anglo-French proposals of September 19th, relating to an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression. When the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled, Germany and Italy for their part will give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Additional Declaration

The four Heads of Government here present agree that the international commission, provided for in the agreement signed by them today, shall consist of the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office, the British, French, and Italian Ambassadors accredited in Berlin, and a representative to be nominated by the Government of Czechoslovakia.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Additional Declaration

The Heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled within 3 months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the Heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Supplementary Declaration

All questions which may arise out of the transfer of the territory shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference to the international commission.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Placed ahead of the Agreement's wording, a communiqué was published in Germany:⁴³¹

The conversations of the Heads of State of Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain which had commenced on Thursday afternoon, have come to a close in the late evening. The resolutions set down in the following documents have been immediately transmitted to the Czechoslovak Government.

At 1.00 a.m. on September 30, Hitler concluded the meeting with a short address in which he expressed his appreciation for the foreign statesmen's endeavors. The occasion was distinctly reminiscent of the first day of March 1935, when Hitler had to thank the three members of the League of Nations's commission in Saarbrücken.⁴³²

A rapport between Hitler and Daladier developed, even though the Frenchman had told Hitler some rather unpleasant truths in the course of the day. Hitler remained aloof to Chamberlain, however, eagerly agreed as the British Prime Minister asked to speak with him privately around midday.

News of the signature of the agreement led to great rejoicing among the inhabitants of Munich. That night and the following day, they cheered Chamberlain far more than they did Hitler. They knew that it had been Chamberlain's effort alone that had averted the outbreak of war. They hoped that now the Western Powers would stand firm to prevent Hitler from carrying through his imperialist designs. For Bavaria, the September events had signaled the second mobilization order since March. Hitler's plans for war were transparent. After all, the citizens of Munich knew only too well what a discrepancy there was between his saccharine words and his deeds. Earlier than others in the German Reich, they developed an intense dislike of Hitler, and did little to mask their feelings.⁴³³ With the ability to do so, they would have long ago treated Hitler as they had King Louis II of Bavaria, by placing him under guardianship. The public display of sympathy for Chamberlain in 1938 was indicative of these proclivities.⁴³⁴

In the eyes of the world public at large, Hitler appeared to have scored an overwhelming success. Without firing a shot, he had gained huge territories and an additional 3.5 million people. The prostrate Czechoslovakia was placed at his mercy. The Western Powers had lost prestige, particularly in the smaller states of southeastern Europe.

There was yet another victor to emerge from the Munich Conference whose importance would become evident within a few months: Chamberlain! He had succeeded in securing Hitler's signature on an international document that forced Hitler's hand. Either the dictator was to abide by what he had signed, meaning that he would have to abandon his gluttonous appetite for annexation, or if he did break with the terms of the treaty, he would be discredited as the aggressor in front of the entire world. Ironically, Hitler himself was among the few who realized at the time that Chamberlain was indeed the true victor of Munich.

After he bade Mussolini farewell at the train station at 1:50 a.m. and had returned home himself, it must have struck him to what extent he had let himself be trapped. He had invested a great deal of time and energy in evading the restraints of international agreements and conjuring up endless excuses so that his freedom of action would not be restricted by any means. Now he had allowed himself to be manipulated into signing an international agreement whose exigencies he could not possibly keep—lest he abandon all his dreams of conquest to the East to build the new Germanic-German Reich.

The Sudeten German territories, which he had so graciously been granted, were of little value to his grand plans if he were not in possession of the remainder of Czechoslovakia as well. Chamberlain, “that bastard”⁴³⁵ had not only spoiled his march into Prague, he also had created a great obstacle to Hitler by making it difficult to find a pretext that would somehow justify a new assault upon the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain had dared to bind him in international chains. Indeed, Hitler had cause to be furious. He had been caught in his own web. How many times had he assured the absolutely binding obligation of his signature:

Whatever we believe we cannot adhere to, on principles of honor or ability, we will never sign. Whatever we have once signed we will blindly and faithfully fulfill!⁴³⁶

Or, an even more boasting example:

Nowhere on the face of this earth is there a better guarantee of the upholding of a contract than a signature by this hand at this time.⁴³⁷

He had been taken by his word, and now he was trapped. Should he misstep, he would find himself accused of breach of contract.

Hitler’s mood steadily worsened in the hours following the signing of the document. Chamberlain found him in dejected spirits when, as agreed, he came to see him at 1:00 p.m. on September 30 at his private apartment (16 Prinzregentenplatz). Schmidt, the interpreter, described the ensuing scene in these words:⁴³⁸ Hitler had changed. In a bad mood and pale, he sat across from me. Absent-mindedly, he sat and listened to Chamberlain expounding upon questions regarding Anglo-German relations, disarmament and economic matters. Uncharacteristically, he added very little to the discussion.”

Although Chamberlain dominated the discussion at this particular private meeting, he had not come merely to chat: toward the end of the talk, he presented to Hitler a prepared statement which contained

an Anglo-German mutual declaration of peace, drafted precisely to meet Hitler's exigencies. These exigencies corresponded to those he had imprudently revealed in his speech at the Sportpalast on September 26.⁴³⁹ Moreover, Chamberlain had added a pledge which called for mutual consultations, a pledge Hitler, as a matter of principle, would loathe to take. He never consulted anyone prior to making a decision, not even his friend Mussolini. He hardly cared to consult the "senile" Englishmen on any such matters.

According to Schmidt,⁴⁴⁰ Hitler, being less than pleased with the declaration Chamberlain placed before him, hesitated to sign it at first. However, perhaps thinking that the placement of his signature on a document the night before had lessened the import of again binding himself in such a manner, he gave in. After all, he had no intention of upholding either agreement. He planned the revenge to be his, to make the British pay for the manner in which he had been treated at Munich. He would show the British whose will would reign supreme in the Europe of the future!

The document signed September 30 had the following verbatim content:⁴⁴¹

September 29, 1938

We, the German Führer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German Relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference, and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

Adolf Hitler
Neville Chamberlain

Hitler's fury at the Munich Agreement could not be stemmed by the flood of congratulatory telegrams from abroad and from across the Reich, which conveyed appreciation of the settlements arrived at in the treaty. Among the telegrams was one by the former French Premier Flandin.⁴⁴² Hitler's reply to this particular wire read:⁴⁴³

I thank you with all my heart for the congratulations which your telegram has transmitted. Hereby I express my gratitude to you for your energetic endeavors striving for complete understanding and cooperation between

September 30, 1938

Germany and France. I have followed these efforts with genuine interest and desire that these might yet bear even more fruit.

With heartfelt best wishes, Adolf Hitler, Reich Chancellor

In contrast to Hitler's mood of September 30 and October 1, the German people were most happy and relieved now that the threat of war had apparently receded. Overall the Munich Agreement was regarded, even within the Party, as an astonishing victory for Hitler. By securing the favorable terms of the agreement, the German media and propaganda campaign had played a crucial role, forcing the Western Powers to capitulate at the expense of Czechoslovakia. The Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, made the following revealing statement in Berlin as he congratulated Goebbels: "Our weapons were not allowed to speak. Your weapons [press and propaganda] have won!"⁴⁴⁴

At the time, no one in Germany realized that propaganda was appropriate as a means of fighting an inferior enemy or one on the verge of collapse, but would be ineffective against a superior opponent.

On September 29, the Austrian General Alfred Krauss had died at the age of seventy-six. The Chancellor ordered a state funeral for the general and sent his widow a telegram:⁴⁴⁵

May I extend to you my sincere and profound sympathies on the most painful loss which you and the Greater German Army have suffered as a result of the passing away of your husband.

Adolf Hitler

A laconic September 30 official announcement canceled the *Erntedankfest* for that year:⁴⁴⁶

Because of the comprehensible need for all transportation vehicles, it has become necessary to cancel the celebration of the *Erntedankfest* on the Bückeberg and the related receptions in Hanover and Goslar.

How things had changed! The era of excessive celebration of national holidays of the years 1933 to 1937 was nearing its end. The *Erntedankfest*, an important national holiday, which was even embodied in a law, was simply canceled "because of the comprehensible need for all transportation vehicles." Soon questions of transportation, armament, and other domestic economic adversities brought by war would supplant the celebration of such supposedly 'eternal' national holidays as May Day, Reich Party Congresses, *Erntedankfest*. Indeed, these celebrations would cease to exist before Hitler met his end.

October 1, 1938

On October 1, Hitler returned to Berlin, from where he sent a handwritten note to Admiral General Raeder congratulating him on his tenth service anniversary as Chief of Navy Command.⁴⁴⁷

That same day in Berlin, Hitler issued the following decree concerning the administration of the Sudeten German territories:⁴⁴⁸

§1

Upon the occupation of the Sudeten German territories by German troops, the German Reich assumes responsibility for the administration of the area.

§2

The administration in the Sudeten German territories will be headed by the "Reichskommissar for the Sudeten German territories." This shall take effect as soon and insofar as I shall withdraw the powers of attorney to administer the said territories from the Commander in Chief of the Army, in whom these are vested for the interim time period. The Reichskommissar will be responsible for all branches of the administration. The Reich Minister of the Interior, in agreement with the appropriate Reich Minister, will decide upon the transfer of all respective branches of the administration to the existing Reich Special Administration (*Reichssonderverwaltungen*).

§3

The Reichskommissar is directly subordinate to me. He shall see to the implementation of my general instructions with regard to the political organization, as well as carry out the specific instructions received from the Reich Ministers concerning the administrative, economic, and cultural organization of the Sudeten German territories.

§4

Within the Sudeten German territories, the Reichskommissar is empowered to issue instructions to the administrative departments of the state, the municipal authorities, and other public corporations. This also applies to general instructions by the Deputy of the Führer pertaining to the offices of the Sudeten German Party, its subdivisions, and connected associations. The Reichskommissar supervises all public corporations in the Sudeten German territories.

§5

The present laws in the occupied territories shall remain in force, excepting those laws which conflict with the interests acquired by the German Reich as a result of its occupation of the Sudeten German territories. With the approval of the responsible Reich Ministers and the Reich Minister of the Interior, the Reichskommissar shall have the right to revise the law via ordinance. Ordinances shall be published in the official gazette for the Sudeten German territories. Unless otherwise noted, they shall take effect as of the day subsequent to their publication.

§6

As Reichskommissar for the Sudeten German territories, I appoint the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein.

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§7

The Reich law shall be introduced to the Sudeten German territories either by myself or by the responsible Reich Minister in accordance with the Reich Minister of the Interior.

§8

The Reich Minister of the interior shall be responsible for the transfer of the Sudeten German territories.

§9

The Reich Minister of the Interior shall issue the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of this decree.

Berlin, October 1, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

The decree made no reference to the Munich Agreement, the only legal foundation upon which the Reich could base its possession of the said territories. This fact in itself is revealing enough!

Moreover, contrary to his unwavering principle of preferring Reich Germans to native politicians in newly acquired territories,⁴⁴⁹ Hitler named Konrad Henlein as Reichskommissar for the Sudetenland. By no means did this reflect a change of heart on the part of Hitler, rather it demonstrated that Hitler regarded the present situation to be of an interim nature.

Had matters proceeded on schedule, and had he taken all of Czechoslovakia by force, it is highly unlikely that he would have appointed Henlein to the position of Reichskommissar (no more than he had assigned Seyss-Inquart to such a post in Austria). In this hypothetical case, it is probable that Hitler would have entrusted Neurath with all executive powers in Bohemia and Moravia, as he did when establishing a Reich Protectorate on March 15, 1939, in these regions. Hitler thought the Sudeten German territories to be of little consequence, leading him to believe that the assignment of Henlein as Reichskommissar there would not engender any risks. In addition, he appeared to be in no rush to travel to the area in order to have himself hailed as the great liberator. Neither on October 1 nor on October 2 was Hitler present when the German troops marched into Zone I (southern Bohemia) and then into Zone II (Bodenbach-Zwickau).

It was not until October 3 that Hitler stepped across what had been the German border at the Wildenau crossing near Asch. That same day, German troops occupied the largest zone (Zone III, encompassing

Eger-Karlsbad). On this occasion, Hitler used his three-axle, cross-country gray Mercedes for only the second time since the March 12 Anschluss of Austria. Again he wore his leather coat that was cut in a military fashion. For the time at hand, he had to leave his field-gray tunic hanging in the closet, which he had planned to wear for his campaign.

Contrary to his demeanor during the days of the Anschluss, Hitler's face was serious and grim. Intermittently, he would force a smile if the crowd hailed him in a particularly enthusiastic fashion. For him, the mass rallies in Eger, Karlsbad, Friedland, Krumau, and in other cities, were of little consolation when set against his dreams of triumphant entry into Prague. Hitler remained irritable for several weeks. In no address in the newly acquired territories could he refrain from mentioning his original intent to conquer the area by force.

His very first speech in the new territories on October 3 in the Eger market place already was anything but friendly. He immediately announced to the Sudeten Germans that they, too, must fulfill new duties—naturally of a predominantly military nature—since, after all, he had with alacrity “drawn his sword” in their defense. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech at Eger is reproduced below:⁴⁵⁰

Egerlanders!

Today, for the first time, I may greet you as *my* Egerlanders! Through me, the entire German Volk greets you! At this moment, it not only greets you but the entire Sudeten German territories which will, in a few days' time, belong to the German Reich in its entirety.

This greeting is at the same time an avowal: never again shall this land be torn from the Reich! This Greater German Reich is protected by the German shield and by the German sword. You yourselves form part of this protecting umbrella. From now on, like all other Germans, you will have to do your part. It is a cause of great pride for all of us that each and every German son will participate not only in Germany's joy, but also in our duties and, if need be, in our sacrifices as well.

For you, this nation was willing to draw the sword! And you will all be willing to do likewise wherever German lands or the German Volk be threatened. In this community of will and fate, the German Volk will, from now on, mold its future. And no power on earth will ever be a threat to it again! And so all of Germany, from East to West, from North to South, stands prepared to stand up for each other.

There is great happiness in all of Germany these days. Not only you feel this, it is felt by the entire nation which rejoices with you. Your happiness is the happiness of the seventy-five million who have made up the Reich until now, just as your sorrow was their sorrow until a few days ago.

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And thus you step forth onto the path leading to Germany's great future! In this hour, let us thank the Almighty who has blessed our paths in the past, and let us pray to Him: may He lead us forth onto the path of righteousness in the future as well.

On the same day, Hitler attended an outdoor dinner at the headquarters of General von Reichenau, at which he appeared to be absent-minded. That afternoon, he left the Sudeten German territories again by passing through Wildstein and Schönbach. At 2:00 p.m. on October 4, Hitler proceeded to Karlsbad via Falkenau, where he delivered an address upon the Theaterplatz:²⁵¹

Germans! Volksgenossen! People of Karlsbad!

Twenty years ago, you were so unfortunate as to set out on a path which led you on to what appeared to be a hopeless future. I set out on my path back then, too: I believed in the resurrection of Germany, in the restitution of my Volk and in the greatness of the coming German Reich. You remained faithful to your *Deutschtum* throughout the years as I remained faithful to my belief! And today we both find ourselves living in that German Reich I had envisioned then and in which I believed. This Reich has become reality, and it will remain so eternally.

Just as you must take care of that Greater German Reich which we share, and the citizens of which you have now become, this Germany will take care of you! Seventy-five million other Germans reciprocate your feelings of love and dedication, of loyalty and willingness to sacrifice.

It was a difficult decision that led me here. This decision was backed by the will to resort to force, if need be, in order to free you. We are all the more happy and grateful that this last and most difficult step needed not be taken in order for us to secure our rights. We are proud to take over this country with all its natural beauty. We are determined to immediately begin with improvements here as well, to improve what needs improvement, to build up what can be built up, and to let the wounds of the past heal.

I did not know which paths would lead me here. But that I would stand here one day, that I knew! As I stand before you now, you will not only thank me but I wish to thank you as well for your loyalty, faithfulness, and your willingness to sacrifice. Just as you are proud of this Greater German Reich whose leader I am, so this Germany takes great pride in you Sudeten Germans. At this hour, we can but think of our eternal German Volk and our Greater German Reich!

Deutschland—Sieg Heil!



XXVI State reception in Rome

Hitler, Mussolini, and King Victor Emanuel III on May 3, 1938, subsequent to Hitler's arrival at the Ostia station. Hitler is wearing the dagger and insignia of a "Honorary Corporal of the Fascist Militia."

Photo: Domarus archives



XXVII September 26, 1938

Hitler in the Berlin Sportpalast after his speech which should mark the beginning of war against Czechoslovakia. From left to right: Hitler, Goebbels, SA Obergruppenführer and Chief of the Berlin Police Graf Helldorf, Hess, Göring.

Photo: Domarus archives

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Hitler returned to Berlin on October 5. At an evening rally in the Sportpalast he opened the new Winterhilfswerk. The short duration of his speech (only thirty minutes) revealed his ill temper. The majority of the speech was dedicated to describing the preparations for armed conflict which he had undertaken during the preceding weeks and months:⁴⁵²

It was a great goal I set for myself on May 28.⁴⁵³ At the time, it was a most difficult decision. I believed in its realization and I could only believe in it because I knew: behind me stands the entire German Volk, and it is ready to take on any [!] mission. [—]

Within these last few weeks and months, I have been able to count upon one great help in matters of foreign affairs, and in my last speech in Halle,⁴⁵⁴ I already thanked that man who always stood behind me as a great and loyal friend of Germany, Benito Mussolini. He placed not only his own strength and power of genius in the service of finding a just solution, but also placed in its service all the power at his disposal. I must also thank two other great statesmen who, at the last minute, realized the historic import of the hour and declared themselves willing to strive for the solution of one of the most burning problems in all of Europe. These men made it possible for me to extend my hand as well for reaching an understanding.

However, above all, my heartfelt gratitude flies toward the German Volk! It has always stood by me in these long months. In solemn determination it has shouldered all those measures necessary to see through the just demands of the Reich. It will be to the eternal glory of our Volk that in a time period in which hundreds of thousands were called to work and hundreds of thousands of our men were called to arms, that in this time period not *one* panic-buy took place, that not *one* man went to the bank, not *one* woman had doubts. Rather the entire nation stood together as one. I must say this openly: I am proud of my German Volk!

He was not quite as proud as he claimed to be. After all, he had not forgotten the embarrassing lack of war enthusiasm the German

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Volk had displayed in the preceding month. Hitler then indirectly revealed his intention not to allow internationally supervised plebiscites to be held in the region, even though it had been agreed upon in Munich to conduct these in various zones.

I hope that within a few days, the Sudeten German problem will *finally* be resolved. By October 10, we will call all German territories our own which belong to us.

With that, one of the most difficult crises in Europe will be over. This year, all of us may truly look forward to Christmas, not only within Germany but outside of its borders as well. For all of us, it shall be a true celebration of peace.

Such emphasis on peace by Hitler was always suspect. Indeed, this usually signaled that he was preoccupied with exactly the opposite. In this instance, he was contemplating the options for military conquest of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Only a few days later, he issued concrete instructions to the military.⁴⁵⁵

In his October 5 speech in Berlin, he had already alluded to the issue. While minutes earlier he had spoken of the assistance that Mussolini, Daladier, and Chamberlain had rendered him, he now declared:

A law reigns above all of us: no one in this world will help us, if we do not help ourselves. This program of self-help is both a proud one and a manly one. It is quite different from those of my predecessors who ran around all over the place, one minute begging at the gates of Versailles, then in Geneva, Lausanne, or at some other conferences [!]. It is with greater pride that we Germans solve our own problems and help ourselves today!

Yet we must realize to how many nameless, countless of our Volksgenossen we owe a great debt. How many hundreds of thousands of German workers were suddenly pulled from their jobs these past months. One fine day they were told: "You must pack your bags now, you are going West!" There a mighty army set to work and built a wall of concrete and steel to protect all of us and all of Germany. They had to leave their wives and children behind. They had to leave their work places and had to choose different, often more taxing tasks. In mass dormitories, they had to put up with many an inconvenience. Certainly, we tried to make things bearable for them. All the same, we owe them thanks, we owe it to them and to the hundreds of thousands of other men who were called up and moved into the barracks and to maneuver sites. And we owe thanks to all those women who had to let their sons and husbands go.

To the "returned" Sudeten Germans, Hitler dedicated only a few words. With effusive sentimentality, he described how, "for the first time," he had seen actual "tears of joy."

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I myself have taken the first step into these [Sudeten German] territories. I was greatly moved by two pictures. For one, I had often witnessed joyous jubilation and enthusiasm. It was the first time that I saw tears of joy in the eyes of hundreds of thousands there.

Secondly, I witnessed gruesome destitution! When Englishmen like Duff Cooper⁴⁵⁶ and Mister Eden go around claiming there had been injustice done to the Czechs—well, they should just see what had happened there in reality. How can they twist the truth like that?! I saw entire villages malnourished, entire cities run down.

My Volksgenossen, it is up to you now to fulfill an obligation of honor! We must take these people into the midst of our Volksgemeinschaft and help them. They need our help! This is merely a token of appreciation on the part of those Germans who were so fortunate as to always have lived in the safe haven of our Reich. We demand but a small sacrifice from everyone. I expect everyone, however, to determine the nature of this sacrifice in accordance to his expertise and ability. I expect of the wealthy to set an example. It must be a question of pride for us to eradicate this destitution in the quickest way possible. I wish to see not one more rachitic child in Germany within a few years' time.

Once again Hitler called the Winterhilfswerk “the greatest social organization on earth.” He concluded his address by stating:

I expect that the 1938 Winterhilfswerk campaign reflects the historic greatness of the year. It shall be the ambition of all of us to contribute to such a monumental success. This success shall then prove beyond all doubt that the word “Volksgemeinschaft” is not just an empty delusion (*leerer Wahn*).⁴⁵⁷ We realize that, in the final instance, all human enterprise requires the blessings of Providence if it is to succeed. Yet we realize as well that Providence accords its blessings only to him who proves himself worthy of them. I believe that all of us have experienced such great fortune this year that we are obligated to make sacrifices voluntarily.

On October 6, Hitler returned to the Sudeten German territories. By way of Fugau, he proceeded to Schleckenau, where he reviewed the Sudeten German Freikorps and signed the guest book of the city. Shortly after 11:00 a.m., he arrived in Rumburg and gave an oration on the market square.⁴⁵⁸ He began his “party narrative” by reminding his audience that the road to freedom had been long:

Let this miraculous development serve as a demonstration of what an unbending will is capable of achieving. Today three and a half million people are in the process of coming to the Reich.

Let all of us pledge ourselves at this hour: the will which shall sustain this Reich shall not fall short of that will which was necessary to build up this Reich. Every parcel of German earth, wherever the flag of the German Reich has been planted, shall remain German for all eternity!

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Subsequent to his speech in Rumburg, Hitler toured the Czech fortifications (bunker line) along the border. As was well known, he considered himself to be an expert on questions of fortification. Around 3:00 p.m., he reached Kratzau and reviewed the troops. Ninety minutes later, he arrived in Friedland, where he delivered another speech.⁴⁵⁹ He recalled the battles of the past decades and declared himself ready for present and future combat:

That flag which flies over all of Germany today shall be the flag of the German Volk for all eternity and the nation shall bear it forth for all eternity! That Reich of the Germans which we have finally erected in the form of the National Socialist state, that Reich is the highest good there is for us in this world. We stand ready to make the most noble and final sacrifice for it at all times! [—]

I am certain that the Reich which has been born out of the struggle of the National Socialist Movement shall, as long as there are Germans breathing, never perish! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

Hitler left the Sudeten German territory by way of Neustadt. The next day, October 7, he visited the area around Schönwiese and Kohlbach. Göring and Colonel General von Rundstedt greeted him upon his noon arrival in Jägerndorf. On the town square, the Führer spoke of his determination to fight to the end and emphasized the strength of the German Wehrmacht:⁴⁶⁰

While one might rob three or six million Germans of their rights and oppress them, no one can, in this world, bend eighty million Germans to his will. [—]

On October 10, the swastika will fly over even the last morsel of the Sudetenland. Then this region will finally be freed, and it will be a Reichsgau and part of the German nation for all time to come!

That afternoon, Hitler again inspected Czechoslovakian bunkers within the Schoeber Line outside of Neuerbersdorf. Together with Göring, Hitler then passed in front of a contingent of Luftwaffe troops in Freudental. Thereupon, he left the Sudeten German territories to proceed to Saarbrücken in the western part of the Reich.

The statements Hitler had made in his dedication of the Winterhilfswerk on October 5 did not make a favorable impression abroad, particularly with regard to Great Britain. Many British were sobered by Hitler's declaration of his intent to prevent international supervision of plebiscites in the Sudeten German territories. On October 3, the British Government accepted the British Legion's proposal, which envisioned assigning 1,000 volunteers to police the

plebiscite territories. The delegation of volunteers was to be headed by two generals, a colonel, and Sir Francis Fetherstone-Godley. The October 4 British newspapers contained photographs of an inspection of the Second Battalion of the Scottish Guards, which, together with four other battalions, was to be stationed in the Sudeten German territories for the duration of the plebiscite.

However, Hitler had no intention of accepting Britain's generous offer of assistance. He believed it was high time for the British to receive their just reward for daring an attempt to subvert his actions. He took advantage of the completion of the new Saarbrücken Gau Theater to attack the British in a rather crude manner and declared that he interdicted any attempt to "patronize him as a schoolmarm would." He continued to announce new military measures to be implemented toward the West. In addition, he asserted that the ten million Germans (i.e. Austrians and Sudeten Germans) had returned to the Reich only through the application of "their own German strength."

"The rest of the world has never understood, nor has it even tried to understand, that these people knew only one yearning, to return to the Reich!" Hitler made this claim despite the fact that only through exactly this understanding had the rest of the world allowed him to absorb 3.5 million Germans into the Reich. Hitler was convinced that the leniency of the Western Powers had been a direct result of the military threat he posed to them. He could not fathom the possibility that the right of all peoples to self-determination had played a part in their calculations. It had been those "little worms,"⁴⁶¹ the French and the British, who had not been capable of making a virile decision.

On October 9, Hitler spoke at a mass rally on the Befreiungsplatz in Saarbrücken. Among those attending this address were West Wall workers, who had constructed the Saarbrücken fortifications. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech follows:⁴⁶²

Germans! Volksgenossen!

When I come to speak before you in your Gau in the midst of these great historic events and moving days, then I do so in the conviction that no one has a better understanding of what has occurred within these last weeks than you. You, my men and women of the Saarpfalz, have experienced for yourselves what it means to be separated from the Reich and you have yourselves experienced the great joy of reunion. You have also borne the privations of nearly two decades of separation. You rejoiced at the hour of liberation, you were overjoyed by it, as it allowed you to return home to our common Greater German Reich. Millions of Sudeten Germans suffered through similar trials

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and tribulations, and that very same joy which once moved you took hold of them these days. At the beginning of this twentieth year following our collapse, I resolved to lead those ten million Germans, who still lived outside of our borders, home to the Reich. I was completely aware that we could force such a return only if we applied all our own strength to this end. The world neither saw nor desired to see that ten million Germans were separated from the German Reich, in violation of the right to self-determination of all peoples, and that they were being oppressed simply because of their *Deutschtum*. The world neither understood nor desired to understand that these men and women knew but a single yearning—back to the Reich!

While these citizens of the world feel great compassion with any criminal who is held responsible for his deeds in Germany, they turned a deaf ear to the complaints of ten million Germans. The world is contaminated by the spirit of Versailles even today. No one should try to tell us that the world has divorced itself from this spirit! No, it has been Germany that has divorced itself from it! A tough decision had to be made. There were the weak amongst us who perhaps did not grasp this. Yet it is a self-evident truth that, at all times, it has been the honor of all true statesmen to shoulder such responsibility. There were a number of conditions which had to be fulfilled to bring about a solution such as this one:

First, the inner unity of the nation. As I made my decision, I was certain to be the Führer of a truly manly Volk. I realize that there are yet many in the world today, and perhaps even certain individuals in Germany, who have failed to grasp that the German Volk of 1938 is not the same Volk it was in 1918! No one can deny the great educational feats accomplished by our *Weltanschauung*. Today there is a *Volksgemeinschaft* of strength and vigor the likes of which Germany has never known before. This was the first condition upon which rested the success of the struggle.

The second condition was the rearmament of the nation, for which I have labored zealously for almost six years. It is my opinion that it is cheaper to arm prior to certain events than to meet these unprepared and have to pay tribute afterwards.

The third condition was the security of the Reich. You yourselves have witnessed the gigantic work being accomplished around you. I do not need to go into any details here. However, let me voice one conviction: no power on earth shall ever be able to break through this wall!

And fourth, in the realm of foreign affairs, we have won new friends. In the last two and a half years, that Axis which has sometimes been the butt of ridicule abroad has proven itself to be of lasting quality. And it has also proven itself to be a steadfast one, even in hours of great distress.

We are happy that the work of 1938, the reintegration of ten million Germans and of approximately 110,000 square kilometers into the Reich, was accomplished without the shedding of blood. And it did so despite the hopes and aspirations of so many warmongers and profiteers throughout the world. Speaking of the cooperation of the world in this peace effort, I must first and for all speak of that one true friend we possess today, Benito Mussolini. All of us know how much we owe to this man. With gratitude, I also think of the

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other two great statesmen who labored to open a passage toward preserving the peace. They concluded that agreement with us which has rendered justice to millions of Germans and that has secured peace for the world.

Yet the experiences of the past eight months can and must harden our resolve to be cautious and never to fail to take whatever steps necessary to protect the Reich. That those statesmen standing in front of us desire peace, we must believe. Yet these men govern countries, the inner construction of which makes it entirely possible that they could, any day, be replaced by men who might not share their resolve for peace. And these other men do exist. The minute another man rises to power in England and replaces Chamberlain—someone like Mr. Duff Cooper, Mr. Eden or Mr. Churchill—that minute we know that it would be the ambition of these men to break loose yet another world war, and that immediately. They are quite open about this, they do not make a secret of it.

Further, we know that the international Jewish fiend looms threateningly behind the scenes on stage and it does so today just as it did yesterday. It has found its most succinct expression in those foundations upon which rests the Bolshevik state. And we are not ignorant either of the machinations of a certain international press that lives off lies and defamations. This obliges us all the more to protect the Reich! Preparedness for peace at all times means preparedness for defense at all hours! Therefore I have decided that the fortification of our Western border be carried out at even greater speed, as I already announced in my speech at Nuremberg. I will now integrate into this line of defense those two large areas which up to present stretched out in front of our fortifications, namely, the area around Aachen and Saarbrücken.

For the rest, however, I am happy to be able to recall within the next few days those measures which we had to institute because they were necessary in these critical weeks and months. I am glad that then all those hundreds of thousands of our men can return home and that our reservists can be released once more. I thank all of them for the way in which they undertook the fulfillment of their duties in the service. In particular, I thank those hundreds of thousands of German workers and engineers, of whom tens of thousands stand amongst us today, and who worked on the fortifications here.

My Comrades, you have helped secure peace for Germany! My particular thanks go to the entire German Volk which has borne itself in so manly a manner. As a strong state, we are prepared, at all times, to negotiate with our neighbors. We do not place any demands on them. We desire nothing but peace. There is only one thing we truly desire, and this applies especially to our relations with England: it is high time that the British finally abandon their grand airs of the time of Versailles.

We will no longer tolerate any schoolmarm patronizing us (*gouvernantenhafte Bevormundung*) Inquiries of British politicians on the status of Germans or other citizens of the Reich within its boundaries are not appropriate. We do not interfere in similar matters in England. There have been many instances in which the rest of the world would do far better to take care of its own national problems than to interfere in ours. Just think of the events in Palestine. In any event, we leave this to those men who think themselves

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called upon by God to resolve these problems. Yet we can but stand in awe of how quickly they come up with ready-made solutions. We wish to counsel all these gentlemen to take good care of their own problems and to leave us alone. That, too, forms part of securing world peace.

Great tasks lie before us. Enormous cultural and economic problems await their solution. No Volk could use peace better than we could right now, yet no Volk knows better what it means to be weak and at the mercy of others.

My Volksgenossen! This year the great work of national unity has been brought to its final conclusion, the resurrection of a proud, mighty, and free German Reich! You yourselves have suffered through so much here that you know why I am uneasy for the future of the Reich and why I demand of the German Volk to continue to stand prepared and to give its best effort. It is a miracle that we were allowed to witness Germany's resurrection in the span of so few years. Things could have developed differently! This we should always keep in mind. We wish to persevere in our determination to serve this Germany, man by man and woman by woman. And at the moment that the greater interest of our Volk and Reich may require it, we shall disregard all personal interests.

Today I stand in your midst for the second time. Back then, your jubilations were an expression of joy at your own return home. Today, you witness the jubilations of millions of other Germans who have also come home to the Reich. With them, let us unite as we pledge ourselves to our one, magnificent German Reich we faithfully believe in. *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

The mutual declaration of peace between Germany and Great Britain had been signed in Munich only ten days prior to this verbal attack. Because the Sudeten German Freikorps reminded him of the much despised militia units, he decided to do away with it. On October 10, while still in Saarbrücken, he issued the following decree effecting its dissolution:⁴⁶³

The Sudeten German Freikorps is dissolved. I thank the men for their self-sacrificing and brave sortie in the struggle for the German *Volkstum* and the freedom of their homeland. I expect of them that they shall now continue to fulfill their duties in such a dedicated manner as they join the fighting formations of Party and State.

Adolf Hitler

The new Government in Prague had been formed on October 4 under General Jan Sirovy, with the moderate František Chvalkovsky as Foreign Minister. The Czechs hurried to accommodate Hitler's demand of redrawing the border without a plebiscite. The situation on October 13 coerced an international commission, consisting of the ambassadors of the Great Powers, to agree not to conduct a plebiscite.⁴⁶⁴

That same day, Hitler toured the Krupp industrial plants in Essen, as if to emphasize an inclination to employ force.⁴⁶⁵

On October 14, Hitler received Chvalkovsky in Munich and accepted the latter's assurances that the Czechoslovakian Government would remain loyal to the German Reich.⁴⁶⁶ In addition to Chvalkovsky, the ex-Prime Minister of Hungary, Darányi, was in Munich. He had come to discuss the issue of the Czechoslovakian regions which had been promised to Hungary. But the Hungarians did not enjoy the same preferred position which the Poles, at that time, enjoyed. With Hitler's connivance, Poland's military had invaded and simply taken the region of Teschen-Olsa on October 1.

The Hungarians, on the other hand, had negotiated the cession of territories with a Czechoslovakian delegation in Komorn (Komárno). The negotiations had not yielded satisfactory results. In the meantime, Hitler had found new friends, the Slovaks. Monsignor Josef Tiso, a Roman Catholic priest, had formed an autonomous Government in Pressburg on October 6.⁴⁶⁷ Because of this development, Hitler was no longer willing to accord Hungary either substantial parts of Slovakia or the Carpatho-Ukraine (Ruthenia).

In his talks with Darányi in Munich⁴⁶⁸ on the afternoon of October 14, Hitler aimed to prevent the Hungarians from calling for the convention of the International Commission, as had been provided for by the Munich Agreement. Hitler instead wanted the Hungarians to first place their demands before the German and Italian Governments and then to accept their decision as final. In this case, Hitler would be the final arbitrator. Because he was convinced that he would receive more concessions from Hitler than from the international Committee, Darányi accepted Hitler's proposal. However, the settlement reached in Vienna on November 2 sorely disappointed him.

In Munich on October 15, Hitler called upon the Reichsstatthalter General von Epp to personally congratulate him on his seventieth birthday. In addition, he gave Epp the command of the Sixty-First Infantry Regiment.⁴⁶⁹

On October 18, Hitler received the parting Japanese Ambassador Togo at the Obersalzberg. Togo presented the Chancellor with an elaborate Japanese table as a personal gift from the Japanese Emperor. In turn, Hitler extended his best wishes to the Tenno and to the Japanese people and handed the Ambassador an autographed photograph of himself.⁴⁷⁰ Later that day, the French Ambassador François-Poncet met with Hitler to bid farewell. He had been transferred to the Embassy in Rome, to work there in the same capacity as he had in Berlin.

October 18, 1938

Hitler received François-Poncet in the Alps at the *Teehaus* pavilion, a structure which Bormann had recently constructed at approximately 1800 meters altitude on the Kehlstein.⁴⁷¹

The pavilion could be reached only by ascending through a 120 meter elevator shaft. Even though Hitler did not particularly cherish the teahouse himself, he used it on this visit to impress his guest by the pure savage nature of the environment. Upon François-Poncet's arrival, Hitler first raged against the British, then lavished abuse upon the Munich Agreement, which he found not in the least satisfactory. Then he addressed the topic of Franco-German relations. He proposed a mutual declaration to acknowledge the existing borders between the two countries. He also suggested that mutual consultations take place on all concerns pertaining to both states.⁴⁷²

It is obvious that Hitler did not have serious consultations in mind. Instead, he was attempting to drive a wedge between Great Britain and France. The Anglo-German declaration of September 30 had created a slight jealousy in the French. Thus they were most receptive to Hitler's proposal to enter into a similar Franco-German agreement. Thus the October 18 conference between Hitler and François-Poncet led to the Paris December 6 declaration on borders and consultations.⁴⁷³ Toward the end of François-Poncet's visit, Hitler bestowed upon him the distinguished award of the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle. Later, this award would become "devalued" through liberal distribution among politicians in the German Reich's satellite states. In Germany, a communiqué on the visit was issued.⁴⁷⁴

Berchtesgaden, October 18

Today, at the Berghof on the Obersalzberg, the Führer and Reich Chancellor received the former French Ambassador in Berlin, François-Poncet, on the occasion of the latter's departure, in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The Führer expressed his gratitude and true appreciation of the parting Ambassador's endeavors to bring about an improvement of Franco-German relations and his resulting contributions to the securing of peace.

Simultaneously, Hitler signed the following decree:⁴⁷⁵

Berchtesgaden, October 18, 1938

As visible proof of my appreciation and gratitude for the accomplishments achieved in the course of the reunion of the Sudeten German territories with the German Reich, I announce the creation of a medal in commemoration of October 1, 1938. The statute contains the details.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor,

Adolf Hitler

At 9:00 a.m. on October 20, Hitler traveled from Linz to the Southern Bohemian area that had been ceded to Germany and reached Krumau by 11:00 a.m. Perched on a rostrum in front of the City Hall, the Führer emphasized that Germany was willing to liberate the area "till the end":⁴⁷⁶

Germans! Volksgenossen! Meine Böhmerwäldler!

As I greet you here today as the new citizens and members of our great German Reich, I wish to, first of all, thank you for your loyalty to your *Volkstum* and for never losing faith in the great German Volk and Reich.

You must also, however, thank those millions of Germans in the Reich who were willing, if need be, to make the greatest of all sacrifices for you, the German people of this land. For Germany was willing and determined to fight for your liberation till the end had this been the only solution!

You will now experience the great joy of being citizens of so great a Reich, a Reich that spans from Königsberg to Aachen, from Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein to the Karawanken, and in the midst of which you lay embedded today. To reach this Reich, you had to tread along a most difficult path. Throughout the centuries we had to fight for this Reich, and it was our generation that had to make the greatest sacrifices within the last decades. This makes the Reich twice as dear to us!

Just as this Reich will take up the cause of each one of you, so must each German in turn be willing to dedicate his entire existence to this Reich and to serve this community. Germany cannot give more to each of us than we ourselves are willing to give to Germany!

There are many Germans who would gladly sacrifice it all to Germany and who are not as fortunate as we are to be members of this community. Alas, they are prevented from doing so. All the more grateful should those of us be who partake in this great happiness!

For all of us this entails one great responsibility, to do everything that might be of benefit to the Reich. At that point at which it becomes necessary to do so, all of us must set aside our personal interests and serve the greater interest of Germany. For we ourselves mean nothing; our Volk means all.

If the German Volk perishes, then every single German will perish along with it! If our great German Reich, however, is once more mighty and strong, then a ray of this fortune will shine upon every single German! All of us live in Germany and through Germany! To this we faithfully pledge ourselves in these memorable and moving hours.

Fortune has blessed us. Providence allowed us to make good what the weak generation before us failed to do. Providence has allowed us to restore internal order to our Volk, to eliminate discord, to overcome fratricide and hatred, and to lead back to our great shared Reich those millions of Germans to whom it had already appeared to be lost forever.

The year 1938 will go down in history as a most memorable one! This year, we have added about ten million Volksgenossen and far more than 100,000 square kilometers of territory to the German Reich and hence to the German

October 20, 1938

Volkstum. We have secured them for the Reich for eternity. And we achieved this without having to resort to an all-out effort. However, this was only possible because we stood armed and prepared for that all-out effort and because we were determined to see it through, if need be!

We thank the Lord that we and so many other German Volksgenossen were spared this suffering. All the more fervently, we pledge ourselves to fulfilling our duties and to doing all that is to the benefit of our Volk and to refrain from doing all that might be to its detriment.

This we promise as Volksgenossen in this mighty and great German Reich to which we have pledged ourselves for a life time, body and soul.

Our German Volk and Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

After returning to Berchtesgaden, Hitler ordered the transfer of the executive powers in the Sudeten German territories to the civil administration. He addressed the following letter to the Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch:⁴⁷⁷

Units of the Army, the Luftwaffe, the Police, the SS Verfügungstruppe, and SS and SA contingents were involved in the occupation of the Sudeten German territory. Placed under the protection of the Wehrmacht, 3.5 million of our German Volksgenossen have finally come home to the Reich. From October 21, 1938, onward, the civil administration will take over the protection of these citizens.

At the same time, I shall relieve you of the authority to exercise executive powers while expressively acknowledging the merit of all offices involved. Together with our Sudeten German Volksgenossen, the entire German Volk thanks all those involved in the liberation of the Sudetenland.

Adolf Hitler

In this correspondence, Hitler voiced his wish to terminate the plan to militarily administer the Sudetenland from October 21.⁴⁷⁸ He believed the time to have come to order the Wehrmacht to prepare to annex the remainder of Czechoslovakia—only three weeks after the signing of the Munich Agreement! On October 21, Hitler sent out the below instructions on the elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia:⁴⁷⁹

Directive by the Führer for the Wehrmacht
Berlin, October 21, 1938
Top Secret
OKW L Ia. No. 236/38

The future tasks of the Wehrmacht and the preparations for the conduct of war resulting from these tasks will be laid down by me in a later directive. Until this directive comes into force, the Wehrmacht must at all times be prepared for the following eventualities:

1. Securing the frontiers of the German Reich and protection against surprise air attacks.
2. Liquidation of the remainder of the Czech State (*Rest-Tschechei*).
3. The occupation of Memelland.

Of the technical details of the military enterprise, which were enumerated in the directive, the following paragraph is worthy of notice:

2. Liquidation of the remainder of the Czech State.

It must be possible to smash at any time the remainder of the Czech State, should it pursue an anti-German policy.

The preparations to be made by the Wehrmacht for this eventuality will be considerably less in extent than those for "Operation Green"; on the other hand, as planned mobilization measures will have to be dispensed with, they must guarantee a continuous and considerably higher state of preparedness. The organization, order of battle, and degree of preparedness of the units earmarked for that purpose are to be prearranged in peace time for a surprise assault so that Czechoslovakia herself will be deprived of all possibility of organized resistance. The aim is the speedy occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the cutting off of Slovakia. The preparations must be so made that the defense of the western frontier (*Grenzsicherung West*) can be carried out simultaneously.

The following are the individual of the Army and Luftwaffe:

A. Army

The units stationed near the Czech frontier and certain motorized formations are to be detailed for surprise attack. Their number will be determined by the forces left to Czechoslovakia; quick and decisive success must be assured. The deployment and preparations for the attack must be worked out. Forces not required are to be kept in the readiness in such a manner that they either can be used for securing the frontier or can follow up the attacking army.

B. Luftwaffe

The rapid advance of our Army is to be assured by nearly elimination of the Czech Air Force. For this purpose the rapid move of the formations near the frontier from their peace stations is to be prepared. Whether even stronger forces will be required for this purpose can only be seen from the development of the military and political situation in Czechoslovakia.

In addition, the simultaneous deployment of the remainder of the offensive forces against the West must be prepared.

On the Obersalzberg on October 24, the Goebbels family visited with Hitler.⁴⁸⁰ Goebbels' amorous escapades had, for some time, troubled the domestic life of his family. The next day, near Pressburg, Hitler inspected the Fngerau bridgehead, whose cession he had insisted upon in the negotiations with the Prague Government because

of its strategic importance. Afterwards, he toured the former Czech barracks and other facilities. On his return trip in the afternoon, he stopped in Vienna to see the Art History Museum and the Hofburg.⁴⁸¹

The following day, October 26, Hitler again traveled to the Sudeten German territories. First he stopped at the Czech fortifications at Trutnov and Zlín in southern Moravia. At 3:00 p.m., Hitler spoke on the market place of Zlín.⁴⁸² In the introductory part of his speech, Hitler claimed that he stood in front of the people as the voice of the German nation and that his presence demonstrated the resolve of the German Reich never to retreat from these territories.

To underline Germany's power, he exclaimed: "Today all Germans can take great pride in belonging to a community that constitutes the greatest and mightiest Reich in Europe." Again Hitler spoke of the "most difficult decision" of his lifetime, which he was forced to make a few weeks earlier. He declared quite openly:

We would have marched in here on October 2 at 8:00 a.m., one way or another. The Reich stood ready to fight to the last. And the German Volk stood determined to see this fight through!

Hitler spent the night in the compartment of his special train in Laa an der Thaya. On the morning of October 27, he stepped out of the train to face the crowd that had quickly gathered at the train station. He continued his voyage early in the day and arrived in Nikolsburg at 9:00 a.m. There he got off the special train and continued his trip by automobile. He drove through the Czech fortified area and, in addition to stopping at a few little villages, briefly visited Pohlitz and Wolframitz.

He returned to Nikolsburg around 11:30 a.m. and attended a reception in his honor at the City Hall. From the balcony, he addressed the inhabitants of this city, where the Peace of Nikolsburg had been signed in 1866, ending the Seven Weeks' War between Austria and Prussia.⁴⁸³

Hitler made use of the history of this city to emphasize the importance of his achievements and his person. He had set his mind to not only tear to shreds the Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain, but also to declare null and void all agreements that had put Germany at a disadvantage. He started with the Armistice of Compiègne,⁴⁸⁴ and concluded with the Peace Treaty of Westphalia.⁴⁸⁵ He felt himself called upon to erase these from the book of history. His presence in Nikolsburg alone would, no doubt, suffice to have the pre-peace agreement there sink into oblivion.

Hitler began his oration by expounding upon the 1866 Civil War. Then he spoke of the suffering the German people had endured since those days and described the trials and tribulations since 1918 in great detail. He declared that he himself was guiding the Reich to the pinnacle of its decade-long struggle and that the Wehrmacht stood ready to fulfill its final mission.

Once every German has learned to always and foremost regard himself as a German, then the Reich will stand secure and mighty for all time. [—]

I have chosen this location to conclude my first journey through the Sudeten German territories because it was here that a certain tragic development once began and it shall be in this very location that this development is officially brought to an end: one Volk and one Reich, one will and hence one shared future! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

On October 29, Hitler mailed a telegram to the Turkish President Atatürk, congratulating him on the fifteenth anniversary of the existence of the Republic of Turkey.⁴⁸⁶ A day later, he signed an ordinance pertaining to the establishment of a Gau of Sudetenland.⁴⁸⁷

On October 31, a decree was issued regarding the supplemental elections to the Reichstag. Its verbatim content was:⁴⁸⁸

Article 1

I order the supplemental elections to the Reichstag in order to accord our Sudeten German Volksgenossen representation in the Greater German Reichstag.

Article 2

The supplemental elections shall be held on Sunday, December 4, 1938.

Berchtesgaden, October 31, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor,

Adolf Hitler

In this instance, Hitler evidently proceeded in a different manner than he had in the case of the reunion of the Saar with the German Reich. In the earlier case, he had simply taken the results of the plebiscite of January 13, 1935, as a basis for nominating the deputies to the Reichstag himself. In this instance, however, he sought to use the special election as a replacement for a plebiscite conducted under international supervision, which had not been held. The election was to be conducted in a truly National Socialist manner, with only one list to choose from; the NSDAP.

On November 2, the “Viennese sentence” was served on the subject of the cession of previously Slovakian territories to Hungary. Hitler was not personally present at this state occasion.⁴⁸⁹ Instead he left it to Ribbentrop and Ciano to reconcile the two German satellite states,

Slovakia and Hungary, in the Belvedere Palace. A day later, Hitler inspected the progress on the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg (Märzfeld, Congress Hall). Construction work had been disrupted by the Sudeten crisis and had resumed again after the crisis' resolution.⁴⁹⁰

On November 6, Hitler spoke at the Gautag of the Thuringian National Socialists in Weimar.⁴⁹¹ This occasion afforded him the opportunity to again verbally attack British statesmen. He began the attack early in his "party narrative." Once again Hitler took up the issue of Wilson's Fourteen Points, in reference to which he proclaimed:

There is only one answer to those politicians and members of parliament abroad, who, from time to time, dare to maintain that Germany has committed breach of contract. All we can say to these men is: the greatest breach of contract of all time has been committed not by, but to the detriment of the German Volk! Not one promise has been kept which was made to Germany in those infamous Fourteen Points on the basis of which Germany laid down its arms!

In this speech, Hitler not only attacked men like Eden, Duff Cooper, and Churchill, but also turned against Chamberlain in a deriding manner. Chamberlain had been noted for carrying an umbrella on his visits to Germany. At the time in Germany, sporting an umbrella was considered to be an outdated Philistine relic. To Hitler, this umbrella proved beyond doubt that Chamberlain was the British version of the senile German Nationalist politician. In Weimar, Hitler expressed his disgust with Chamberlain when he spoke of certain "umbrella-carrying prototypes" (*Regenschirmtypen*):

Only a blind man can deny that the political leadership of the German nation is a different one today than that of say five, ten, or even twenty years ago, both internally and externally. Those umbrella-carrying prototypes from the heyday of our bourgeois party world have been eradicated and shall return no more!

The audience rocked with laughter and frantic applause upon hearing this ironic allusion to Chamberlain. Hitler then underscored that he was acting from a position of military strength:

From the very first day, I had set my maxim: a German man is either the foremost soldier in the world, or he is not a soldier. We will never be cowardly soldiers, and we do not wish ever to be so. Hence we must be the foremost soldiers worldwide.

As a man who loves peace, I have continuously striven to provide the German Volk with a certain kind of weaponry and defense particularly well suited to convince others of our determination for peace. Regrettably, there are people who hate the hedgehog merely because it has quills.

Well, all they have to do is not bother the animal. No hedgehog has ever attacked someone lest he was threatened himself. Let this be our code of conduct, too! Let others keep their distance. We wish to be left in peace, to be left to our work, and not to be bereft of our right to life which others claim for themselves as well.

For the democratic states, this ought to be a quite straightforward position easily understood. After all, it is they who constantly speak of equality of rights! How can they claim these rights for all sorts of tiny peoples and then become outraged when as great a Volk as ours demands the same?! Our National Socialist Wehrmacht will see to the securing of these rights for us and will serve as a guarantee for them.

It was in this spirit that I undertook a reorientation of our foreign policy and that I turned to those states who have been forced to fight for their rights just as we have been. Assessing the results of this, our action, I feel I can say: all of you can judge for yourselves whether or not we have achieved truly unbelievable feats on the basis of these principles!

Precisely because of this, we should never forget what has made this success possible. Even if some foreign newspapers scribble, "You could have achieved this by means of negotiation," we know very well that the Germany before us was capable of nothing other than forever negotiating! For fifteen years, it did nothing but negotiate and in the end it lost all. I am open to negotiations as well but let there be no doubt that I will not have Germany's rights slighted, not by negotiations, and not by any other means!⁴⁹²

German Volk—may you never forget to whom you owe your successes, to which Movement, to which ideology, and to which principles! And secondly, always be cautious, always keep your guard! It is quite well to speak of peace and disarmament internationally; however, I am highly suspicious of the disarmament of weaponry if evidently there is no mental disarmament as well!

In the world, a rather odd differentiation of peoples has developed according to which these either form so-called authoritarian states, that is states of discipline, or they form democratic states. In the authoritarian, in other words, disciplined states, it is self-evident that one should not defame foreign peoples, that one should not lie about them and that one should not plunge them into war! In democratic states, however, all this is allowed because after all one is "democratic."

In authoritarian countries, such warmongering is out of the question because, after all, it is the duty of their governments to prevent warmongering. In democratic countries, the governments know but one duty: to sustain democracy. In other words, they have the liberty to become warmongers if need be!

Just recently, I named three of these international warmongers. They were upset by this, but not because of any question of principle. No, they were upset because I had dared to cite names. Mr. Churchill has openly declared that, in his opinion, the present regime in Germany must be overthrown with the help of forces in its interior, forces that gladly would assist him in this venture. If Mr. Churchill spent less of his time talking with emigrants, people

paid abroad to commit treason, and spent more time with Germans, then he would realize the degree of stupidity and plain insanity contained in his words. I can assure this gentleman, who apparently lives way behind the times, of one thing only: there is no such force in Germany that could bring about the overthrow of the present regime! In Germany, there is only one force, and that is the force of the German nation, manifested in leadership and following, in defense and armament.

I have no intention of denying, before these most worthy gentlemen that we Germans have no right, for instance, to demand that other peoples change their constitution. However, as the leader of all Germans, it is my duty to take into consideration these constitutions and the possibilities resulting from them. A few days ago, the deputy of the British opposition leader in the House of Commons stated that he desired to make no secret of it that he would greatly welcome the destruction of Germany and Italy. If such a man, in one or two years' time, rises to power thanks to the democratic machinations of his party, I cannot prevent him from doing so.

But there is one thing of which I can assure him: I will prevent him from destroying Germany! And I am equally certain that the German Volk will take care that these gentlemen's designs on Germany come to naught! And in the very same manner, Fascist Italy will take care of itself, that I know!

I am convinced that for all of us there is a lesson to be drawn from these international hopes. And that lesson is to stand together and to move closer to one's friends. The more we form a cohesive community in Germany, the less can these warmongers anticipate; and the closer this will move us to Italy, the one state that shares our fate, the less will these others feel encouraged to conspire against us.

As we let the year 1938 pass by in front of our eyes, we can but be filled with great pride and overwhelming joy. Germany has increased in size and has done so in the most natural and moral manner there is! Millions of our Volksgenossen whose sole desire and ambition it was to return to Germany now form part of our community!

Now they will do their share in the support of the Reich and, undoubtedly, they will serve as its most loyal members, for they themselves know quite well what it means to have been amputated and separated from the Reich! This year also imparts great responsibility upon us: we must derive from it the realization and the determination never again to stray from the path of success! If the world is willing to disarm, then so are we, but under one condition only: first the warmongers are to disarm! However, as long as there is only talk of disarmament and the warmongers go about their business as usual, then we must assume that their goal is to steal our weapons and to once again subject us to a fate equal to that of 1918-19. All I can say to Mr. Churchill and comrades is: that was once and shall never be again!¹⁴⁹³

I strode forth on my path with a tremendous faith in the German Volk. What else could have kept us from despairing back then? I had faith in the German Volk, in its inner values and hence in its future. Today my faith has miraculously proven itself justified. This year, it has been reinforced once more. How deserving our Volk proved itself in these last five, say six, years!

Has not everything come true which I foretold year upon year and which all of us desired so desperately?

How wonderfully has our Volk conducted itself in the course of these past weeks and months! My Volksgenossen, you may believe me when I say that, yes indeed, I am proud and happy to be allowed to be your leader!

The German Volk has formed a magnificent picture of such consistent unyielding cohesion precisely within these last weeks, like the cohesion I witnessed in the times of its greatest trials in the War. No nervousness, no rush, no insecurity, no signs of desperation, instead only confidence and loyal following. Every single man and every single woman knew that Fate might have asked the final sacrifice of us. It is to this cohesion and to this calm that we owe the fact that we were spared this sacrifice!

Fate did not call upon us because it knew we were strong! This we shall carry in our hearts as a lesson for the future! Then no ill can come to our beloved Germany, neither now nor in all eternity! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

The constant references to the supposedly “wonderful” stance of the German Volk in the Sudeten crisis revealed how little he had managed to come to terms with the lack of popular enthusiasm for war that September. He was tense, waiting for an opportunity to seek revenge upon those who in his eyes bore the responsibility for this development—the Jews.

The main part of Hitler’s annual speech in the Munich Bürgerbräukeller on November 8⁴⁹⁴ consisted of yet another outburst against British politicians. Prior to this outpouring of wrath, he delivered a verbose and bombastic “party narrative.” He ranted that there would have been no collapse in 1918 had he been in charge of the nation at that time:

Nevertheless, had not the German Volk in its blindness allowed the civic unrest back then to foment a civil war, then there would never have been a collapse such as that of 1918. I believe I have a right to say that, had Fate put me at the helm back then, this collapse would never have come about.

He then proclaimed that of course he had been right in 1923 as well, even though his attempt at a putsch had ended in failure. By recounting this example, Hitler wished to establish, once and for all, that he could never be wrong. Indeed, in the future he would not stand for anyone to express doubt over his decisions:

I have been told that not too long ago, a man was heard saying: “Well, you know, the Führer, too, can err. After all, he was wrong in 1923 and went under back then!” All I can say to these Philistines is: I was not wrong in 1923! I did not go under back then! I did receive a severe blow at that time, but the Party and hence Germany recovered from this blow and they are all the stronger for it.

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What was the situation like in 1923? I was the leader of a rather small party, however, of a party in determination and courage. I was perhaps the only leader of a party who could claim that he was backed by a community of men and women, a community that stood ready to march upon a moment's notice if necessary. Others had a following which was willing to make deals only.

Back then I resolved to eliminate this incompetent regime. The deed was not carried out then. However, this failure proved and will prove itself to be of greater benefit than we may realize to this day. I know not what the fate of Germany would have been had the course of events taken a different turn and had Herr Kahr and his comrades succeeded in their attempts to tear this country apart.

Subsequently, Hitler read a lengthy monotonous excerpt from Clausewitz on the decadent nature of court and government officials. Then he asserted complete agreement with the founder of the modern doctrine of war and his statement: "I declare and assert before all the world and posterity that, in my opinion, the faulty wisdom that seeks to back away from danger is the most immoral result of what fear and anxiety can instill in man." Hitler added:

I declare and assert before all the world and posterity that in 1923 I, too, acted in accordance with this conviction!

Once Hitler believed he had sufficiently demonstrated to his intellectual critics that he could never be wrong, he again turned against the British parliamentarians and described his military might in the most graphic terms:

Every day, as I read in foreign journals that we are deeply shaken by the armament efforts of our neighbors, I can assert only one thing, namely, that I would be shaken only if the German nation failed to arm itself! The fact that others are arming does not shake me up!

Let there be no doubt: the German Volk will not be caught carrying the olive branch while the rest of the world arms itself to the teeth.

In this event, we will do precisely what is necessary to secure peace for ourselves!

As a Gennan statesman I am obligated, in the interest of my Volk, to concern myself with measures taken by the rest of the world, to assess their consequences, and to take into consideration possible dangers arising from them. And here I will not tolerate a certain British member of parliament telling me what to do! Some people of late have come up to me and claimed: "Oh, we meant to destroy the dictatorships but not the German and Italian peoples." My only answer to this is: something of this sort you could perhaps claim prior to November 1918, but no longer after November 1918! Back then, these very same circles had claimed that all they sought was the destruction of "Prussian militarism," the destruction of only one dynasty, the House of Hohenzollern, not the destruction of the German Volk! The German Volk

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would then be led toward regaining its freedom in the framework of international democracy. We got to know this particular type of "freedom" quite well! And the German Volk has learned its lesson.

A collapse, such as the one experienced by the German Volk due to its naivety, will not repeat itself in the next millennium!

And I can assure you this will also be the case for all those who still believe they can instigate hate campaigns against the German Volk once more! Germany will never again be duped by such rhetoric! As a Führer of responsibility, I will point out these dangers to the nation. And one of these dangers I see arising from the constant hate campaigns abroad directed against Germany. Whoever does not want to believe this, should simply call to mind a few of the recent incidents.

It has not been all that long ago that there was a debate concerning questions of civil aviation before the House of Commons in England. Back then, a certain type of new civil airplane was declared to be of great practical value and particularly useful. Then one man of the opposition party stood up and shouted: "I hope this plane can also carry bombs to Berlin!" We know what this means! People might tell me: "That was only one man of the opposition party." To that I can only reply: In these democracies, the Constitution allows the opposition of today to become the government of tomorrow. In general, this usually happens sooner or later. We are most grateful that France and England have removed men of such persuasion from office and that these two countries desire good relations with Germany. More than once, we have made it clear that all we want from these countries is the return of the colonies unjustly taken from us. I have always asserted that, of course, we shall not go to war simply because of this. Rather, it is a question of justice, we say, a question of whether there is an honest intent to render the peaceful coexistence of various peoples possible. We desire no more of these other peoples, we demand nothing of them. We simply wish to make deals with these peoples, that is we wish to conduct trade with them. So if there is talk of reaching an understanding, we really do not know what there is to reach an understanding about.

However, there is one thing I must never let out of sight. Today there might well be men in power in France and England who desire peace. Yet there are other men who do little to conceal that they wish for war with Germany. I am forced to state this in all objectivity before the nation and to draw the consequences. Mr. Churchill can be Prime Minister by tomorrow. And when one leader of the British opposition declares that it is not the German Volk they wish to destroy but the regime, then that is one and the same thing since this regime will not be destroyed lest one destroys the entire German Volk! And if someone claims that he wishes to free the German Volk from this regime, then I will tell him: The German Volk is none of your business! If there is one man whose business is the German Volk, my dear gentlemen of the British parliament, then that is me!

The regime in Germany is an internal affair of the German Volk, and we will not stand for being supervised as if by a schoolmaster. Moreover, I believe that we have achieved far more than these gentlemen. Above all we have

restored order to our state which is something you cannot say for a good number of countries on the face of this earth.

Hence I am forced to take into consideration the persuasions of men who might not govern today but could do so tomorrow and who have left little doubt as to their convictions. The German Volk will understand why I am warning it and why I myself am determined to take all precautions necessary to make certain that there is no foreign interference!

On a side note, let me assure you that the German Volk shall not succumb to a fear of bombs, falling—let us say—from either Mars or the moon.⁴⁹⁵ We will keep good measure as is the custom of all Germans. But I am determined to ensure the security of the Reich by fortifying it to the last. And I know that the entire German Volk agrees with me on this! No doubt this means sacrifice. However, it is better for us to make sacrifices now than having to pay up one day in the form of contributions or should we rather say “reparations” as they were called back then.

For us there is only one maxim that truly counts and that I spoke of in Saarbrücken: “We are always ready for peace!” It was not us who broke the peace. However, we are always ready to stand up in defense of ourselves as well, in a manner both manly and determined.

When someone says to me, “So it is not by legal means that you intend to enter into world history, but rather it is violence which serves as your means,” then all I can say in reply is that today’s Germany did not refuse to obtain its rights by means of negotiation! Year after year we attempted to secure our rights by negotiating. And most certainly English parliamentarians have no right to doubt this. After all, it was by means of negotiation that we concluded a treaty with England. It is not our fault that others did not become parties to the treaty.

Always keep in mind the following: National Socialist Germany will never go to Canossa!⁴⁹⁶ We have no need to! If the rest of the world persists in denying us our rights by means of negotiation, then it should not be surprised if we resort to other means in order to secure our rights, rights we cannot obtain in the customary fashion. Now that these British advocates of world democracy maintain that this year alone we destroyed two democracies, I can only ask them: What precisely is democracy? Who has the right to speak in the name of democracy?

Has the good Lord handed over the keys to democracy to Mr. Churchill or to Mr. Duff Cooper? Has the lock combination been engraved upon some ancient tabulae perhaps at present in the hands of the British opposition?

In our opinion, democracy implies a regime supported by the will of a people. I became Chancellor of Germany once in compliance with the rules of parliamentary democracy; and that as the leader of the strongest party by far. And it was in compliance with the rules of parliamentary democracy that I possessed the absolute majority then, and today I received the complete approval of the German Volk—let Mr. Churchill doubt this if he pleases. I did not eliminate two democracies this year, rather, I destroyed, as the epitome of a true democrat, two dictatorships! Namely, the dictatorship of Herr Schuschnigg and the dictatorship of Herr Beneš. It was by peaceful means that

I attempted to persuade these two dictators to open up a path toward democracy for their peoples by permitting them to exercise their right to self-determination. I did not succeed in this attempt. It was only then that I applied the force of our great German Volk to restore democracy to these countries, in other words to liberate these oppressed people.

These gentlemen of the British parliament might know their way around the British world empire, but of Central Europe they know nothing! Here they completely lack any idea of the situation, the events, and their circumstances. They should not, and will not, regard this as an insult, for, after all, we do not know our way around India, Egypt, or Palestine either.

Nonetheless, I believe it would be for the better if these gentlemen applied their enormous expertise and their infallible wisdom for which they are so well known, if they applied these, let us say, for instance or rather especially to the case of Palestine. They might do great good there. Because, after all, damn it, what is happening there reeks of brute force rather than democracy! But I am just citing this as an example, I do not mean to criticize, for I am but the advocate of the German Volk rather than that of others. In this I differ from Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden who see themselves as the advocates of the whole world.

I am merely the advocate of my Volk! And here I do everything in my power that I deem necessary. And if Mr. Churchill turns to me and says, "How can a head of state be at odds with a British parliamentarian?" then all I can say to him is: "Mr. Churchill, you should be honored by this!" By the fact that a German head of state does not hesitate to be at odds with a British parliamentarian, you can see in what great esteem English parliamentarians are held here. Besides that, I am not a head of state in the sense that a dictator or monarch is, I am a leader of the German Volk!

Rest assured, there are plenty of titles I could have appropriated myself. I kept my old title and I will keep it as long as I live because I have no desire to be anything other and I have no intention of ever becoming anything other! I am content this way. Mr. Churchill and these gentlemen are delegates of the English people, and I am a delegate of the German Volk. The only difference here is that Mr. Churchill received only a fraction of his people's votes while, I may confidently say, I represent the entire German Volk!

Therefore, my Old Comrades in Arms, when I call upon you and the entire German Volk to proceed with caution, I have the holy right to do so! In these few years, I have scored great successes for the nation. The nation must understand that I always take great care to preserve it. I do not want to live to see that on my dying bed I would have to close my eyes to equally sinister prophecies, as was the case with Bismarck⁴⁹⁷

Listening to Hitler's words, it would be easy to entertain the thought that perhaps he indeed believed that the menace of a declaration of war by Great Britain truly existed. However, it is well known that this was far from his mind. He saw the British to be "little worms" and "senile" Philistines, that had come to rest so comfortably on the laurels

of days gone by that they had fallen asleep on top of them. No longer were they capable of formulating a “manly” decision—i.e. to decide upon war. His verbal campaign against the British was an outgrowth of his fury at them both for failing to allow him the freedom to proceed to the East as he had envisioned, and for surveying every step he took with great suspicion. His tirades were to function like deserved slaps in the face, wakening them to “reason” and teaching them whom they ought to respect as the actual master of Europe!

In this sense, too, Hitler was convinced that it had become necessary to now apply thumbscrews to the German Jews in order to exert pressure on the British Government.

Already Hitler had plans at hand for an appropriate measure. On November 7, Herschel Grynszpan, a German Jewish emigré, had fired upon the legation counsellor Ernst Eduard vom Rath at the German Embassy in Paris. Vom Rath was seriously wounded in the attack. Through his act, Grynszpan had wanted to protest and draw attention to the denial of rights to Jewish people in Germany. In any event, this was how his deed was assessed worldwide.

Even though one might have expected differently, Hitler had not mentioned the incident at all in his speech at the Bürgerbräukeller. He had come up with a far better idea. Since Rath had been so critically wounded in Paris, Hitler was sure that he would eventually die. As soon as news of his death reached Germany, Hitler would stage an anonymous pogrom in all of Germany.

The customary march to the Feldherrnhalle, and from there to the Königsplatz, took place on November 9. For the first time, the Führer’s new military sycophants, Keitel and Brauchitsch, occupied the places of the fired generals Blomberg and Fritsch. Raeder and Milch also participated in the march.

In a French hospital, the legation counsellor vom Rath died at 4:30 p.m. on November 9 of the various injuries he had sustained in the attack. What had happened in Paris was a nearly perfect replay of the events of February 1936, surrounding the death of Wilhelm Gustloff in Davos. In both cases, a fanaticized Jew had assassinated a representative of National Socialist Germany to protest against the treatment of his fellow men there. Regrettable as the deaths of innocent people in these events were, it is extremely unlikely that they could have provoked a “spontaneous” outburst of a thirst for revenge among the German people. The latter had no reason to hold the innocent German Jews responsible for the murders. Under normal circumstances, as in the

time of the Wilhelm Gustloff case, an assassination such as that of vom Rath would not have led the German population to seek vengeance in a pogrom.

However, and this was the crucial point, *Hitler* reacted completely differently to the more recent incident. Gustloff had been killed immediately prior to the occupation of the Rhineland. Hitler did not wish to attract international attention; thus, he had to content himself with a relatively moderate speech at Gustloff's funeral.

But the assassination of vom Rath came at a most opportune moment for Hitler to use it as a pretext for staging a Jewish pogrom throughout the Reich. Hitler sought revenge for the smugness of the German Jews during the Sudeten crisis and believed that this measure would be most effective in pressuring the secret Jewish world government. If this organization, and its members among the English inner circle in the City of London, did not react swiftly to induce a more subservient demeanor of the Western Powers facing him, he wanted to make it clear that the Jews in Germany would suffer severely in consequence. Their cries of anguish would cause Jews worldwide to shudder. For the rescue of those "hostages" of the same creed and race in Germany, "world Jewry" would influence the British Government to espouse a more lenient stance toward Germany. It was the same attempt at blackmail that Hitler would use again and again during the war.

Of course, this was a completely utopian undertaking, given the fact that the secret Jewish world government only existed in Hitler's mind. Nonetheless, even harsh realities could not succeed in convincing Hitler to abandon his preconceived notions of 1919. From early 1942 onward, when it became obvious that the conquest of Russia did not go on as planned, he found himself forced to face the consequences of his previous policy and to demonstrate to the West that even his cruelest threats were deadly serious. Hundreds of thousands, finally millions of Jewish people were slaughtered. However, this did not in the least force the Western Powers to consider Hitler's terms of peace.

Nevertheless, in 1938, Hitler still believed that a "simple pogrom" would suffice to serve his interests. He himself did not wish to be implicated in the upcoming incidents. Contrary to the Gustloff case in 1936, he remained silent on the Paris murder and avoided making any specific comments in connection with vom Rath's death. He only sent condolences to the parents of the assassinated legation counsellor in the following telegram, dated November 9:⁴⁹⁸

November 9, 1938

To Herr and Frau vom Rath, Paris

Please accept my sincere sympathies on the grievous loss with which you have been afflicted as a result of the cowardly assassination of your son.

Adolf Hitler

This was the only public stance Hitler took with regard to the vom Rath case. Goebbels was to execute the pogrom according to his instructions. Hitler not only desired to keep himself aloof from the affair, but he also wanted to keep his favorite branches of the Party organization, such as the Political Leaders and the SS, from being compromised before the German public.

Speaking to SS recruits taking their loyalty oath in front of the Feldherrnhalle at midnight on November 9, Hitler made no mention of the Parisian affair either. He only presented them with the customary admonishment to devote their lives to his defense.⁴⁹⁹

Above all, I expect of you to uphold the motto which you have the honor to bear.⁵⁰⁰ Your honor must always and under all circumstances be loyalty.

Hitler passed the infamy generated by the persecution of the Jews on November 9 and November 10 on to the branch of the Party he had disliked for a long time already: the SA. Up to January 30, 1933, he had taken advantage of their services in his rise to power. But since that date, Hitler had built his political base upon the military. He loathed the SA's ideas on the establishment of an independent militia. The sight of their hats alone sufficed to pique his anger.⁵⁰¹

In addition, the majority of these hundreds of thousands of SA men were financially independent of the Führer. They neither entertained ambitious designs nor were their professional careers linked to the success of the Movement. Hence, their situation was completely different from that of Political Leaders and the SS. The SA men wished only to patriotically serve the cause of the Fatherland. Because the SA was a thorn in Hitler's side, he saw it as the ideal scapegoat for the excesses of the upcoming pogrom.

The pogrom aimed to destroy Jewish synagogues,⁵⁰² demolish Jewish apartments, and seal the fate of the remaining Jewish businesses. The resulting outcry that was certain to be voiced by the German population against such atrocities could then be blamed on the SA—after all, the SA had long proven to be unreliable.

After the war, an inquiry into the participation of the SA men in the so-called "Crystal Night"⁵⁰³ was undertaken by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. The fact that only a small percentage of

the SA membership took to the streets that night (along with other Party members and Political Leaders) matters less than the revelation at the Nuremberg trials that the orders to act that night had not come from the leaders of the SA. Indeed, the majority of the SA leadership had not yet returned from the festivities in Munich. Instead, the Ministry of Propaganda and the commissioned Political Leaders had issued the directions on how to proceed that night. Those among the SA men who heeded the call to action on that evening of November 9, 1938, had been deceived by Hitler.⁵⁰⁴

The riots and campaigns directed against the Jews that month included dozens of murders, which were later investigated at the Nuremberg trials as well. Nonetheless, the pogrom of 1938 can be considered comparatively “mild” in relation to the brutality of many pogroms of earlier centuries in Germany and in other countries. That night nearly all synagogues stood in flames. Jewish families awoke in terror as their furniture was hacked to pieces. There were incidents of theft of Jewish private property, though these were not very frequent. The goal was destruction, a show of force.

Those roaming the streets of the Jewish quarters of German cities that night heard the crashes of breaking furniture and china, a sound they heard again during the Second World War bombings of German cities, when the air shocks from the exploding bombs shook houses and destroyed their furnishings.

The Party and State feigned complete surprise on the morning of November 10, when the smoldering ruins of the synagogues were brought to daylight. With glass of broken windows from Jewish homes scattered about the streets, the government decided that only a “spontaneous outburst of popular fury” could explain such odd behavior, and immediately endeavored to direct this “public outrage” into more orderly channels by staging official marches to protest the assassination in Paris. Göring imposed a “penalty,” in the amount of one billion mark, upon the Jewish community in Germany, for its “sin.”

Hitler refrained from commenting on the pogrom. Even his ‘secret speech’ in Munich before the German press on the evening of November 10 contained no reference to the events that had taken place less than twenty-four hours earlier.

Ceremoniously printed invitations to attend the speech in the Führerbau at the Königsplatz were extended not only to the publishers and the leading editors of Party newspapers, but also to members of the bourgeois press (insofar as a bourgeois press still existed at this

time). There had been no comparable event since 1933–34, when Hitler had repeatedly spoken before German journalists and publishers in Berlin. The official reason given for this unconventional gathering was that the government wished to express its gratitude to the German press for its actions in the course of the Sudeten crisis.

In Germany, the belief was widespread that the astonishing accommodation of the Western Powers at the conference in Munich had largely been due to the German press campaign against Czechoslovakia. In all likelihood, Hitler shared this opinion. As mentioned before, Hitler continuously overestimated the influence of propaganda and the press, maintaining his firm conviction that both factors had played a decisive role in the First World War.

Though the gratitude to the German press was a valid reason to deliver the ‘secret speech’ of November 10, Hitler had another consideration in mind as well. He had not been satisfied in the least with the German people’s lack of display of popular enthusiasm for war in September. In the meantime, other developments had added to his displeasure: the Munich Agreement, the Anglo-German declaration of peace, the frustrated war. In his mind, all these developments appeared to threaten the future spiritual wholeness of the German population. He feared the ascendancy of a pacifist philosophy, all the more because he had just declared the Sudeten area would be his last territorial claim in Europe.⁵⁰⁵ Hitler intended to use the German press as a means for preventing such an undesirable development. The press was to prepare the German public for future wars. More importantly, the media was to instill into the Volk the “blind” conviction that whatever decision the Führer made was the only correct one.

Hitler’s ‘secret speech’ of November 10, 1938, has been preserved on a phonograph record. Its verbatim content, which has been published later,⁵⁰⁶ is reproduced below. Hitler began his talk by referring to the military preparations taken within the last months, and stated:

The year 1938 owes its great successes, as a matter of course, primarily to the enormous work of education which National Socialism has wrought for the German Volk. Slowly this work is beginning to bear fruit. The German Volk has brilliantly proven itself within these past months; yes, indeed, we may say that it has done so better than any other nationality in Europe. Naturally, we also owe these successes to the decisiveness of the leadership. Gentlemen, I can assure you that this was not always easy.

First, the decisions had to be made; then they had to be carried out. After all, the nation as a whole—and particularly the intellectuals—did not stand

behind these decisions. It was only natural that numerous of these “spirited men”—those at least who think of themselves as “spirited”—were less than in agreement with these decisions. They voiced doubts continuously. Hence, it was all the more important to persevere with an iron will and to see through the decisions which had been made in May despite heavy opposition.

Further, the actual motivation behind these decisions, which were the root of our successes, was revealed in our large-scale preparations and, most importantly, in our military rearmament. Certain measures which had to be and have been implemented sooner or later were undertaken this spring. Central to these measures was the construction of the fortifications in the West. Moreover, the political situation worldwide greatly advanced our interests. Taking advantage of this situation was instrumental to our success. We benefited greatly from the international situation which never before has appeared so favorable to our cause.

In this context, one must not forget one thing which was crucial, namely, propaganda. Not only propaganda in the interior but also in the exterior. As I pointed out earlier, the fact that the German Volk took a different stance in this case⁵⁰⁷ quite different from that of other peoples and of that which the German Volk would have taken not so very long ago, is the result of the persistent enlightenment campaign with which we have inundated the German Volk. And here the press played a big role.

With this we have taken upon ourselves the resolution of several tasks this year which we wish to achieve by employing propaganda. And it is here that the present press will be amongst our foremost instruments. First, the slow preparation of our Volk itself. For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace. Only by constantly emphasizing the German Volk’s desire for peace and peaceful intentions was I able to gain the German Volk’s freedom step by step and thus to give it the armament necessary as a prerequisite for accomplishing the next step. It is self-evident that this peace propaganda throughout the decades may well have had quite questionable effects. It might well leave the mistaken impression in the minds of many that the present regime stands for the resolution and the willingness to preserve peace under all circumstances.

This would not only lead to a wrong assessment of the ambitions of this system. It would also, and above all, lead the German nation, instead of being prepared for what is to come, to fall prey to a spirit of defeatism. In the long run, this could and most certainly would obliterate the successes scored by the present regime.

For years, I spoke only of peace because of this forced situation. Now it has become necessary to slowly prepare the German Volk psychologically for the fact that there are things that cannot be achieved by peaceful means. Some goals can only be achieved through the use of force. Not that it was necessary to propagandize the use of force as such, but it was necessary to shed light on certain events abroad in such a manner that the inner voice of the German Volk naturally cried out for the application of force. That meant that certain of these events needed to be portrayed in a manner in which they would automatically trigger a certain reaction in the brains of the mass of the German

Volk: if you cannot stop these things in a peaceful manner, then you will just have to stop them by force—in any event, things cannot go on like this. Fulfilling this task took many months' time: it was begun on schedule, continued, and reinforced. Many did not understand this, gentlemen, many thought it a bit extreme. These men were those hypersophisticated intellectuals who have no idea of how to get a Volk to stand straight when thunder rolls and lightning is in the sky. Secondly, it was necessary to make propaganda abroad as well and to do so for a variety of reasons. For one, it was necessary to portray those problems, problems that moved us ourselves, to the world as issues of importance and great urgency. Second, it was necessary that it became increasingly clear to the whole world that the German nation had reached a stage at which it could no longer be discounted. This would have to become increasingly evident based on the manner in which we treated these problems. And finally, one had to convincingly portray the cohesiveness of the German nation. It was also to this end that the press was essentially employed. Further, it was necessary to impress the enemy by this propaganda and press campaign, impress the enemy we faced at this time, namely, Czechoslovakia. There might have been some who did not understand the measures we took in the course of these years. Gentlemen, from May 21 on, it was crystal clear that this problem had to be resolved in one way or another! Any further delay would only have complicated the situation and might well have rendered its resolution all the more bloody. Today we know that this was perhaps the last possible moment in which to resolve this problem in the manner in which we were able to resolve it now.

One thing is certain, gentlemen: even a delay of no more than one or two years would have placed us in a most difficult situation militarily. Our enemies worldwide would not have changed. The "aircraft carrier" in the heart of Germany would have continued to build up and to seal itself off behind its fortifications. The imperative of first meeting this challenge would have implied that all our additional weaponry be applied to this task. This in turn would have slowly but surely devoured all investment into the military.

Hence, this problem had to be resolved this year—no matter what the circumstances. It was simply no longer possible to defer this issue to a later date. For the first time, preparatory steps were pursued to completion, and they were carried out on such an enormous scale that they could not well be disguised. Above all, however, the surrounding countries must have been aware of the activity—given the circumstances. Back then, I somehow had the impression that all these pacifist slogans no longer moved anyone. They had become tiresome and, anyway, no one believed them any longer or took them seriously. By then, I had arrived at the conclusion that only one alternative remained; to speak the truth relentlessly and brutally, and to do so without any false pretenses. No more and no less was required. In the long run, this simply had to have a paralyzing effect upon the state which was the most afflicted.

Many times, the question was put to me: "Do you truly believe this is right? For months now, each shooting-range in the vicinity of Czechoslovakia is being fired upon constantly. Czechoslovakian bunkers are being fired upon

constantly. Live ammunition is being used constantly. Indeed, you practically force everyone to notice the on-goings." I was convinced that these tactics would ultimately, over the months, ruin the nerves of these gentlemen in Prague. And to this end, the press had to make its contribution. It had its share in slowly ruining the nerves of these people. Indeed, their nerves did not stand up to the pressure.

After a few additional references to how he had gone about destroying "the nerves of these gentlemen in Prague," Hitler maintained that "others," i.e. the Western Powers, had suffered a nervous breakdown as well.⁵⁰⁸

At this last and crucial breaking point, the others lost their nerve so that in the end it was not necessary for us to actually take up arms. Indeed this was the main task of our press campaign, a task many did not understand. They said: "You are exaggerating, this is not fair play, after all it is just a tiny state." Only intellectuals could say something of this nature, naturally the Volk never would. In this instance, the Volk preferred a diet of greater clarity, boldness, and acridity. But certain intellectuals did speak in this manner, feeling themselves guardians of a different type of morality in Germany. They felt themselves responsible for what they called justice and for keeping measure in all things. Many of them did not understand this. Believe me, it was necessary! And in the end, all that counts is the success! I would now like to establish the fact that propaganda did excellent work this year, extremely excellent work. The press, too, blossomed in this work, and I personally felt great pleasure looking through numerous German newspapers every day.

Almost every day I could ascertain the great effectiveness of this propaganda and, in particular, of this propaganda in the press. What matters in the end is the success, as I said earlier, and, gentlemen, what a fabulous success it is indeed! This success is like a dream, a success so great that, in the present, we are not yet capable of assessing its true extent.

I realized the greatness of this success for the first time as I found myself standing on the Czech bunker lines. It was then I realized what it means to gain a line of fortification, nearly 2,000 kilometers in length, without having had to fire a shot. Gentlemen—this time propaganda in the service of a great idea conquered ten million people and 100,000 square kilometers of land for us. That is enormous!

For us, this opens the door to an understanding of Napoleon's victories. He was victorious not only because he was a brilliant strategist and great warlord. The Marseillaise and the ideas of the French Revolution came before him, and brought them to fruition. Out of this, we must arrive at one fundamental realization: the press, gentlemen, can achieve the impossible and it can have an enormous effect if it is used as a means to an end. We live in a time when the opposite is proving itself to be true. For example, assuming there are 2,400 newspapers in one country and each of them makes its own politics based upon its journalists' reflections, then there are 2,400 newspapers aiming to discredit each other. The net result would be chaos like the one we

are witnessing at present in the French press. One newspaper repudiates the conclusion of the other and, within a short time, the result is that every newspaper is discredited. When we look to the past six years, we cannot deny that the French press played a pivotal role in the collapse of the country. And this was so because of the complete muddleheadedness and lack of discipline of the French press. Every paper published whatever it thought appropriate at one particular point in time.

One of the papers claimed that any negotiations with Germany on the basis of a 200,000-man army were tantamount to a criminal deed. Another paper claimed that any negotiations on the basis of a 300,000-man army were tantamount to crime as well. Three years later, these same papers demand: "Now why did you not accept the 300,000-man army proposal back then?" They keep contradicting themselves. This whole matter is proof that in modern times, in times in which the greatest battles ever are being fought, in such times you cannot win the battle if the—let me call them—"critical swords" act to self-glorification. They must instead listen to one command and strike out in one direction. As a means to an end, the press becomes an instrument of incredible force. Its value is not diminished by the fact that there is no need for paper A to disprove the claims of paper B, nor by the fact that paper C could contradict both the claims of A and B. In an age where questions of such paramount importance are on the agenda, the press will lose its importance completely once it strays from this path, something we witness in many other countries today. I experienced this early on, gentlemen—in my youth. As a young man when I first witnessed the practical formation of a national identity in Vienna, the city's newspapers were exclusively of a Marxist or liberal democratic persuasion. This included all the big papers such as the *Neue Freie Presse*, *Wiener Journal*—at the time still named the *Die Zeit*—, *Wiener Tagblatt*, and *Extrablatt*, and so on. Those were the big papers and the papers of the worker. For the remainder, there was only one with an anti-Semitic agenda, namely the *Deutsches Volksblatt* with a circulation of about 20,000 to 25,000. And on the board of the city council of Vienna, 136 of the 148 delegates were anti-Semitic, namely the Christian Socialists. That goes to show how little influence the press had in reality. No one took note of its scribbling. The press published, the people read, but the papers themselves had no influence.

Today the situation is similar in many other countries where public opinion is beginning to make itself felt. Public opinion there is of a completely different nature from that portrayed by the press. The press simply does not want to face the facts. It was once the same here. When I took power, we controlled less than five percent of the German press. Not even five percent: 95 percent opposed us. But the power became mine; the Volk backs me!

That simply goes to show just how incredible the power of the press can be when it serves as an instrument of power wielded by one government. And, I would like to point out, this proves just how devoid of importance the press becomes when it is left to its own devices, when it tries to make history and politics by itself. In Germany, we have attempted to transform the press into a most powerful instrument. And at the close of this year, I would like

to proclaim before you that I am more than satisfied with the results. The press has gloriously passed the test and has proven its value. We face great new tasks. And above all we have one mission, gentlemen, one mission we must fulfill by all means: to strengthen the self-confidence of this German Volk—step by step! I realize that this is a goal that cannot be achieved within a year or two.

What we need is a forceful and confident public opinion, if at all possible, to penetrate the ranks of our intellectuals as well. It is in this manner only that we successfully can make politics in the long run. When I say in the long run, I do not mean spring 1939 nor am I speaking of the summer. What I am speaking of are the coming decades, the years that lie ahead of us. We must instill in our Volk that same profound self-confidence that once permeated the German soldier at the end of the Franco-German War of 1871 and that he felt up to the middle of the World War. This type of self-assurance gives the German Volk a sense of its intrinsic value and the sense that its leadership is the right one. Here it is of paramount importance that in our education of the Volk we must consciously combat all those forces that I myself have encountered as the greatest enemy of the resurrection of our people: mass hysteria—and more specifically—the hysteria of our intellectual strata. To this end, one must rely completely on the broad general public in order to counter the weight of this inbred, intellectual and hysterical strata.

Let me give you an example. In February of this year, our intellectuals claimed: “Things are not going well in foreign affairs; truly they are not going well at all!” Toward the end of February: “We are headed for catastrophe! Our foreign policy is a catastrophe, a pure catastrophe!” Mid-March: “Incredible victory! The battle is won—thanks to our braveness and steadfastness. Everything is in order now! Germany is invincible, it is a world power, etc. The colonies are next on the list—they will be returned to us as gifts, undoubtedly. Too bad the leadership did not carry the matter further, evidently it was not quite its day. It should have made a double-take, it should have pushed further, everything was still open.”

Two months later, upon the beginning of Czechoslovakian predicament they claimed: “Haven’t we had enough for one year?! We should not be embarking upon yet another enterprise.” A month later: “This will end in catastrophe! Germany will face economic ruin; this will ruin German financially! We can pay for this neither in terms of money nor in terms of human endurance!” Another week later: “The entire world is against us; we are facing another world war!” Yet another week later: “Triumph! Why did the leadership not take things a step further and take all of Czechoslovakia?!⁵⁰⁹ Why negotiate?” You would not believe the response I have had.

I knew one man a while back who sat in this office in Berlin. Regarding negotiations on the topic of the Navy, he maintained: “This demand for 35 percent is utterly outrageous! To think that the English would ever agree to anything of that nature is to totally underestimate them. They cannot agree to that, they will never agree to such a demand! This will lead to a breakdown of British-German relations, it will lead to the isolation of Germany! This will strain the so laboriously won rapprochement between Germany and England—

laboriously won by the Foreign Ministry that is.” Then the actual negotiations take place. The demand for 35 percent is granted, even 45 percent regarding the submarine fleet. If we wished we could get one hundred percent. About three or four months thereafter, I finally had to throw this gentleman out of the Foreign Ministry for good since this very gentleman had declared, all of a sudden: “I have no idea what got into Ribbentrop to make such a big deal out of this. Had he gotten 50 percent then we could talk, but 35 percent—what is a mere 35 percent in the end?” I then fired this gentleman after his statement was brought to my attention, perchance. He was a legion counsellor.

I have experienced similar things in the meantime. I received memoranda that proved to me in black and white that all this was completely impossible and, in the end, it would lead to catastrophe, and so on. And then I saw other memoranda that insisted that the distance between our southernmost position in ... ⁵¹⁰ and our northernmost position in lower Austria was a mere 60 kilometers—why on earth had I not taken these few kilometers as well. And then it was pointed out to me that there happened to be German-speaking enclaves in this strip of land in case I should not be aware of this fact! Yes, gentlemen, such is the hysteria of our high society! We must strive in particular not to let this hysteria infect the broad masses. And we must do so in order to instill in the Volk, and if at all possible in certain intellectual circles as well, a real self-confidence. It is the mission of the press to further the self-confidence of all Germans and to refrain from doing anything that might thwart this process, endanger this self-confidence, or to weaken its impact.

I know only too well that certain parties will point out that in fact there are several issues which deserve criticism. Gentlemen, there are two approaches. Approach number 1: I search all of Germany to find something to criticize. Once I start on that, gentlemen, I will turn into a veritable *Rüsselschwein*⁵¹¹ in no time. There will be plenty of subjects, and I will dig myself in ever the more. That is one way to stay busy, but to me it is not a satisfying one.

However, there is another approach which lies in the recognition of the great tasks facing us. I will not resolve even the most trifling of matter if I get bogged down by details. Rather I must direct the force of the entire nation toward the truly great tasks facing us. I must solve these great tasks. To the extent that I succeed in resolving these enormous tasks, small matters will reveal themselves as ludicrous and trivial. No one will speak of them ever again. And hereby I will overcome them as well. No one will take note of them any longer and no one will think of them.

And finally: human imperfection. In the past, this issue was not removed from the face of the earth either. The press in the liberal states did not succeed in this and neither shall we. There will always be people of insufficient strength and talents, lacking in character, etc., and we cannot remove them from the face of the earth.

What is important instead is not to promote public awareness of these faults, but to emphasize instead the great surge of strength in our nation, a strength evident throughout the centuries and millenniums.

After Hitler had reflected at great length upon this immense success and, likening himself to Napoleon, he began to flaunt anecdotes and war stories. Considering the later course of events, one of these tales was particularly amusing, although perhaps not in the context its author had intended:

One day, a man came up to me and said: "Listen, if you do this, then Germany will be ruined within six weeks' time." So I said: The German Volk once survived wars with the Romans. The German Volk survived the *Völkerwanderung*. The German Volk later survived the great battles of the early and late Middle Ages. The German Volk survived the religious wars of more recent times. The German Volk then survived the Napoleonic Wars, the Wars of Liberation, even a World War, even the Revolution [of 1918]—it will survive me, too!

For once, a statement by Hitler was most authoritative! The Führer continued:

It is imperative for us to instill in the German Volk a confidence based upon its history and our beliefs in order to be able to carry out the great political tasks facing us. Gentlemen, a nation's Führer can do no more than his nation will allow him to do. This is a law of unquestionable appropriateness and significance. I ask you: how shall I approach the tasks facing us in the future if I have behind me a people lacking in faith?! It does not suffice that I myself have faith: I must know that behind me stands a German Volk strong in its convictions, united, secure, and confident. It is the goal of our mutual, gigantic efforts to achieve this. This is a wonderful task.

You know it is something completely different to be making history instead of ... [sentence incomplete]. And indeed today we live in a most wonderful period, a time in which we can truly say that history is being made. And indeed we can say that we have not wasted our time in the pursuit of trivial matters, that we did not record historic events simply for the sake of recording events. Nor did we talk about them only for the sake of idle chatter. All this has led to for one outcome, an historic outcome, which allows us to stand proudly amidst the ranks of our revered ancestors, gentlemen! And I did not accomplish this feat by myself. Rather, it is the accomplishment of hundreds of thousands who stand behind me, who march alongside me, and who represent the Volk in the end. Therefore, it is necessary for us to strive to awaken the true force of the German Volk by reinforcing confidence in this power. Hereby we will bring stability to the assessment of political problems.

Now it appeared to be necessary to once again rage against the intellectuals:

I should perhaps add that there is yet one concern that continues to haunt me. It is the following: when I take a look at the intellectual classes we have—unfortunately, I suppose, they are necessary; otherwise one could one day, I don't know, exterminate (*ausrotten*) them or something—but unfortunately

they're necessary. So when I take a look at these intellectual classes and imagine their behavior and take a closer look, in comparison to myself, and to our work, then I almost get scared. For since I have been politically active and particularly since I began to lead this Reich, I have experienced only successes. And all the same, this mass is floating around, often in such a positively repulsive, nauseating way. What would happen if we ever suffered a defeat? It is a possibility, gentlemen. Can you imagine how this race of chickens would act then, given the chance? They are not reliable, even now that we are scoring success upon success unrivaled in the history of mankind. Can you imagine how they would react if we truly suffered defeat?

Then Hitler addressed the crucial point in his speech. He wished to make it perfectly clear to the press, and through its offices to the German people, that the leadership, i.e. Adolf Hitler, would always make the right decisions, and therefore it was imperative to blindly obey.

Gentlemen, it used to be my greatest pride to have built up a party that stood by me, come what may. The party stood behind me, even in times of setback and dismay, and apparently it did so all the more fervently when times were tough. I took great pride in this, and it was a great consolation for me. This is precisely what we must bring the Volk to do. It must learn to fanatically believe in the *Endsieg* so that even if we meet with failure, the nation will assess this failure in a different light, in a more illuminated light if I may say so, thinking: this is only temporary, victory will be ours in the end!

There once was a Prussian warlord who epitomized this trait of character: Blücher—the man of innumerable defeats who zealously believed in victory in the end, and this was the crucial point!⁵¹² We must instill this belief in the entire Volk. It must be instilled with an absolute, stubborn, self-evident and confident faith: in the end we will accomplish all that is necessary. This can only succeed, we can only accomplish this by persistently appealing to the nation's strengths, underscoring the Volk's good points, and ignoring its so-called bad points.

To this end, it is imperative that the press blindly pledge itself to one principle: "The leadership acts correctly!"

Gentlemen, we all must admit that we do indeed make mistakes. Journalists are not exempt from this either. Nevertheless, we all can only endure if, instead of permanently criticizing each other in full view of the world public, we highlight each other's positive aspects.

In other words, it is imperative that—while not disclaiming the possibility of errors or even of discussion—the correctness of the leadership's actions must, in principle, be continuously emphasized. That is crucial. Above all, you know, this is necessary because of the Volk. Still today I hear some people demanding—they are throw backs to a more liberal age: "Should one not place this issue before the Volk for once?" Well, gentlemen, I do believe I have accomplished not little, at least a lot more than some old cobbler or some old dairymaid.

Nonetheless, it is entirely possible that I may not arrive at an agreement with other gentlemen on the assessment of certain problems, with other gentlemen who have also accomplished not little. However, a decision must be made. It is totally impossible that I leave this decision, an issue to which no one knows a solution at this point, in the hands of dairy maids and dairy farmers or cobblers. It is totally impossible.

It does not make any difference whether this decision proves correct in the last instance—that is of no interest. What is decisive is that the entire nation as a single unit stands behind this decision. It must form a unitarian front. Should the decision prove not entirely correct, this will be more than compensated for by the determination with which the whole nation backs it. This will be of importance in the coming years, gentlemen! In this manner only can we free the German Volk from the bondage of doubt, a doubt that only makes the Volk unhappy. The broad mass would rather not be troubled by doubt, it has only one desire: to be led by a leadership it can trust. The mass does not want this leadership to be a divided one, but rather that this leadership should step before it as one.

You may believe me that the Volk likes nothing better than the feeling that when I venture out into the streets with my colleagues on a day such as November 9, they can point at us and say: “That is he, and that is he, and that is he.” The Volk feels secure in the knowledge that these men will stand together, follow one Führer, and this Führer will stand by these men. These men are their idols. It is possible that an intellectual might not be capable of comprehending this. But the man in the street, he somehow places his trust in those men who step before him. He depends on these men. Seeing the Führer step forth, accompanied by all his men, that picture reassures the man in the street.

It is this that makes the people happy! That is what they want! This has been the case throughout German history. The Volk always delights in seeing the men on top united. This makes it easier to maintain its own unity. We must bear in mind the big picture, we must do everything in our power to preserve and foster this impression with the Volk. We must instill in the Volk the conviction that the leadership is right and that everyone stands behind this leadership. Psychologically speaking, this makes it possible for the leadership to hold its own in times of crisis.

In summary, I would like to point out one fact, gentlemen. In the liberal states, the mission of the press can be summed up as follows: press plus Volk against leadership. For us, it must read: leadership plus propaganda plus press, etc., to stand united before the Volk! Leadership of the Volk entails all of this. Every man must feel himself to be a leading member of the Volk and must feel himself personally responsible. Every man must internalize the high principles of leadership. Regardless of what is discussed behind closed doors, the leadership must step before the Volk as one, a single united entity.

It does not matter whether one of its members is responsible for propaganda only, another is responsible for the press, and a third conducts rallies or a fourth manages the political organization. A fifth may lead the military. A sixth may either work in the administration or represent his country abroad.

All of these men are part of the German Volk's leadership, and as such they must appear to stand united before the Volk. Amongst us, we can exchange opinions. Before the Volk, there is only one opinion. Gentlemen, this is the clear-cut command of the hour! If we can carry out this command, then this leadership will make the German Volk great and mighty. And this means, that in 1935 we find ourselves not at the end of an epoch. Rather, we stand at the beginning of another great era in the history of our Volk.

Gentlemen! I believe in the future of the German Volk. In the past, a man perhaps thought: "The Führer must be a dreamer—how else could he believe in these possibilities?" Quite easily, gentlemen! People make history. People did so in the past, and they will do so in the future. What is decisive is the internal worth of the people. Their numbers are crucial. The value of the German Volk defies comparison. I will never believe that there could ever be a people of greater worth.

Here Hitler referred to the decision between war and peace. He could not put this decision before the German Volk, simply because the latter's choice would have been a most obvious one. At the end of his nearly one-hour speech, Hitler presented the gentlemen with a long list of figures. In it, the German Volk was not only listed as the most valuable of all peoples, but also as the one numerically dominant nation. His calculation was the following:

I am convinced that, particularly today, our Volk represents the pinnacle reached by an evolution toward gradual, racial improvement, unequaled on this planet at present. With regard to statistics you should always keep in mind that the American Union is made up of 126 million or 127 million people. However, if you subtract the Germans, Italians, Negroes, Jews, etc.,⁵¹³ then all you are left with are about 60 million Anglo-Saxons, people who count themselves as members of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Russian Empire contains not even 55 million or 56 million true Russians. The British Empire has less than 46 million Englishmen living in the mother country. The French Empire contains less than 37 million true Frenchmen. Italy has little more than 40 million Italians. Only 17 million Poles remain in Poland. However, from 1940 on, 80 million people of one race will live in Germany, surrounded by nearly eight million people additionally who are actually of the same race as well. Whoever has doubts about the future of so great a block of people, whoever does not believe in this future, is merely a weakling. I believe in this future without reservation!

We once called our own the greatest empire on earth. Since then, we have slackened in our efforts, and we have worn ourselves out. We exhausted our powers in a process of inner disintegration. We lost in standing abroad. Now, after a period of crisis which has lasted 400 or 300 years, our Volk has finally recuperated. And I am certain that what we are witnessing today we is the rebirth of Germany and hence of Germany's future. For all of us, the greatest happiness lies with having been allowed to partake in the process of preparing, forming, and realizing this future.

All of us feel profound satisfaction at this and, in view of this, all else loses in meaning. It was this firm conviction that once led me forth from my hospital bed as it has inspired me to this day on which I stand before you. And all of us must resound with this firm conviction as we stride forth on the path laid out for the German Volk. I am certain this path will lead the German Volk to greatness and it will lead the German nation onward toward a bright future. I wish to thank you once again for your cooperation.

Evidently, here Hitler did not include the British with the Germans in his tables, despite the fact that he had repeatedly declared the British to belong to the same race as the Germans.⁵¹⁴ It is also remarkable that Hitler did not mention the supposed "Bolshevist threat to the world" in his 'secret speech' of November 10. On other occasions, he often reminded of this imminent danger in order to justify his military measures to the Western Powers. Furthermore, he used the threat of allying himself with the Bolsheviks as a threat to terrorize the British into a more lenient stance. The strategy was starkly reminiscent of the tactics Hitler used to deal with the German Nationalists during the November 1932 transportation strikes, when he had encouraged National Socialist cooperation with the Communists.

On November 11, Hitler sent a telegram to the President of the Turkish National Assembly, expressing his condolences and his sorrow at the death of the Turkish President Kemal Atatürk:⁵¹⁵

Deeply moved, I and the German Volk extend our great sorrow and sympathy on the demise of the President of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk, to Your Excellency, the Great National Assembly, and the entire Turkish people. With him we have lost a great soldier, a brilliant statesman, and a historic person. In the erection of the new Turkish Empire, Atatürk has created for himself a memorial which will survive the ages.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

In Düsseldorf on November 17, Hitler attended the funeral services for the assassinated legation counsellor vom Rath. The Führer himself did not speak on the occasion⁵¹⁶ and his demeanor was quite the opposite of the behavior he had displayed two and a half years earlier at the funeral of Wilhelm Gustloff, where he had delivered a lengthy address.⁵¹⁷

This time he was concerned about appearances and wished in no way to be connected to the pogrom that had followed the death of vom Rath. He may have found credulous listeners in his German audience, but his tactic failed him with regard to the international public. Out of protest against the committed atrocities, the United States recalled its

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Ambassador in Berlin, Hugh R. Wilson. An American Ambassador would never return to National Socialist Germany. Hitler was forced to react by recalling the German Ambassador, Dieckhoff, from Washington on November 18. Only a Chargé d'Affaires remained in the American capital.

On November 21, Hitler received the newly appointed Japanese Ambassador Lieutenant General Oshima at the Obersalzberg. He delivered the following address on the occasion:⁵¹⁸

Your Excellency!

I gratefully acknowledge your words of appreciation for the development of the German Reich and the German Wehrmacht. We owe this development to the unerring pursuit of a standardized path upon which the German Volk seeks to attain the fulfillment of its great national mission.

Under the wise guidance of its Imperial House within the last decades, Japan has witnessed a remarkable upswing which is reflected in the spirit of the Japanese Volk so like that in Germany.

A further proof of this kindred spirit is the fact that both our peoples have correctly identified the extent of the danger posed by the corrosive agitation of international communism and have allied themselves, together with the Italian people, to ward off this dangerous influence in the agreement against the Communist International.

Therefore, I am convinced that the German-Japanese friendship, based upon such a strong foundation, will be augmented and expanded upon in the future for the benefit of both our peoples in the service of peace and progress worldwide. In your previous capacity in Germany, Your Excellency, you have already greatly contributed to the further amplification of our friendly relations.

Hence I welcome it all the more that Your Excellency remains dedicated to the service of this idea in your new and highly responsible position. Let me assure Your Excellency, that your endeavors shall always be certain of my unflinching support.

Further, Hitler received the newly appointed Belgian Ambassador, Count Davignon. The count had previously served his country in the capacity of an envoy to Berlin. He presented his credentials to Hitler, who accepted them with the following words:⁵¹⁹

Your Excellency!

I am greatly honored to accept from your hand the correspondence which accredits you as the Royal Belgian Ambassador Plenipotentiary here.

I strongly applaud His Majesty the Belgian King's choice of Your Excellency as his first Ambassador to the German Reich. You have now represented your country as envoy here for over two and a half years and have come to know Germany well in the interim. It is with great satisfaction that

both the German Reich Government and the Royal Belgian Government reflect upon this period in which the relations between our countries developed most favorably. The basis for German-Belgian relations, as articulated in the German declaration of October 13, 1937,⁵²⁰ has stood the test of time—particularly within the last months. You may rest assured that your efforts to expand upon this foundation and to intensify German-Belgian relations will always meet with my full support.

I thank you for the friendly best wishes which Your Excellency has again extended for both the prosperity of Germany and myself. I return these with great sincerity, Your Excellency, and bid you welcome.

At the Obersalzberg on November 21, too, Hitler welcomed the recently appointed envoys from Albania, Manchukuo, and the Dominican Republic. He delivered the customary addresses on the occasion.⁵²¹

In the same location on the next day, a reception was held for the new French Ambassador, Robert Coulondre. He was to be the last accredited diplomat of the Third Republic serving in Berlin. In reply to the French Ambassador's introductory speech, Hitler delivered the address below:⁵²²

Your Excellency!

I am greatly honored to accept from your hand the correspondence which accredits you as France's Ambassador Plenipotentiary of His Excellency, the President of the French Republic.

I warmly welcome the fact that Your Excellency sees it as your mission to continue the work of your predecessor, Ambassador François-Poncet, and thus wish to contribute to the creation of consistent and trusting relations between Germany and France. I agree with you completely that both our peoples have every reason to cultivate good neighborly relations based upon mutual respect. Similarly, our countries complement one another in the realm of economics and thus should strive to work together in a spirit of honest cooperation. Now that the border disputes—which for such a long time in the past have weighed heavily upon our relations—are no longer of import, it is my firm conviction that peaceful competition will not only be mutually beneficial for our countries, but for Europe as a whole.

In this spirit, as you begin your work here, you may rest assured that I will do my utmost to facilitate the fulfillment of your mission. I bid you a heartfelt welcome, Your Excellency.

Later that day, the newly named Latvian Envoy Edgar Kreewinsch called upon Hitler. Having represented his country in Berlin in earlier years, Kreewinsch was well acquainted with Germany.⁵²³

On November 24, royal guests visited the Obersalzberg. Hitler's prestige had grown tremendously in the Balkans, and the Rumanian King Carol II believed the time to be ripe for him to pay his respects

to Hitler. The following communiqué was published on the meeting of the two statesmen:⁵²⁴

His Majesty King Carol II of Rumania, accompanied by his son Crown Prince Michael, called upon the Führer and Reich Chancellor for a private visit on the Obersalzberg today. They took breakfast together at the Berghof. Foreign Minister Ribbentrop attended both the breakfast and the ensuing discussions.

Afterwards, Hitler received the South African Minister of Defense, Commerce, and Industry, Oswald Pirow, on the Obersalzberg. The minister was at the time touring Germany.⁵²⁵

That same day, Hitler added to his previous instructions for military preparations for the annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the Memelland. He now included an ordinance to effect the occupation of the city of Danzig.⁵²⁶ These were the goals Hitler had set for his upcoming military moves. Hitler was confident that he could attain them without causing much of an uproar or provoking any serious interference by the Western Powers. This, however, was a dangerous mistake on his part.⁵²⁷

For the last time in his life, Hitler gave an election speech on December 2, 1938. He delivered it at Reichenberg, where he spoke on the topic of the upcoming December 2 supplemental elections to the Reichstag.⁵²⁸ Hitler arrived in the capital of the Sudetenland at around 2:00 in the afternoon. First he toured the House of Trade and the city theater, then continued on to the City Hall, where a reception was given in his honor. After a welcome by the Mayor, Hitler thanked him in a short address in which he emphasized his intention to transform Reichenberg, within a few years, into “a truly beautiful stronghold of the Movement.”

At a mass rally that evening, Hitler delivered his big election speech. He began with the obligatory “party narrative,” which even his regular listeners found comparatively long. However, he stood before thousands of Sudeten Germans, who heard him speak for the first time and adored him as though he were a godlike figure. They still possessed a faith in him which the people in the old part of the Reich had incrementally lost over the course of his six-year rule.

In front of the Sudeten Germans, Hitler could indulge once again in an orgy of verbosity. He listed his achievements of the past twenty years of his life, crowning his description with the following:

“National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!”

By the time Hitler's narrative had finally taken him to the year 1938, he could not refrain from expounding upon the preparations he had made for war against Czechoslovakia:

In this year, the German Volksgemeinschaft has proven itself to be a reality for the first time, a Volksgemeinschaft that does not shrink from threat or blackmail.

We have limited our foreign policy goals in a most reasonable fashion, yet there comes a point where international rights cease to exist and where the national rights of all peoples make their appearance! And it is for this national right to life that we stood up this year; we were determined to see it through even if this should demand the utmost of us.

Millions of Germans were not able to spend this summer, this fall, with their families. For many months, they were in the barracks or at military training sites. In this manner, they made a solemn vow that for them the German Volksgemeinschaft is more than simply a term or a phrase. To them it is a holy duty for which each man for himself is immediately willing to sacrifice his life, if need be, as so many millions have done before us.

From this determination, the Greater German Reich arose. It has cleared the path into this great Reich for you as well, my Volksgenossen, now that it has taken you in!

That with all your heart you have pledged yourselves to this greatest of communities, this most social of communities which exist on this earth todaythis I know! Now you must avow your heart's desire before all the world! This is what you are called upon to do on December 4 of this year!

Hitler maintained that the plebiscite would symbolize the completion of the birth certificate of Greater Germany, the Third Reich, which would be valid to the end of time.

Now you, too, shall step before the face of all the world at the completion of this year, profess your faith, reaffirm it, and hence solemnly avow your faith. I know what this avowal will be. Actually, it would not even be necessary to avow it. However, it is necessary to render complete the birth certificate of the Greater German Reich!

The birth certificate of the Second Reich was signed by the German Princes. The birth certificate of the Third Reich will be issued and verified by the German Volk.

Beneath this birth certificate of Greater Germany, all men and women of our German Gaus have set their hand already this year, be they from East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, Brandenburg, Berlin, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Hanover, from Central Germany, from Franconia, Swabia, from the Rhine, from the South, from our Ostmark all the way to Vienna. And now you, too, will set your hand to it so that its validity shall remain for all eternity!

Greater Germany has arisen out of the will of the German nation! This is confirmed by all men and women of this Volk! And one day the German youth will pledge itself to this Reich forever. It is this that I demand of you now!

In the December 4 election in the Sudetenland, of the 2.94 million ballots cast, 2.64 million votes went to the NSDAP (98.8 percent). Hitler could not be content with such a “meager” showing. After all, the Saarlanders had reaffirmed his rule on March 31, 1936, by casting 99.9 percent of the votes in his favor. Earlier that year on April 10, the Austrians had demonstrated their support for his policies by dedicating to him 99.7 percent of the votes. Hitler felt that he had been done an injustice by the Sudeten Germans, whose gratitude for his willingness “to draw the sword” for them ought to have resulted in a far better showing. He punished them for the poor results of the plebiscite by simply ignoring them. There were no particular thanks to the Sudeten Germans as there had been for the people of the Saar and of Austria.⁵²⁹ Instead Hitler used his time that day to mail a congratulatory telegram to Franco, on the General’s forty-sixth birthday.⁵³⁰

The day after the plebiscite, December 5, Hitler proceeded to the Sudeten-Silesian region, accompanied by Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Milch. There he attended maneuvers conducted by the Army and the Luftwaffe.⁵³¹ What a telling foretaste of his plans for the future!

In the meantime, Ribbentrop journeyed to Paris. Upon arrival he went to meet his colleague, Bonnet, in the Foreign Ministry. There they signed the following Franco-German Declaration on December 6:⁵³²

The German Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Georges Bonnet, acting in the name of and by order of their Governments, have at their meeting in Paris on December 6, 1938, agreed as follows:

1. The German Government and the French Government fully share the conviction that peaceful and good neighborly relations between Germany and France constitute one of the most essential elements in the consolidation of the situation in Europe and in the preservation of general peace. Both Governments will consequently do all within their power to assure the development in this direction of the relations between their countries.

2. Both Governments state that between their countries no questions of a territorial nature are outstanding and solemnly recognize as final the frontier between their countries as it now exists.

3. Both Governments are resolved, without prejudice to their special relations with third powers, to remain in contact with each other on all questions concerning both their countries, and to confer together should the future evolution of these questions lead to international difficulties.

In witness thereof, the representatives of the two Governments have signed the present Declaration, which comes to force immediately. Executed in duplicate in the German and French language at Paris, on December 6, 1938.

Joachim von Ribbentrop

Georges Bonnet

This declaration met all the exigencies of the proposals that Hitler had presented to the former French Ambassador to Berlin, François-Poncet. Hitler would have been greatly deceived had he believed that the signing of a like document would prevent the French from declaring war on him in the event that he attacked Poland. For Hitler such declarations and mutual non-aggression pacts were not meant to keep him neutral, but rather to give the other signatories a pretext to refrain from intervention against his aggression. He envisioned that France could point to the December 6 declaration with Germany to justify neutrality in the event of a German-Polish conflict.

Naturally, Hitler failed to inform Mussolini of his intention to incorporate France into this alliance system. It is fairly certain that his friend was not pleased at all upon hearing the news. The Italian had just announced his claims on Tunis and Corsica and had found little love for his *mare nostrum* policy⁵³³ on the part of the French.

In Germany, meanwhile, the demonstrations of military might kept rolling. On December 8, the aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin* was launched at the Deutsche Werft in Kiel. It was the first ship of its kind in Germany. However, it would never be equipped nor would it ever see action.⁵³⁴ Hitler attended the ship's launching, at which Gbring spoke at its christening. Thereafter, Hitler reviewed the Navy from the harbor in Kiel and had breakfast with the commanders in chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht aboard the light battleship *Grille*.

In Munich on December 10, Hitler received the Italian Minister of Economics Lantini at the Führerbau.⁵³⁵ That same day, he delivered a big 'culture speech' to open the Second German Architecture and Industrial Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst.⁵³⁶ First, he spoke at great length on the mission and goals of architecture. He then announced his latest project, the construction of a giant opera house in Munich. Then Hitler's fetish for numbers surpassed all reasonable bounds: he earnestly claimed that the number of churches, theaters, assembly halls, and other public buildings in a city had to rise in proportion to the growth of its inhabitants. For instance, this meant that the Berlin Cathedral would have to furnish seats for 100,000 faithful. In his Munich speech, Hitler explained himself in the following terms:

Let me take up the topic of just one single project: the blueprint for a new opera house in Munich. For many years, it was worked upon, and it is now that its outlines are taking shape and form. Yet it still will take a long time for this work to reach its final completion. And the same applies to the great buildings in Berlin and the enormous building projects all over the Reich.

Let us never forget: we are not building for our time, we are building for the future! That is why the structures must be grand, solid, and durable, and thereby they will become beautiful and worthy. May every man commissioning a work, every architect who finds himself enchanted with some latest fad that he thinks remarkable or interesting, may he think again and ask if his project will be able to stand up to the criticism of the centuries. Because this is what counts! That is easily said. But we have countless examples for works, works where evidently someone was not thinking, works which evidently were not built with a purpose in mind and hence do not do justice to this purpose, either in size or in the long run.

Let me just cite one of these examples. In Germany there are about forty million Protestants. The Confessional Church⁵³⁷ built for itself a cathedral in Berlin which serves as the central church for the three and a half million Protestants living in the capital of the German Reich. The cathedral holds 2,450 seats, each of which is numbered in order to accommodate the more prominent Protestant families in the Reich.

My Volksgenossen! Something like this is happening in an age of so-called democratic evolution. Here the churches ought to lead by example being the most democratic since after all they deal with souls and not with professions or even social classes. Now it is somewhat difficult to follow how this church of 2,450 seats can possibly do justice to the spiritual needs of three and a half million faithful. The dimensions of the building structure are not the result of technical necessities but rather they are the net result of a narrowminded and thoughtless building process. Actually this cathedral ought to accommodate 100,000 persons.

You might ask me: "Do you believe that 100,000 persons will actually go there?" It is not my business to answer this question, a question that would have to be answered by the Church! But you will now understand that we, as a true Volk movement, must keep the needs of our Volk in sight as we carry out our building projects. Hence we must build halls into which 150,000 or even 200,000 persons will actually fit. That means: we must build them as big as the technical possibilities of our day permit, and we must build for eternity!

Another example can be found in the realm of theater buildings. Around 1800, a small town of 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants built for itself a theater with 1,200 seats. Now in the course of the years, commissioners from building inspection authorities and fire protection agencies come along and begin to limit the number of theatergoers for security reasons. In this same time period, the small town grows; 100,000 or 150,000 people live there now. In other words, while the number of seats in the theater declines, the number of inhabitants of the city increases continuously. It becomes necessary to build a new theater. And now the city of 150,000 people begins to build yet another theater holding 1,000 or 1,200 seats, as many seats as the old theater already held a hundred years ago.

Well, it seems that one has forgotten the fact that the orchestra has swollen to sixty musicians today instead of the sixteen musicians of the past. This is largely due to our new composers—I need only name Richard Wagner. Both supernumeraries and choir also have an increasing membership, and overall

technical requirements today demand the participation of far more people. Today this same theater needs to accommodate 450 or 500 stage hands, members of the choir, soloists, dancers, that is 450 or 500 members and an audience of one thousand. That means every member of the audience must support two members of the crew. That is possible perhaps in a capitalist age. For us, this is impossible, for we must finance our theaters through contributions from the Volk.

Because this alone necessitates that the masses of our Volk go to our theaters, these theaters must have a certain size.

Now we are asked: "What? You want to build an opera with three thousand seats here?" Yes, indeed, we would like to increase that number even more because we want thousands of our Volk to partake of the fruits of German art. [—]

Another objection might be: do we have to build so much just now? Yes, we do! We must build more now than ever before, because before us, they built either nothing or pitiful miserable structures.

And secondly: we just happen to find ourselves today in an epoch of great rejuvenation for the German Volk! He who has not realized this yet, he must nonetheless believe it! That is a fact! Posterity will have greater appreciation of the years 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938 than certain of our contemporaries who seem to live behind the times!

Posterity will see this epoch of the greatest resurrection of the German Volk ever in the context of the foundation of an enormous, great and mighty Reich. These years will one day be seen as corresponding to the ascent of a movement to which we owe that the German Volk emerged from the confusion of party politics, segregated classes, and various confessions and melted into one entity of great spiritual strength and willpower. Such an epoch has not only the right to leave its mark upon eternity in the form of great monuments, it has a duty to do so!

If someone says to me, "Why do you build more than earlier?" all I can reply is: "We build more because we are more than we were earlier." Today's Reich is different from that of yesterday. It is not just a passing fancy since it is supported not by merely a few individuals or certain interest groups. For the first time in its history, the German Reich has its foundation in the willpower and consciousness of the German Volk. Hence it well deserves that monuments now built will one day testify to its greatness even when its people have long been silent.

Furthermore, this art of building also spawns other arts, such as sculpture and painting. How true this is you can see by looking at the two wonderful sculptures exhibited here. They represent Party and Wehrmacht and no doubt they belong to the most beautiful art ever created in Germany. [—]

We are incapable of assessing what countless German artists have created with truly painstaking diligence and zealous dedication. As the speaker for the German Volk, I wish to express its gratitude to those involved since it cannot possibly thank each artist individually.

Naturally, the true recompense lies within the work itself! Through it, the artist makes his way into eternity. I have the honor of declaring this exhibition

open to the public, an exhibition that will prove to you that there are indeed many artists making their way here in our country, finding it, and continuing upon it.

On December 14, Hitler sent King George VI a congratulatory telegram on the British monarch's birthday.⁵³⁸

The next day, Hitler advantageously used the occasion of the completion of the 3,000th kilometer of the Autobahn to invite 3,000 workers from several Autobahn construction sites to Berlin. Here, the 'Theater des Volkes' was the site of an "evening of comradeship."⁵³⁹ In a good mood, the Führer bade his guests welcome with the following words: "I simply cannot be everywhere at once—so it is for the better that today you come to see me for a change!"

Subsequently, Hitler lectured the workers on the "philosophy of business." He spoke on the production and distribution of goods, citing various examples from the history of railroad and motoring. Naturally, he also made reference to the "construction of the West Wall."

This great feat had been made possible solely through the deployment of the work force of the Reich Autobahn project. To embellish this admission of the limited nature of the accessible German manpower, Hitler found flattering words for the workers assembled before him.

Perhaps it has been precisely this work which has made possible the bloodless revolution that united our German Volk in the Greater German Reich.⁵⁴⁰ This year, they [the Sudeten Germans and Austrians] can celebrate Christmas with us for the very first time.

Toward the end of his speech, Hitler maintained that the success of the year 1938 had been "a tremendous and historic joint effort," stating:

I have invited you to Berlin, as part of the German Volksgemeinschaft, to act as representatives of your hundreds of thousands of colleagues who are employed in one of the most important work projects in the Reich. I wish to thank you and all of those who cannot be here with us tonight for your work, accomplishments and above all for your loyal fusion into our great German Volksgemeinschaft.

On this day, 3,000 kilometers have been completed, thereby concluding a monumental and gigantic work. Hence you, as the representatives of this great accomplishment deserve, more than anyone else, to truly be happy for two hours tonight.

On December 16, Hitler received the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador Chen-chieh at the Chancellery in Berlin:⁵⁴¹

December 16, 1938

I welcome the fact that Your Excellency regards it as a mission of particular priority to expand upon the good and friendly relations between our countries. You may rest assured that in this enterprise you shall enjoy my full support as well as that of the Reich Government. Our mutual endeavors to strengthen cultural ties between us will, I hope, be continued successfully in the future. As you do, I believe that the differing structures of our economies provide a most favorable opportunity for us to expand our economic ties.

I thank you for the friendly note extending the best wishes of His Excellency, the President of the National Government of the Chinese Republic, for both the prosperity of Germany and myself personally. I return these best wishes in all sincerity and bid you welcome, Your Excellency.

Thereafter, the new Envoy of the Netherlands in Berlin, Jonkheer van Haersma de With, visited Hitler for the first time.⁵⁴² In his address, Hitler first lamented the tragic death of the former Dutch Envoy.⁵⁴³ He then spoke of the good neighborly relations between the two countries, stressing that the German Reich accorded great importance to maintaining these relations and to developing even closer ties in the future.

On December 17, Hitler issued a supplementary order to the directive “occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia.”⁵⁴⁴ The favorable political developments in Prague left him with little fear of any possible complications. He was convinced that the Wehrmacht would not be met by any serious military opposition and thus felt no need to prepare for such an eventuality.

On December 23, Hitler again delivered a ‘secret speech’ before a group of 7,000 construction workers, employed in the reconstruction of the Chancellery.⁵⁴⁵ Among other issues, he spoke of the “profound significance of building in National Socialist Germany” in general, and in particular its applicability to the Reich Capital. That evening, Hitler attended the first showing of the monumental film *Pour le mérite* at the Berlin Ufa Palace. The film was generally applauded, and Hitler congratulated its director Karl Ritter, maintaining that it was the “best film ever made on contemporary history.”⁵⁴⁶

On December 24, as every year, Hitler attended the Christmas celebrations of the *Alte Kämpfer* in the Löwenbräukeller in Munich. In an address, he recounted the events of the past year.⁵⁴⁷

While at the Obersalzberg on December 30, Hitler awarded the poet E.G. Kolbenheyer the *Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches* medal, on which the dedication “Dem deutschen Dichter” was engraved.

Résumé

The last day of 1938 marked the end of the triumphant years the Führer had enjoyed since his rise in 1932. Looking at this period more closely, one realizes that the structure of Hitler's successes was domestic in its entirety. He had made himself the sole and undisputed ruler in all areas of political life within Germany. In the field of economics, he had played the central role in conquering the ills of unemployment and deflation. Through this, he had secured for himself the approval of the people. He had consolidated state, industry, and Wehrmacht directly under a single supreme commander: himself.

Even his most spectacular triumphs—the reintroduction of general conscription, the establishment of a strong German Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, the occupation of the Rhineland, the Anschluss of Austria, and the acquisition of the Sudeten German territories—seem only at first glance to be of a foreign policy or military nature. In reality, they were founded upon interior conditions, too. Although other countries had an important stake in the matters, and despite Hitler's repeated breaches of international law and supranational treaties, each of these events touched essentially upon concerns of either domestic policy, the German state, or German people.

Hitler had considerably expanded the German Reich's territory without firing a single shot. Now he had achieved everything that could be attained by the art of rhetoric, the insistence upon the principles of self-determination of the peoples and international law, and finally by military pressure short of war. Even though his methods undoubtedly shocked the Western Powers, they were not yet willing to take any steps against him. After all, in 1938 Hitler did not venture beyond the boundaries of German concerns by force, and his demands pertained to territories that were largely inhabited by Germans. For this reason, international agreements could be achieved.

The dictator, however, with his insatiable lust for power and the gigantic war machinery he had built up, was not suited for peace. When would this most hazardous gambler on earth overstep the territorial marks of "Greater Germany" to pursue his expansionist

designs by force? It seemed to be only a question of time. Then the Western Powers, led by Great Britain, would react in exactly the same way they had calculated for this case and announced long before—by going to war with Germany and hereby bringing about the Third Reich's downfall.

Hitler had never understood these fundamental principles. As 1938 neared its end, he was convinced that he stood, as he himself had put it,⁵⁴⁹ “at the beginning.” For him, the years 1933 through 1938 had merely served as a preparation for his actual purpose, which he pursued in the realm of foreign policy: the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East, all the way to the Ural Mountains. He really believed that in Europe and in the world he would score precisely the same victories he had gained at home, both before and after his rise to power, with regard to the German Nationalists, leaders of military, members of international high finance and nobility, etc. In the beginning, they had looked down at him, the self-taught person who had come in from nowhere, at best wanting to use him as a “drummer” for their purposes. Meanwhile, not only the rich and powerful of Germany had learned how to show their respect to the Führer!

Hitler's master plan was now to swamp the saturated bourgeois Western Powers with his spellbinding rhetoric, while using brute force to deal with the inferior and primitive peoples of the East. Then he would show the degenerated Englishmen who was the ruler in Europe. This would be his ticket to the *Endsieg*, to world dominion—the ultimate goal which his predecessors Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and William II had striven for in vain.

Indeed the Führer surpassed them all in record time—considering the territorial dimensions concerned and the monstrous, uncompromising brutality he applied. Not only was he willing to consign the ‘hostile world’ to the flames, the demonic Pied Piper also led his most faithful adherents, his allegedly ‘beloved Volk,’ and ‘his youth’ into the abyss to sacrifice them without mercy on the altar of his megalomania. But the age-old plot of hubris that has been told since the case of Lucifer, developed inevitably and strictly according to the laws of a Greek tragedy. Now the whole of mankind was on stage, and the greatest battle ever given on this planet left about fifty-five million people dead.

As the years of Hitler's ascent drew to a close, he already lacked the sense of balance imperative to a “sleepwalker.”⁵⁵⁰ First of all, the Munich Agreement meant a failure to him: the Western Powers had

accorded him the Sudeten German territories, but they had not granted him *carte blanche* to further proceed with his aggression to the East and on the contrary bound him in contractual chains. The dictator could hardly conceal his anger—under no circumstances was he willing to bear such restrictions! In this coherence, the sequence of the further incidents appears veritably predestinated, and, while people in Germany and in the world believed that Hitler had scored his greatest triumph to date in Munich, his descent was inexorably about to begin.

From early 1939 on, Hitler completely lost control of the fast train he had undertaken to steer. All attempts to transfer his domestic tactics to the international scene, failed him miserably and ended in catastrophe. The course of events took quite a different turn from the one he had imagined and predicted. Now the tyrant was trapped by his own utopian visions, completely caught up within the world of ideas he had formed in the year 1919. In view of reality and the measures taken by the Allied Forces, his oratorical efforts could no longer be of any real import, no more than a delaying factor in the progress of the dramatic action. In order to postpone the defeat, Hitler was forced into constant improvisations to atone for reactions abroad which he had failed to foresee.

The years 1939 through 1945 would destroy the fundamental assumptions underlying all his theses. The first hypothesis to be refuted was his assertion that domestic policy corresponded to foreign policy. Following this, other hypotheses fell into disproof as well, such as the “senility” of the British, the “primitive” nature of the Bolshevik Soviets, and the influence of a “secret Jewish world government.” These revelations precluded the possibility of coercing the acquiescence of the Western Powers by taking, keeping, and slaughtering Jewish hostages—and rendered futile the attempt to vanquish the world by new German *Wunderwaffen*.

In spite of all, Hitler hoped for a miracle, refusing until the end to accept the truth. He believed with tenacity and steadfastness that his visions could yet come true, either with the help of Providence or, if necessary, by forcing Fate through willpower. At the end of the year 1940, he would phrase his central idea for the World War:

“I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally!”⁵⁵¹



XXVIII September 29, 1938

The two opponents—Hitler and Chamberlain—at the Munich Conference. In their midst: interpreter Paul Schmidt. Standing behind them: Göring.

Photo: Domarus archives



**XXIX A sullen face
in the Sudetenland**
Hitler speaking in Rumburg
on October 6, 1938.



XXX On the way to Karlsbad
Hitler standing in an open Mercedes SSK. Crowds amassing along
countryroads, hailing and thanking their Führer.

Photos: Domarus archives

APPENDIX

Hitler's Rise to Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

It is no doubt impressive how Hitler improved his lot from that of an unskilled laborer, living in a hostel for the homeless in Vienna, to his later position as head of the German Reich. Far more astonishing is his military career. The former corporal assumed supreme command of all three branches of Germany's Wehrmacht. Admirals and generals promptly complied with his orders and, for the most part, did so without voicing any objections. And all this took place within a military that jealously guarded its strict rules of conduct and proudly looked back to a three-hundred-year history.

Hitler was never a career military man. He had not even "served." Indeed, prior to the First World War in Austria, he had done his utmost to avoid making "this most noble sacrifice a man can be asked to make,"¹ as he would later call it. His participation in the First World War was his sole qualification for his later position as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. As a common front-line soldier, he had been a member of an infantry regiment of the Bavarian Reserve troops. In recognition of his military service, Hitler had been awarded the Iron Cross, Second and First Class, in addition to the Bronze Badge for injuries sustained in battle.²

Once he became Reich Chancellor, Hitler managed to instill in the admirals and generals a conviction that Fate had preordained him to realize the military's domestic and foreign policy ambitions. Moreover, he persuaded them that he possessed expertise in military affairs, supplemented by great intuitive knowledge. Hitler achieved a remarkable feat of rhetorical prowess in claiming that he had "come from the ranks of the Reichswehr and would always remain one of them,"³ a version which was indeed accepted.

Any investigation of Hitler's phenomenal success with the military has to address the objectives pursued by the military and Hitler's method of subjugating its leaders to his will. Hitler's military ambitions were primarily directed toward the realm of foreign policy. He believed

that the realization of his goals hinged upon the establishment of an army based upon a two-year compulsory conscription program. This conscription was crucial to his envisioned conquest of the East, an area he termed the “new Lebensraum.” He abhorred militia units, *Wehrverbände* and such paramilitary organizations. These military groupings did not know the “blind” obedience ingrained in regular military units, an obedience he deemed crucial to the implementation of his ambitious designs. Hence he placed little faith even in his own SA and, in 1934, he did not desist from the cold-blooded murder of its most prominent leaders, among them his closest friends.

On the other hand, Hitler regarded the generals, and in particular the members of the General Staff, as his natural allies in the pursuit of his future conquests. To him, these men were mere “blood-hounds,” straining at the leash, eagerly waiting for him to unleash them upon an opponent.⁴

In Hitler’s opinion, domestic policy served only one end: to create the prerequisites for a “policy of strength toward the outside world.” As he would freely admit at a later date,⁵ the Party and its various subdivisions were but “a means to an end” to him. At times, he would strive to please the generals far more ardently than he ever sought to accommodate his fellow Party members. There is little doubt that, had he succeeded in the conquest of the coveted new Lebensraum, he would eventually have rid himself of the Wehrmacht’s generals in order to build up an army with officers more to his liking.

In direct opposition to Hitler’s ambitions, the Reichswehr’s leaders concerned themselves largely with issues of a more domestic nature. In compliance with the Constitution of the Weimar Republic, the Reichswehr was an institution devoid of any political function. However, this neutral role applied primarily to enlisted men and officers of lesser standing. The leading figures within the Reichswehr sought to transform it into a potent instrument of political power.⁶

The entire body of the Reichswehr generals regarded the existence of the Weimar Republic as a national disgrace, a most embarrassing institution they would have to eliminate at the first opportunity which arose. The leading members of the Reichswehr openly supported the “stab-in-the-back” legend, a myth purporting that the German Army had been on the brink of victory in the autumn of 1918. As victory appeared to be within reach, traitors without conscience—aided by mysterious dark forces—robbed the army of the fruits of its victory, thus “stabbing” Germany “in the back.”

These “November Criminals,” as Hitler called them, supposedly were none other than the founding fathers of the “confounded” Republic of Weimar. The Reichswehr generals blamed them for the outcome of the Versailles Treaty, in particular with regard to its provisions concerning Germany’s military. And moreover, in the eyes of the generals, these men supposedly guilty of high treason were responsible as well for the replacement of the cherished black-white-red banner and cockade with the despised black-red-gold flag. While being allowed to retain the black-white-red “Reich Naval Ensign,” the military men were coerced into accepting a black-red-gold canton which had to be placed on the flag. This antagonism typified the bitter enmity between the leaders of the Reichswehr and the Weimar Republic.

Nevertheless, the Reichswehr generals had no intention of directly involving themselves in any coup attempt. Neither were they willing to resort to revolution or other illegal measures in pursuit of such an end. Needless to say, the generals were not opposed to taking action themselves in the event of “chaos” or the erosion of the legal authority of the government.

It is not entirely clear precisely what type of state the generals envisioned to replace the “interim government” of the Weimar Republic. There is no doubt that most of the generals would have welcomed the restitution of the monarchy and feudal privileges which had been lost to them in the aftermath of the military defeat of 1918.

A small, radical group among the generals toyed with the idea of establishing a military dictatorship. This group was composed of men and associations as disparate as General von Schleicher and the Soldatenbund. Members of the Soldatenbund had been particularly active in the early years of Hitler’s rule. Even as late as 1938, they openly advocated the transformation of the Third Reich into a military state.⁷

Another less radical formation within the army sought to achieve its goals through limited cooperation with the men in power in the Weimar Republic. The majority of this group’s members had belonged to the last Army High Command (Oberste Heeresleitung), and they had worked side by side with the Social Democrats in 1918. It was a relatively small grouping within the German army composed of men such as Groener, Heye, von Stülpnagel, and von dem Busche. In his function as Reich Minister of Defense in 1932, Groener bore the brunt of the fervent and passionate opposition of the remainder of the Reichswehr—and of Hindenburg as well.

As is evident from the above, the goals pursued by the military were of a predominantly domestic nature and aimed at destroying the Republic of Weimar so despised by the generals. A milestone in their struggle was the reintroduction of general conscription to Germany, for it entailed sweeping sociopolitical consequences and strongly affected the caste system.

In matters of foreign policy, the Reichswehr endeavored to render null and void the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. To the generals, this meant at the very least the restitution of the 1914 eastern boundaries. For this, the generals saw the maintenance of good relations with the Soviet Union and the Red Army as crucial to their effort to circumvent the provisions regarding Germany's military as established in the Versailles Treaty. For instance, German officers could be trained in the Soviet Union and instructed by members of the Red Army in the handling of weaponry prohibited in Germany.

In 1920, Poland had appropriated for itself territories along its western frontier by the use of brute force and in defiance of the recommendations put forth by the Western Powers. The land at stake was located east of the so-called Curzon Line⁸ in White Russia and the Ukraine, and hence a concerted action by Germany and the Soviet Union directed against the Polish state was within the realm of the possible. Within the Reichswehr, an assault upon Poland was at the center of debate and strategic planning. Naturally, the fact that East Prussia had been severed from the Reich played an important role in these considerations as well.

The manner in which the German-Polish border had been redrawn in accordance with the Versailles Treaty entailed further complications. Its course was a most unfortunate one that contained all the necessary ingredients to torch Europe once more. In the days of the Weimar Republic, East Prussia had consistently been administered by special military law apart from the main body of the Republic. The Versailles Treaty reinforced its special status. East Prussian fortifications were the only military installations within Germany that were permitted to maintain heavy artillery units for their defense. It came as no surprise that Hitler took advantage of the extraordinary status of the territory in an effort to gain the favor of the Reichswehr.

Contrary to Hitler, the generals of the Reichswehr had no intention of realizing their foreign policy aims through a general war. Rather, they hoped for the development of a more favorable situation abroad such as a possible armed conflict between either the Soviet Union and

the Western Powers or between the Soviet Union and Poland. The generals considered the latter scenario a distinct possibility. Like Hitler, they were taken in by the deceptive belief that the Anglo-Saxon Powers would stand aside in the event of an outbreak of open hostilities between Germany and Poland—particularly if Germany had obtained the implicit consent of the Soviet Union prior to such action.

The aims pursued by the Reichswehr and Hitler had various aspects in common. Both strove to put an end to the Weimar Republic, to reintroduce general conscription to Germany, to reunite East Prussia with the Reich, and to rid Germany of the black-red-gold flag. The ambitions of Hitler and the generals in the question of power politics were closely related as well. Both parties sought to secure for themselves a central position within the power structure of a future German state. However, these shared ambitions bore within themselves the seeds of future conflict.

Prior to 1932, the Reichswehr generals had been willing to accept Hitler as the national “drummer.” They had consented to integrate Hitler’s SA men into the Reichswehr under the pretext of establishing new militia units. Nevertheless, the generals’ disdain for the former Austrian corporal—who by no means fit into their social circles—was such that it never occurred to them to accord him any position of power, either in the military or in the political realm. They had no room for him in the new German state they coveted. In their minds, Hitler was to set the stage for a “national revival” within Germany. He was to clear the streets of Communists, rid the parliament of democratic majorities and popularize the idea of defense. After he had accomplished this, he was expected to step down and leave center stage to the generals themselves or to the royal family, so that either of these could assume power as guarantors of the “new national” law and order within Germany.

Needless to say, the generals had failed to account for the man Adolf Hitler in their calculations. They had underestimated his tactical abilities. Hitler, on the other hand, knew only too well the strength and weaknesses of the generals opposing him, and he was determined to take full and relentless advantage of their faults. Nevertheless, he had pledged himself to pursuing the legal path to attaining this goal. To this end, he relied completely upon his “national” oratory prowess instead of revolutionary overthrow: for the one time that he had employed revolutionary tactics, the venture had failed miserably. The debacle of 1923 had taught Hitler a valuable lesson he took to heart. He realized

that, as a rule, Germany's generals would always bow to the authority of a legitimate government, even if they despised it. As long as the state maintained its power in a legal fashion, the generals could never be moved to support a revolutionary movement, no matter how sympathetic they might be to its cause.⁹

Hence, in this instance, Hitler trod the legal path to power, thereby assuring himself of the generals' approval. He knew well that the use of force was simply not an option for the realization of his goals. He also realized that any armed units that might march on the Capital would succumb to the bullets of police and Reichswehr long before they ever reached Berlin. While he had drawn together armed militia units in Mecklenburg in 1932, he had merely been bluffing at that point. In fact, Hitler had never seriously contemplated instigating an armed rebellion on a national scale.¹⁰

In the course of the year 1932, Hitler had repeatedly tried to take hold of power by means of various plebiscites. None of these attempts bore any fruit, and thus Hitler resorted to the last device left at his disposal in order to gain power in a legal fashion: he would attempt to convince Reich President von Hindenburg to personally appoint him Reich Chancellor.

The main obstacle to be overcome in this undertaking was the heavy reliance of Hindenburg upon his old advisers, the majority of whom came from the ranks of the Reichswehr generals and the East Prussian Junkers. Hence, Hitler deduced that it would be most advantageous to secure for himself the support of the East Prussian officers prior to any further action. Hitler began his campaign by rallying numerous generals to his cause. For the most part, these military men had retired from active duty during the times of the German Kaiser, and their discontent with the present regime made them easy prey for Hitler's national slogans. The connections his principal negotiators, Röhm and Göring, had formed with the Reichswehr were of crucial importance to this undertaking.

Unrelated to these circumstances, Hitler enjoyed strong support in the Reich Navy in 1932. The enthusiasm of the "Christian officers at sea" was such that the "landlubber" Hitler was hailed whenever he came aboard to inspect a battleship, even if he did so merely as a civilian. On May 26, 1932, prior to a tour of the cruiser Köln, Hitler entered the following memorable dedication into its visitors' book: "With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich. Adolf Hitler."¹¹

Nonetheless, in the months prior to the take-over, the Navy did not rally to Hitler with such enthusiasm and unity simply because of his national persuasion and his solemn pledges to blow the dust off the “violated black-white-red cockade of the Old Army and Navy.” The motives behind the Navy’s enthusiasm for Hitler were of a psychological nature as well. The sailors had suffered greatly from a sense of national “shame” that had been attached to them ever since the events in November 1918. In the eyes of nationalists both within the Reichswehr and outside of it, the Navy had been the pivotal cause of collapse since it was the first branch of the Armed Forces to succumb to signs of demoralization that fateful month. Pointing accusingly to the mutiny on ships of the Navy at the time, the conviction spread that the German Navy as a whole had failed its country at the end of the War. The Navy officers had supposedly confined their high-seas fleet to harbor when they should have been leading their men to battle. The ensuing inactivity—the most disgraceful condition for any soldier—had led the “blue boys” astray and caused them to commit such deplorable acts as the 1918 revolts in Kiel and Wilhelmshaven.

Although unsubstantiated,¹² this story’s popularity rivaled that of the “stab-in-the-back” myth in nationalist circles. As a result, the Navy’s men felt a vague feeling of guilt. Army officers and other dignitaries of national renown, who felt they had no share in this disgrace, looked upon the Navy with condescending pity.

Given this background, the Navy’s men felt Hitler to be the awaited Messiah who would deliver them of their guilt and restore the honor of the Navy. While Hitler was fond of speaking out against the “November Criminals,” not once did he reproach the seamen for their actions. To the contrary, whenever appearing before an audience composed of naval officers, Hitler made certain to pay the Navy his respects. Indeed, Hitler appears to have been completely earnest on this subject for he greatly admired the Navy’s moral code of conduct. Hitler was enormously impressed by the Navy’s pledge to “fight unto one’s last breath,” even in a hopeless situation. He also doted on the seamen’s maxim rather to go down with their ship than ever to surrender to the enemy. This fascination with the Navy’s unwritten code of conduct stayed with Hitler to the last. In his political testament of April 29, 1945, he expressed great disappointment with the officers of the Army, but lauded the Navy, sparing it from his wrath.¹³

Prior to his rise to power, Hitler feared the majority of the Reichswehr generals less than he did those officers who wished to pursue

paths different from his own. The majority of generals were traditionalist in outlook and monarchist at heart. A small number of officers, however, were not categorically opposed to cooperation with the parties of the Weimar Republic. Others continued to dream of the establishment of a military dictatorship.

In 1932, Hitler found himself faced by two proponents of these divergent points of view: General Groener, Reich Minister of Defense and of the Interior and member of the Brüning cabinet; and General von Schleicher, Chief of the Ministerial Office. Hitler was determined to oust Groener and, if at all possible, to remove Schleicher from office in the wake of Groener's dismissal. In the case of Groener, a pretext for action presented itself rather quickly.

As mentioned earlier, Hitler greatly valued the maintenance of good relations with the East Prussian Reichswehr. As early as 1931, he had placed local SA units at the disposal of the Army there. After the April 13, 1932, election reinstating Hindenburg in office one last time, Brüning and Groener forced a measure through the cabinet that banned both the SA and SS. However, neither of these two officials were prepared for the strong reaction of the Reichswehr to this move.

General Groener proved remarkably short-sighted in his assessment of the situation. His own State Secretary, General von Schleicher, conspired to remove him from office. Within a few days after the measure had passed cabinet, Hindenburg had been persuaded that a decree banning the SA was detrimental to the Reichswehr and would considerably weaken it. Groener was forced to resign as Minister of Defense on May 13, 1932. His fall signaled the impending fate of Brüning who resigned on May 30. Schleicher took over Groener's post as Reich Minister of Defense in the von Papen cabinet, and the decree banning the SA was rescinded. Nevertheless, despite frequent consultations with each other, Schleicher remained Hitler's declared enemy.

Once the returns of the July 31 election revealed that Hitler could not secure more than 37 percent of the popular vote, Schleicher determined to summarily deal with Hitler by assigning him the post of Vice Chancellor, a position of hardly any significance. When Hitler rebuffed this offer, Reich President Hindenburg summoned him on August 13 and accused him of being incapable of forming a government on his own.

Hitler pledged to himself to seek bloody revenge on Schleicher for having trapped him in so embarrassing a situation. Prior to any further action, however, Hitler knew he had to come to terms with the "Cabinet

of Barons.” For this purpose, he required a strong and effective “nationalist” slogan. He came upon one quickly in the form of five death warrants. Dated August 22, 1932, these warrants were the outcome of an extraordinary trial at Beuthen conducted by the von Papen government. The verdict was a death sentence for five SA men guilty of having murdered a Polish guerilla in Potempa. Swiftly Hitler seized the opportunity and branded the von Papen cabinet as the “hangman of national freedom fighters for the German Volk.” Unrelated to this, Hitler shocked Germany once more by announcing National Socialist cooperation with the Communists in the Berlin transportation workers’ strike. This move sought to terrify right-wing circles bringing to mind the possibility of a Red-Brown alliance.

Although Hitler had lost two million votes in the Reichstag election of November 6, the NSDAP still remained the strongest party. von Papen’s cabinet stood no chance of being tolerated by such a parliament, and thus it was forced to step down. Now Hindenburg had to intervene in person. He summoned Hitler to his office several times. As early as November 1932, Hindenburg indicated willingness to entrust a cabinet to Hitler as long as the latter respected the parliamentary principles it was based upon.

At this point, however, Hitler had little desire of assuming such a responsibility. Rather, he intended to deal with his most dangerous opponent, General von Schleicher, prior to any further move. Hitler assumed that Schleicher would lose greatly in popularity as the “Winter Chancellor” and that he would isolate himself within the Reichswehr in the process. Although undoubtedly without intention, Schleicher indeed presented Hitler with the first opportunity to strike. He had commissioned the head of his department, Lieutenant Colonel Eugen Ott, to call on Hitler. For three hours, Hitler prevailed upon the officer, persuasively arguing that the appointment of Schleicher to the post of Chancellor brought with it far more dangers than the Reichswehr had realized.

On December 4, Hitler planted the next land-mine in Schleicher’s path. This time the conspiracy against Schleicher was to take place within the inner circles of the East Prussian Reichswehr. This body was headed by General Werner von Blomberg in his capacity as Commander of the Wehrkreis and by Colonel Walter von Reichenau who served as Chief of Staff. The latter received a voluminous carefully composed letter¹⁴ in which Hitler pointed out that he held “General von Schleicher’s present cabinet to be particularly unfortunate because it cannot solve

this problem of the inner, spiritual rearmament of the nation.” Hitler desired to “overcome Marxism, to establish a new unity of spirit and will in the Volk and a universal spiritual, moral and ethical armament of the nation.” He expressed the aim of bringing about “technical rearmament, the organizational mobilization of the power of the Volk (*Volkskraft*) for the purpose of national defense, and the attainment of a legal recognition by the rest of the world of the new situation which has already been brought about.” As Hitler put it: “East Prussia can only be saved if Germany is saved. It is clear that Schleicher’s cabinet will once more delay and impede this one and only possible deliverance” [Hitler’s accession to power].

On December 6, the newly elected Reichstag met for its first session. Hitler had seen to having one of his party members appointed Chairman by seniority, the eighty-two-year-old General Karl von Litzmann, popularly known as the “Lion of Brzeziny,” an ardent admirer of the Führer. Litzmann’s opening address contained a long list of accusations aimed at Hindenburg, whom he alleged of having vested his trust in a certain Hermann Müller, a Brüning, or a von Papen as Reich Chancellors, but had to this date declined to call upon Hitler.

Subsequently, Göring, who had distinguished himself as a Pour-le-mérite-award recipient and as Hitler’s “best man,” was elected President of the Reichstag with the help of the votes cast by the Center Party and the Bavarian People’s Party. In his address, Göring declared that the National Socialists profoundly regretted that “the appointment of the Reich Minister of Defense as Chancellor had made the Reichswehr into a bone of political contention.”

The stage was set. Hitler had only to stand by and observe the further development of the situation up to the certain downfall of Schleicher. Moreover, he could prepare the setting for his Presidential Cabinet by either directly influencing the advisers of Hindenburg himself or by indirectly proceeding through the offices of his military experts Göring and Röhm. Two conferences with von Papen, held on January 4 and 18, were crucial to this drive, as were the later meetings with Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg, the Reich President’s nephew, and State Secretary Otto Meissner on January 22. By January 28, Schleicher was forced to resign, since Hindenburg had not accorded him the right to dissolve the Reichstag. The next day, Göring assured Meissner in a most innocent manner that the National Socialists would not oppose the reinstatement of the monarchy, provided that two thirds of the Volk expressed this desire.

Rumors that Schleicher intended to stage a putsch and that the Potsdam garrison would march on Wilhelmstrasse hastened the constitution of a new government. Because of the tense and unstable situation, the new Reich Minister of Defense was sworn into office as a precautionary measure. It is revealing to note that the position was to be occupied by the former Commander of the Wehrkreis of East Prussia, General Werner von Blomberg. The aforementioned Colonel von Reichenau, previously Chief of Staff of the division deployed in East Prussia, was assigned the post of Chief of the Ministerial Office.

The East Prussian landowner and Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, gave his blessings to the new Presidential Chancellor Adolf Hitler on January 30, 1933. In doing so, he accorded Hitler his complete trust from that day onward. The Reich President yielded to all the Chancellor's demands and even granted the dissolution of the Reichstag, a measure he had earlier denied Schleicher. Having become Chancellor, Hitler immediately seized the opportunity to gain the favor of the military. He strove to win over to his cause those generals who had not yet joined the ranks and files of his more ardent admirers. Already on February 3, Hitler spoke before the men in command of the army and navy and expounded his principles to them.¹⁵ As he would do repeatedly throughout the years to come, Hitler expressed his desire that the army remain the sole armed force within Germany. He insisted that there would not be any absorption of party formations into the military, as in the prototype of Fascist militia units. He promoted the idea of instilling a will to defense in the general populace by all possible means while the twin evils of Marxism and pacifism were eradicated.

Hitler explained the motivation behind his struggle to be that of reversing the Treaty of Versailles and the restrictions it had imposed upon Germany's military. He claimed that he would invest in the military all and everything he could manage to save. Since 1918, no head of government had proposed such an enticing program to the generals. Not surprisingly, the generals rejoiced at the prospect of additional funding and suppressed any and all doubts they might still have entertained. In the course of the following years, Hitler liberally distributed promotions, awards, and remuneration among the generals. They became some of his most faithful and loyal followers. Ignoring vulgar insults, unjustified accusations and headmaster-like admonitions, the generals bore the reign of the former corporal with patience and without much resistance.

On March 12, 1933, the customary commemoration of the dead of the First World War took place, at the time still termed *Volkstrauertag* (Day of National Mourning). Hitler had decided not only to rename the holiday, calling it the *Heldengedenktage* (Heroes' Memorial Day) from 1934 on, but also customarily took advantage of the occasion to announce additional measures to strengthen the armed forces.¹⁶ He did this nearly every year prior to the Second World War, staging impressive military parades to give his announcements the proper setting.

March 12, 1933, was the first in a series of similar annual celebrations. Hitler marked the day by proclaiming that both the black-white-red banner and the swastika flag would serve as the official standards of the Reich. in spite of the fact that this measure was in blatant defiance of the Weimar Constitution, both Hitler and Hindenburg signed their names to it, and the Wehrmacht rejoiced at the return of its beloved black-white-red ensign.

March 21, 1933, "Potsdam Day," was to signify the union of old imperial Germany and its young "nationalist" counterpart, personified by Hindenburg and Hitler respectively. The multitude of generals of the Old Army and members of the German high nobility assembled on this occasion created a grandiose backdrop for the Reichswehr units, SS and SA men, members of the Stahlhelm, and various other national military associations as they marched past the rostrum. Judging by outward appearances alone, an unwitting member of the audience that day might have thought that the restoration of monarchy and the feudal state was imminent.

Regardless of all princes, barons, and generals present at Potsdam, the future of Germany would be determined by one man alone—Adolf Hitler. To him, these remnants of the feudal system were no more than pawns in a game, pawns he knew how to handle and how to make into willful instruments for his designs,

As a first step toward this end, it was imperative for Hitler to sever all of Germany's international ties and, above all, to prepare for Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. He knew that he would have to bring about such a measure prior to the implementation of equality of rights in military affairs which the League of Nations had determined to grant Germany in its December 11, 1932, session.

With these considerations in mind, Hitler delivered his first "peace speech" on May 17, 1933—one of the many such addresses that were to follow. It was the primary purpose of this speech to preclude any

contractual settlement of these matters by placing exorbitant demands upon the League, demands it could not possibly meet.

In the meantime, the number of Reichswehr generals who admired Hitler without reservation had grown steadily, but there still were several important members of the military who were ill at ease with the Führer. General Freiherr von Fritsch, the new Chief of Army Command, figured most prominently among these. For Hitler, it had become increasingly clear that he needed to plant a more reliable man, a Party member, amongst the top-ranking army men—and he chose Göring for the task.

In order to transform this former Air Force captain into a general of the Reichswehr, Hitler required Hindenburg's connivance. He arranged for Göring to present Hindenburg with a tax-exempt country estate, renamed "Hindenburg Neudeck," at a celebration in Tannenberg on August 27, 1933. In addition, Hindenburg received the Prussian domain Langenau and the Preussenwald woods. He demonstrated his appreciation for these gifts by promoting Göring, the former captain, to the rank of infantry general—a process without doubt unparalleled in the history of the Prussian-German army. Later, at the September "Reich Party Congress of Victory," Hitler accompanied the new Reichswehr general at the maneuvers of the Fifth Reichswehr division stationed in Ulm instead of his usual routine of conducting "Wehrmacht Day."

Hitler announced Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations on October 14, 1933. To his great astonishment, neither Great Britain nor France undertook any steps militarily to counter his move. In his eyes, this lack of resolution on their part provided ample proof of their internal weakness and inferiority.

At the same time, he secured Hindenburg's approval for new elections to the Reichstag. This meant that the legislature would be composed exclusively of National Socialists in the future. Hindenburg had expressed concern with regard to this topic, fearing for the preservation of his rights as Reich President within the framework of such a newly constituted Reichstag.

In order to dispel Hindenburg's reservations, Hitler assured him that he did not intend to infringe upon the Reich President's privileges. In an October 14 press release, Hitler instructed the Reichswehr not to assign guards of honor to him on official occasions, "for he desires that this high military honor be reserved for the Reich President and the high military officers."¹⁷

On November 8 and November 9, 1933, the festivities in commemoration of the 1923 Putsch afforded Hitler the opportunity to regain the favor of the armed forces. Hitler proclaimed his commitment to both Reichswehr and Land Police. He also took it upon himself to swear in recruits for both his personal *Leibstandarte*, members of which were allowed to carry arms from March 17 onward, and the recruits for Göring's and Röhm's equally armed *Stabswachen* (staff guards).

Clearly, Hitler's insistence that the Wehrmacht constituted "the sole bearer of arms" in Germany was not entirely true. What he neglected to mention, furthermore, was the fact that the number of recruits for Göring's police units had constantly been on the rise.¹⁸

In his January 30, 1934, address before the Reichstag, Hitler made clear his opposition to the reinstatement of monarchy in Germany. Shortly thereafter, on February 3, he dissolved all monarchist clubs and associations. On the occasion of the Heldengedenktag, following a proposal by Blomberg, Hindenburg bestowed the sovereign symbol of the Party, eagle with swastika, upon all members of the Reichswehr, despite the fact that it was not yet accepted as the national emblem. Members of the armed forces would henceforth bear Hitler's sign on tunic, cap, and steel helmet. Battleships suffered a similar fate. Apparently, Hindenburg, Blomberg and the entire Reichswehr had entered into a competition with Party organizations to see which of them could implement the National Socialist Revolution the speediest.

Nonetheless, Hitler was far from satisfied. It was the question of Hindenburg's succession which was foremost on his mind during those days. Undoubtedly, Hitler himself intended to ultimately assume the post of Reich President. Unlike the late Reich President Ebert, Hitler had little desire to function as the commander of the military in name only. He coveted both titular and actual control over the Reichswehr generals, much like the control Hindenburg had enjoyed.

Still Hitler doubted whether the generals would truly accept him as their superior: he decided to improve his image by proving his "manly" courage in a rather peculiar manner. He attempted to gain the generals' favor by having a number of top-ranking SA men, some of whom had been personal friends for years, murdered in cold blood. In the course of time, irreconcilable differences between Reichswehr and the SA had become apparent. These differences in opinion threatened to overshadow the earlier successful cooperation between both groups, as in East Prussia.

It is highly probable that the true issue at stake was the *Gleichschaltung* of party and state, which strongly affected all realms of public life at the time and particularly the SA. The SA Standarten had, with Hitler's full approval, appropriated for themselves the numbers of old imperial garrison regiments. The Reichswehr generals most feared the application of the *Gleichschaltung* process to the top echelons of Reichswehr and SA. Röhm, the SA Chief of Staff, sought to promote this development in the hope of personal advancement. After all, if Göring, a former Captain, could rise to the post of Reichswehr General of the infantry, then Röhm, a retired Captain and Lieutenant Colonel in Bolivia, could justifiably be promoted equally.

Although Hitler actively pursued the process of *Gleichschaltung* of party and state, he stood firmly opposed to it insofar as the SA was concerned. He strongly believed that the establishment of an army based upon two years of compulsory military service was crucial to his plans for conquest to the East. Hence, he was willing to defer to the generals. While neither Röhm nor any of the other SA leaders so much as contemplated mutiny Hitler nonetheless had the most prominent among them arrested for "attempted treason" on June 30, 1934. For this, he chose those SA men whose past had been tainted by their involvement in the Freikorps movement. These men were then summarily shot without the benefit of a public trial.

The Reichswehr aided and abetted Hitler in the preparation for these assassinations both in a material and in a spiritual sense. As early as June 28, the Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, put the armed forces on alert. At the same time, Blomberg published an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, applauding the Führer and claiming that "the Wehrmacht stands by the leadership of the State in discipline and loyalty" and by "the Führer of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, who once came from our ranks and will always remain one of us."¹⁹

On June 28 as well, the Chief of the Ministerial Office, General von Reichenau, whose recent promotion had advanced him to the rank of Major General, had Röhm expelled from the German Officers' League. This action was tantamount to declaring Röhm an outlaw to be hunted down at will. By July 1, Berlin guards goosestepped by the Chancellery, hailing Hitler for the ominous murder of the SA leaders.²⁰ The Reichswehr stood by silently, tolerating the events in return for the convenient elimination of two of its most unpopular generals—former Minister of Defense, General von Schleicher, and his State Secretary, Major General von Bredow.

In the aftermath of these events, Hitler no longer needed to fear that control of the military might slip from his hands following the imminent death of Hindenburg. Indeed, he eagerly assumed control and charged on with his plans for the military even prior to Hindenburg's demise. In clear defiance of the Constitution, Hitler arranged for the cabinet to appoint him successor to the Reich President the day before Hindenburg finally passed away. On August 2, the very day Hindenburg died, Hitler hurriedly altered the loyalty oath to be taken by all incumbent soldiers to read, "to render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler."

On August 6, the Reichstag met to mourn the demise of Hindenburg. Immediately after its session, the Reichswehr paraded by its new Commander in Chief (Oberbefehlshaber) for the first time. The parade provided a curious illustration of what precisely Hitler had neglected to mention when he had earlier promised the generals that the army would remain "the sole bearer of arms in the nation." Armed contingents of the Land Police, the SS Leibstandarte, and the Feldjägerkorps strode in step behind the Reichswehr units.

Naturally, such displays were not in the least to the taste of the generals. At times, it appeared as though a sharp controversy would arise between Reichswehr and SS. However, an emotional appeal by Hitler at the "Rally of German Leadership" in Berlin on January 3, 1935, dispelled such notions. Moreover, as mediator between the front lines, Göring read a declaration of loyalty to the Führer, emphasizing that he spoke in his capacity as "a high-ranking National Socialist leader and at the same time as a Reichswehr General and a Member of the Reich Cabinet."

Hitler announced the reintroduction of general conscription to Germany on the 1935 Heldengedenktag. While the generals were exceedingly well pleased by this measure, the general public in Germany was shocked and deeply disturbed by the possible consequences of this action. Perhaps sensing this disquiet, Hitler made ample use of the services of old Field Marshal von Mackensen who made several token appearances at military ceremonies. Hitler used Mackensen's presence to keep his backside free so that he could proceed with his plans in spite of Hindenburg's demise. While Hitler displayed great skill in dealing with military men in general, the extent to which Mackensen came under his spell was truly astonishing. On July 31, 1935, Mackensen even terminated his honorary membership in the Stahlhelm, thereby facilitating Hitler's dissolution of the front-line soldiers' association. As a sign of appreciation for the services rendered by

Mackensen, Hitler presented the Marshal with the ancestral estate Prussow on October 22.²¹ Shortly thereafter, on November 7, 1935, the Stahlhelm ceased to exist.

At the September 16 “Reich Party Congress of Honor,” the elite of Germany’s generals, men such as Blomberg, Fritsch, Raeder, and Göring, marched up in front of Hitler as though they were mere recruits. At the same Party Congress, Hitler declared the swastika flag the exclusive official Reich banner. On November 7, 1935, he introduced the flag with the swastika emblem as the Reich Naval Ensign to the Wehrmacht and abolished the old black-white-red flag.

Parallel to these developments, General von Reichenau was assigned to head the Seventh Army Corps in Munich. In his capacity as Chief of the Ministerial Office in the renamed Ministry of War, Reichenau was replaced by Major General Keitel, who assumed his post on October 1, 1935.

On March 7, the 1936 Heldengedenktag, Hitler sent troops to occupy the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland, thereby extending the military sovereignty of the Reich to encompass this area as well. On March 16, he introduced *Truppenfabnen* to the Wehrmacht. On April 20, Hitler appointed the first Field Marshal of his career, his Reich Minister of War, General von Blomberg. In the course of the following years, Hitler accorded this title to twenty-eight members of his staff.

In July of 1936, Hitler secretly instigated the Third Reich’s entanglement in the Spanish Civil War. On August 24, he decreed the extension of the compulsory conscription from one year to two years of military service. At the Reich Party Congress that year, Hitler had the audacity to claim that this two-year compulsory service would prove so beneficial to the young recruits that it would add ten years to their life expectancy.²²

The year 1937 passed much like the quiet before the storm. Not even the customary celebration of the Heldengedenktag was accompanied by any spectacular event connected to the military—as was usually the case. The bombing of the Spanish harbor Almería on May 31 was the only event worthy of note that year. Hitler had ordered the expeditionary force’s venture as a reprisal for the shelling of the pocket battleship *Deutschland* while in Spanish coastal waters.

Behind the scenes, Hitler was busily preparing for his conquest of the East. On November 5, 1937, Hitler astonished his generals by revealing to them his intention of launching attacks upon Czechoslovakia and Austria in the near future. To Hitler’s great displeasure, Blomberg

and Fritsch did not in the least rejoice at such prospects. Instead, they ventured to voice misgivings over the Führer's military analysis of the situation and, in particular, they disputed his a priori assumption that the Western Powers would remain neutral and indifferent to a German move of such importance.

Hitler realized that, given their views on this topic, both Blomberg and Fritsch might become costly liabilities in the event of a war. Hence, he decided to rid himself of the two generals as soon as possible. This did not prove particularly difficult. Hitler succeeded in luring Blomberg into a marriage that provoked the Minister's downfall, and Fritsch was discredited on account of alleged homosexuality. On February 4, 1938, Hitler made official the removal of both military men from office. He himself took over the Reich Ministry of War and thereby secured for himself an unchallenged position as Supreme Commander (Oberster Befehlshaber) of the Wehrmacht²³

Artillery General Keitel assumed Hitler's earlier responsibilities in presiding over the High Command. Hitler appointed Artillery General von Brauchitsch the new Commander in Chief of the Army.²⁴ By promoting Göring to the rank of Field Marshal, Hitler made him the highest ranking officer on active duty with the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, Hitler reassigned forty-six leading military men to various new command posts, while retiring fourteen others.

On March 10, Hitler issued the first mobilization order of his career. He called up several Bavarian Military Districts, judging their manpower sufficient for the invasion of Austria. On the same day, Hitler effected the dissolution of the Soldatenbund, the last vestige of reactionary generals. Two days later, Hitler slipped into his new role as Warlord. As an outward sign of this change, Hitler wore the Wehrmacht's cockade in the center of a wreath of the oakleaf cluster on his cap. After the Austrian venture had proven a complete success, Hitler had himself celebrated as a "victorious warlord" on the front pages of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. On March 13, the day of the Heldengedenktage festivities, Austria was officially incorporated into the German Reich.

On May 28, Hitler gave orders pertaining to "Case Green" in preparation for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The date was set for October 2, 1938. At the same time, Hitler issued instructions for the construction of a new line of fortification along the Reich's western border, the West Wall. By August, it had become increasingly clear that Hitler intended to proceed as planned with the assault upon Czechoslovakia, in spite of strong opposition by the generals.

Hitler was greatly annoyed, however, by the fact that the Munich Conference had ruined his plans for a forced entry into Czechoslovakia. An agreement was signed at the September 29 conference provided for the ceding of the Sudeten German territories to the Reich and thus robbed him of his pretext for invasion.

General von Brauchitsch expressed his disappointment in the following terms: "Our weapons were not allowed to speak."²⁵ Hitler vowed to make up shortly for the defeat he deemed himself to have suffered at Munich. On October 9, he made public his plans for the construction of further fortified structures in the vicinity of Aachen and Saarbrücken. And on October 21, despite solemn pledges to the contrary, Hitler instructed his generals to proceed with preparations for "the elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia."

In light of the remarkably short time period in which Hitler rose to his position as the unchallenged Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, one has to grant him considerable political cunning. Hitler followed the path of legality to power, an approach greatly cherished by the Wehrmacht generals. As he fought them with their own weapons, he secured victory for himself in the end. The military's leaders bowed to his command even if his orders blatantly violated the Constitution or obviously defied international law. No general ever refused to obey the Führer in public.

Among the three thousand generals—of whom a good number were opposed to Hitler's handling of military matters—only one, Colonel General Beck, had the courage to face up to the consequences of his conviction. Because his conscience did not allow him to further support Hitler's policies, Beck voluntarily handed in his resignation as Chief of the General Staff, and he was allowed to do so without suffering any retribution on the part of Hitler.

The Year 1935

Notes

1. See above, p. 170, speech of October 16, 1932.
2. See above, p. 512.
3. See below, June 26, 1935 and note 153.
4. Published in VB, No. 2, January 2, 1935.
5. It was Hitler's habit to spend New Year's Eve and New Year's Day on the Obersalzberg, and he was disgruntled over this January 1 meeting. In 1935 he abided by the scheduled itinerary, but from 1936 on he postponed the reception until around January 10. It was the dictator's wish that the year should be punctuated by a series of holidays, not unlike the practice of the Catholic Church, and the party calendar foresaw the following special holidays: January 1 (New Year's Day), January 15 (in commemoration of the Landtag election in Lippe-Detmold in 1933), January 30 (day of the *Machtergreifung* in 1933), February 24 (announcement of the party program in 1920), Misericordia Domini in March (Heroes' Memorial Day), April 20 (Hitler's birthday), and May 1 (National Holiday of the German Volk). No special holidays were scheduled for June, July and August because these were harvest/vacation months, but the string resumed in the fall: within the first half of September (Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg), the Sunday following Michaelmas in September or October (*Erntedankfest*), and November 8/9 (in memory of the Putsch of 1923 and those who had died for the Movement).
6. Published in VB, No. 2, January 2, 1935.
7. At that, time, the Wehrmacht was frequently referred to as the "school of the nation."
8. The rally was convened on January 2, 1935, with only twenty-four hours' notice. Göring had even ordered an aerial barrage for Berlin and special anti-aircraft protection during the rally (NSK report, January 4, 1935).
9. DNB text, January 3, 1935; VB, No. 4, January 4, 1935.
10. Göring, taking on the responsibilities of "host," greeted the participants when the rally commenced. The State Opera House (Berlin, Unter den Linden) belonged to the Land of Prussia, and Göring was acting in his capacity as Prussian Minister-President.
11. For more details on the Soldatenbund, see below, 1937, note 1.
12. On February 4, 1938, Hitler dismissed Generals Blomberg and Fritsch and appointed Göring Field Marshal, personally taking over supreme command of the Wehrmacht and becoming head of the Reich Ministry of War. From this point onwards, the conflict between the Party and the Wehrmacht played only a secondary role.
13. Report in VB, No. 5, January 5, 1935.
14. Report in VB, No. 12, January 12, 1935.
15. DNB text, January 15, 1935.

16. Published in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1935.
17. Published in VB, No. 17, January 17, 1935.
18. Published in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1935. In No. 21 of January 21, 1935, the VB published Ward Price's comments on this interview: "I am convinced of Adolf Hitler's love of peace.—Never before had I seen Adolf Hitler as youthful and invigorated as last Friday [the interview was held on Thursday, January 17, 1935]. I was constantly amazed by the keen concentration of his reasoning when he spoke on events in world politics."
19. The reference here is made to Hitler's "Peace Speech" before the Reichstag on May 17, 1933. See above, *ibid.*
20. Report in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1935.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Published in VB, No. 26, January 26, 1935.
23. A structuring in Reich Gaus, parallel to the Gau divisions of the NSDAP, was effected only in Austria, the Sudetenland, Danzig, West Prussia, and Posen (or Wartheland), i.e. in newly acquired territories.
24. DNB report, January 26, 1935. A Foreign Office record of the talk with Lord Allen of Hurtwood on January 25, 1935 can be found in Friedrich Berger, *Deutschland-England 1933-1939, Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Instituts für ausenpolitische Forschung*, Vol. VII (Essen, 1943), pp. 47 ff.
25. Report in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1935.
26. Published in VB, *ibid.*
27. RGl. 1935, 1, pp. 494–68.
28. Report in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1935. Friedrich Grimm, born 1888, defense attorney in numerous *Rubrikampf* cases (resistance against the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923) and trials before the Feme.
29. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1935.
30. *Ibid.*—Here Hitler is alluding to the dictatorial government of Minister-President António de Oliveira Salazar.
31. Published in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1935.
32. Reports in VB, Nos. 35 to 37, February 4 to 6, 1935.
33. VB, No. 38, February 7, 1935. Official bulletin.
34. Published in VB, No. 39, February 8, 1935.
35. Published in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1935. This speech is quite typical for Hitler's attitude. Streicher could take personal and moral liberties under Hitler, because he "did not waver for a second" and "stood behind him unerringly in every situation." Of those sentenced to death in Nuremberg in 1946, Streicher alone maintained his "undying" devotion to Hitler to the bitter end, raving like a lunatic all the way to the gallows.
36. Report in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1935. The designer to whom Hitler refers was Dr. Ferdinand Porsche. See also Paul Kluge, "Hitler und das Volkswagenprojekt," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 341 ff.

37. See above, January 17, 1935.
38. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, February 16, 1935.
39. Published in VB, No. 50, February 19, 1935.
40. Report in VB, No. 53, February 22, 1935.
41. DNB report, February 22, 1935.
42. Published in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1935.
43. It was Hitler's perpetual concern that "one of the nameless" might dethrone him: the reason underlying the great precautions he took to ensure that no political power—however marginal—might be wielded without his approval and constant supervision.
44. That these solemn declarations were completely without merit is best illustrated by Hitler's actions on March 15, 1939 when, in one fell swoop, he unilaterally breached both the Munich Agreement and the Anglo-German declaration of mutual consultations of September 30, 1938, he himself had signed.
45. Report in VB, No. 59, February 28, 1935.
46. Report in VB, No. 63, March 4, 1935.
47. Report in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1935.
48. Hitler's rallies were frequently favored with sunshine and gave rise to the popular epithet *Hitlerwetter*, in a certain sense a sequel to the sunny weather referred to under the regime of William II as *Kaiserwetter*. If rain, gales, or thunderstorms happened to blight the sky, either some evil power was alleged to be at work (as, for instance, in the harsh winters of 1939–1942) or Providence was providing the German people with an opportunity to prove their resilience.
49. Published in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1935.
50. See above, speech of August 27, 1933.
51. See above, speech of August 26, 1934.
52. The type of "work" Hitler had in mind was to be revealed two weeks later: on March 16, 1935, general conscription was reintroduced in Germany.
53. Here several minutes of resounding applause interrupted the speech.
54. Hitler spoke only once more at a rally in Saarbrücken. On October 9, 1938, shortly after the Munich Agreement, he delivered the notorious speech in which he inveighed against Great Britain and announced new military action on Germany's western border; see below, *ibid*.
55. 1 Cor. 13, 2 ("Faith moves mountains")—yet another instance of Hitler's penchant for equating the Christian faith in God with faith in himself and his politics.
56. This phrase was a harbinger of the soon-to-be-accomplished fact of the swastika banner being made the sole *Reichsflagge* (national flag).
57. Here Hitler gave vent to his resentment that "others," i.e. international bodies, had settled the question of the Saar and prevented him from taking independent action.
58. DNB report, March 2, 1935. An eighth deputy was later appointed.
59. DNB report, March 4, 1935.
60. Published in VB, No. 65, March 6, 1935.

61. Hans Schemm, a teacher by profession; Gauleiter in Upper Franconia in 1925, founder of the National Socialist Teachers' League; from April 13, 1933, Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture.
62. Published in the magazine of the National Socialist Teachers' League in 1935. Taken from the author's notes.
63. Published in VB, No. 66, March 7, 1935.
64. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1935.
65. Article 198 of the Treaty of Versailles read: "Germany may not maintain a military air force on land or at sea as a part of its armed forces." (RGBL. 1919, I, p. 957).
66. See above, p. 364.
67. According to Bullock, p. 332; cf. also Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 283.
68. The Luftwaffe, which had been masquerading under the guise of the German Air Sports Association (DLV), wore blue "civilian" uniforms without military insignias; a few days' time was needed to attach the epaulettes and to issue helmets, rifles, etc. in preparation for March 16 and 17, 1935.
69. Joachim von Ribbentrop, born 1893 in Wesel, hanged 1946 in Nuremberg, acquired his mark of nobility—the "von" in his name—by means of adoption.
70. DNB report, March 10, 1935.
71. This White Paper contained Great Britain's plans for increased armaments. The grounds cited were Germany's rearmament (despite the provisions of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles). See Bullock, p. 332; cf. also Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 283.
72. Published in VB, No. 74, March 15, 1935.
73. The SA sports badge (also called the SA military badge) was a bronzed-tinted badge which was pinned to the left side of the chest as were the Reich sports badge and the Iron Cross 1st Class. It depicted a sword and swastika with oak wreath. The badge was first awarded as early as November 28, 1933, but was confined to members of the SA. On March 18, 1937, a further decree was issued requiring repeated achievement tests for the SA "into old age."—The "former sections" denoted not only the SS but also the NSKK, which had become independent in the meantime, and several other organizations.
74. Bullock, p. 333. Apparently Bullock took the official DNB bulletin of March 16, 1935 at face value. It read: "The same enthusiasm [as in the Reich Cabinet] reigns in the German Volk," but was issued simultaneously with Hitler's proclamation, i.e. at a point in time at which no public reaction could possibly have been available.
75. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1935.
76. According to Bullock, p. 333, the French had extended military service to two years because of a shortage of youth born in the war years 1914–1918.
77. Published in VB, special issue, March 16, 1935.
78. Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937), British Prime Minister in 1924 and from 1931 to 1935.

79. *The Times*, March 12, 1935; quoted from Baynes, p. 1208.—Stanley Baldwin, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley (1867–1947), British Prime Minister in 1923, from 1924 to 1929, and from 1935 to 1937.
80. Hitler is referring here to the police troops; he chose the odd and linguistically incorrect expression *Truppen-Polizeien* in order to disguise, even at this point, the military character of these divisions which had been previously denied.
81. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1935.
82. DNB text, March 18, 1935. Published in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1935.
83. For Hitler's attitude toward England, see above, pp. 53 ff.
84. Reports on Hitler's stops in Augsburg, Stuttgart, and Wiesbaden in VB, Nos. 79 to 82, March 20 to 23, 1935.
85. DNB text, March 26, 1935.
86. By the will which was to "pervade into the bottommost organs" Hitler naturally meant his own.
87. DNB report, March 24, 1935. In August 1914, Fürst had taken part in the Bavarian King's Own Regiment's attack on the French border town of Badonviller (Badenweiler) and afterwards composed a march which was first performed at the market place in Peronne. It was later called the Badenweiler March (Army Music March No. 256) and was allowed to be played in the Third Reich only when Hitler was present.
88. See below, June 18, 1935.
89. For the contents of these talks, see Schmidt, pp. 294 ff. and *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945* (London/Washington 1949 ff.), Series C (1933–1937), Volume III, no. 555, pp. 1043 ff. (hereafter referred to as DGFP).
90. Report in VB, No. 88, March 29, 1935. The fighter group of the German aviation hero Manfred von Richthofen (shot down in action) was the most famous group in the First World War. Its last commander was Hermann Göring.
91. Report in VB, *ibid.* Francisco Agramonte y Cortijo was the last Republican Ambassador before the Spanish Civil War.
92. Report in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1935. See Ulrich Gregor/Enno Patalas, *Geschichte des Films*, Vol. I (Reinbek, 1976), p. 144: ... "The camera sweeps upward along the flagstaffs, underlining the enormous expanse of the Congress grounds. Then the Führer appears in focus as the overawing ruler of this New Order. He strides forth, alone, along the wide empty path between the innumerable rows of lined up formations. Towering above them, he stands at the rostrum."
93. See above, p. 528.
94. Report in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1935.
95. Report in VB, No. 93, April 3, 1935.
96. Report in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1935.
97. Report in VB, No. 95, April 5, 1935.
98. Expression used in the *Kulturkampf* (struggle between Church and State) of the nineteenth century, meaning being in favor of absolute supremacy of papal over national authority. See also Ludendorff's

invective against Hitler in his magazine *Am Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft*, 1926–1932.

99. See above, p. 518, speech of August 7, 1934.
100. See below, November 8, 1937.
101. Published in VB, No. 99, April 9, 1935.
102. Report in VB, No. 101, April 11, 1935.
103. See below, March 11, 1936.
104. Reports in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1935.
105. The square standard showed a black swastika bordered in gold on a red background encircled by a gold-worked oak wreath. In the corners were two golden national eagles and two golden eagles with swastika, as depicted on the steel helmets worn by the Army. The design was created by Professor Klein, Munich.
106. Report in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1935.
107. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1935.
108. DNB report, May 1, 1935. The text of the speech was printed in VB, *ibid.*
109. Oswald Spengler, a philosopher and social theorist (1880–1936), enjoyed great popularity among the National Socialists as long as his works *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* and *Preussentum und Sozialismus* were useful stepping stones for Hitler's climb to power. Prior to the NS takeover, Spengler met with Hitler several times and had himself photographed with the dictator. However, in 1933, when he dared to articulate his skepticism about the future of National Socialism in his new work called *Jahre der Entscheidung* (Part 1), he fell out of Hitler's favor and Part 2 of this work was not allowed to be published. In spite of this, Alfred Rosenberg wrote a lengthy obituary in the *Völkischer Beobachter* at Spengler's death in 1936.
110. Reports in VB, Nos. 122 and 123, May 2 and 3, 1935.
111. Report in VB, No. 123, May 3, 1935.
112. Report in VB, No. 124, May 4, 1935.
113. Report in VB, No. 126, May 6, 1935.
114. Published in VB, *ibid.*
115. Report in VB, No. 127, May 7, 1935.
116. Report in VB, No. 133, May 13, 1935.
117. Published in VB, No. 134, May 14, 1935.
118. DNB report, May 18, 1935.
119. Report in VB, No. 140, May 20, 1935.
120. RGB1. 1935, 1, p. 609.
121. See above, p. 558, note 130.
122. Until 1918, there were Ministries of War in both Prussia and Bavaria.
123. Hitler introduced two-year conscription by decree on August 24, 1936 (RGBL. 1936, I, p. 706) shortly before the close of the one-year term served by those born in 1914. The reasons for this step were cited as the alleged Bolshevik threat, the Spanish Civil War, and health motivations; see below, September 9 to 14, 1936.
124. Published in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1935. This wording contained a few minor transcription errors which were corrected by the author.

125. See above, pp. 324 ff., speech of May 17, 1933.
126. See Schmidt, pp. 294 ff.
127. These figures are greatly exaggerated. Even the official "Roll of Honor of Those Murdered for the Movement" published in VB (No. 312, November 8, 1937) cited a total of only 258 persons up to May 1935; see above, p. 572, note 211.
128. See Schmidt, pp. 297 f.
129. In March 1935, the signatory powers repeatedly demanded the institution of a directorate in the Memel territory according to the provisions of the Statute.
130. Hitler broke off his attack on Lithuania as abruptly as he had launched it. For years there was no discussion on this question at all; then Lithuania surrendered the Memel territory to the German Reich in response to a German ultimatum on March 23, 1939; see below, March 22 and 23, 1939.
131. In his speech of September 1, 1939 (see below), Hitler boasted having spent ninety billion marks on arms within a six-year period.
132. This remark was a warning to the British to finally come to reason and give him *carte blanche* in Eastern Europe.
133. Cf. report in VB, No. 145, May 25, 1935.
134. Report in VB, No. 149/150, May 29/30, 1935.
135. DNB report, June 1, 1935; VB, No. 153, June 2, 1935.
136. Armand Augustin Louis de Caulaincourt (1773–1827), French diplomat and Foreign Minister under Napoleon; Ambassador to the Tsar in Saint Petersburg from 1807 to 1811; later Division General.
137. Cf. Ribbentrop's testimony in IMT, Blue Series B, X, pp. 274 f.; pp. 468–471. See also below, February 4, 1938.
138. Cf. Schmidt, p. 312.
139. For a report on the negotiations, see *ibid.*, pp. 311 ff.
140. A proportion of one to one had been fixed for submarines, but in terms of total tonnage, they counted one to three. In respect to the larger warships, Germany did not achieve the permitted strength prior to 1939 due to the lengthy construction period required. The Germans did, however, unwisely exceed the contractually allowed tonnage and armament in respect to both battleships and battle cruisers completed. In his speech of April 28, 1939 (see below), Hitler withdrew from the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 in retaliation for the British reaction to his occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, believing that in so doing he would move the stubborn British to recognize his supremacy in Europe.
141. Published in VB, No. 238, August 26, 1935.
142. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1935.
143. DNB report, June 3, 1935.
144. Report in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1935.
145. DNB report, June 9, 1935.
146. Report in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1935.
147. DNB text, June 18, 1935; published in VB, No. 170, June 19, 1935.

148. Report in VB, *ibid.*
149. Report in VB, No. 174, June 23, 1935.
150. Reports in VB, Nos. 175 to 177, June 24 to 26, 1935—The reference here is to the 1864 war between Denmark on the one side and Prussia and Austria on the other.
151. Report in VB, No. 177, June 26, 1935.—Hess was recovering from an injury he had received doing sports.
152. Reports in VB, No. 179, June 28, 1935.
153. RGBl. 1935, I, p. 769. Paragraph 8, section 3 of the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 had incidentally provided: "Performing compulsory labor service constitutes a prerequisite for active military service." RGBl. 1935, I, p. 610.—In spite of all the rhetoric lost on the subject in Paragraph 1 of the Reich Labor Service Law of June 26, 1935 ("The Reich Labor Service is an honorable service to the German Volk, its purpose to provide education in the Volksgemeinschaft and the true concept of labor, and particularly in the recognition due to manual labor," etc.), compulsory labor service came to be nothing more than a preparatory course for military service.—For the establishment of the "women's labor service" with its "work maidens" (*Arbeitsmaidens*), ideological considerations initially played a more significant role; during the war, this institution, too, became another branch of the *Kriegshilfsdienst* (auxiliary military service).
154. Report in VB, No. 179, August 28, 1935.
155. Published in VB, No. 181, June 30, 1935.
156. Photo report, *ibid.*
157. Reports in VB, No. 182, July 1, 1935.—The segment in question joined Munich and Holzkirchen.
158. Reports in VB, Nos. 185 and 186, July 4 and 5, 1935.
159. Report in VB, No. 193, July 12, 1935. Among the women who helped Hitler regain his self-confidence following the failed Putsch in 1923 were Carola Hoffmann, Helene Bechstein, and Winifred Wagner. See also Bullock, pp. 391 f.
160. Report in VB, No. 194, July 13, 1935.
161. Cf. Schmidt, p. 316.
162. Wolf Heinrich Graf von Helldorff, born 1896 in Merseburg. Arrested and hanged in connection with the attempted assassination of July 20, 1944.
163. Report in VB, No. 203, July 22, 1935.
164. These speeches did not really be kept "secret" to the public as a rule. Most of them have been published exclusively in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (not in the DNB reports), although in many cases not in their entirety. See also below, October 31, 1937.
165. Published in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1935.
166. Report in VB, No. 220, August 8, 1935.—An American society dedicated to the memory of the former Prussian Officer Friedrich von Steuben, General Chief of Staff under George Washington.
167. Report in VB, *ibid.*

168. DNB text, August 11, 1935.
169. Here Hitler chose an extremely modest term.
170. This passage recalls to mind the thinking of William II, who also personally laid claim to God's favor and went so far as to describe the Almighty as an "ally" of Prussia and Germany. He declared on February 24, 1892 before the Brandenburg Provincial Parliament: "Furthermore, I am of the absolutely firm conviction that our ally at Rossbach and Dannewitz will not let me down. He has taken such infinite trouble with our Old March [Brandenburg] and our House [Hohenzollern] that we need not think He has done it all for naught."—Cf. Penzler, Vol. I, p. 209.
171. Report in VB, No. 225, August 13, 1935.
172. See below, November 7, 1935.
173. On May 26, 1932, Hitler had written, "With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich.—Adolf Hitler." Taken from the author's notes..
174. Published in VB, No. 246, September 3, 1935.
175. Published in VB, No. 242, August 30, 1935. Queen Astrid, a Princess of Sweden, was the wife of King Leopold III of Belgium.
176. Published in VB, *ibid.*
177. Report in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1935.
178. Report in VB, No. 249, September 6, 1935.
179. Reports in VB, Nos. 250 to 252, September 7 to 9, 1935.
180. A satirical National Socialist weekly.
181. Published in VB, No. 252, September 9, 1935.
182. RGBl. 1935, 1, pp. 1145–1147.
183. See below, November 5, 1935.
184. Dr. Franz Schlegelberger, State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Justice, of which he was temporarily in charge from 1941 to 1942.
185. RGBl. 1942, 1, p. 247.
186. The issuance of citizenship patents foreseen in this law never became reality, for the subject was eclipsed by arms production and preparations for war. To judge from Hitler's remarks to the Reichstag in this context, only tried and true National Socialists were to be declared "citizens of the Reich" (*Reichsbürger*). The remaining Germans were to be "subjects of the state" (*Staatsangehörige*) without any special rights of citizenship, as well as the Jews or other people lacking "German or cognate blood." See below, speech of September 15, 1935, and note 211.
187. The insignias of the Holy Roman Empire (the Imperial Orb, Crown, Scepter, and Sword; including several relics, in particular the Holy Lance) were kept in Nuremberg until 1796 and then removed to the National Treasury in Vienna. After the Anschluss, Hitler immediately had them restored to Nuremberg. In 1946, they were reinstalled at the Vienna Hofburg. The replica of the imperial Sword presented to Hitler in 1935 was the work of the Aachen master goldsmith Witte.—See also below, September 5, 1938, and 1938, note 339.
188. Published in VB, No. 254, September 11, 1935.

189. Champ de Mars; in Merovingian and Carolingian times, the place where the Reich's elite gathered for military parades.
190. Published in VB, No. 255, September 12, 1935.
191. Ibid. The construction work on the Congress Hall, modeled after the Roman Colosseum, was halted because of World War II, leaving behind a gigantic torso of the debacle of the Third Reich; taken over by the City of Nuremberg in 1960 to be used in part as a sports arena.
192. Ibid.
193. DNB text, September 12, 1935; VB, No. 256, September 13, 1935, partly in indirect speech.
194. Published in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1935.
195. Here Hitler was alluding to the generals' attempts to gradually dissolve the Party and to erect a military dictatorship with the aid of the Soldatenbund; see below, 1937, note 1. Certain circles within the Stahlhelm shared these thoughts—reason enough for Hitler to dissolve the Stahlhelm organization.
196. DNB report, September 13, 1935.
197. Report in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1935.
198. DNB report, September 14, 1935; VB, No. 258, September 15, 1935, partly in indirect speech.
199. When men fit for service at the front became increasingly rare in the course of World War II, Hitler did not hesitate to send large numbers of German women in their places as assistants to the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the SS.
Although armed at best with pistols and not deployed in infantry fighting, the women wore uniforms, lived in barracks like their male colleagues, and assumed some soldierly duties. Many were taken prisoner by enemy forces.
200. DNB text, September 14, 1935; VB, No. 258, September 15, 1935.
201. *Mein Kampf*, p. 392.
202. "*Flink wie Windhunde, zäh wie Leder and hart wie Kruppstahl.*"
203. DNB report, September 14, 1935.
204. This body never achieved any real significance, but was soon subsumed into the organization of the Four-Year Plan which governed economic life in Germany from 1937 onwards under Göring.
205. Published in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1935.—The name *Verfügungstruppe* meant that it should stand at Hitler's personal disposal (*Verfügung*); see also below, August 17, 1938.
206. Former conscripts did not long have an opportunity to join the ranks of the SA. Those who were discharged in 1937 and 1938 were enlisted shortly thereafter for military purposes (e.g. Austria and the Sudetenland) and deployed in the war from 1939.
207. The demonstration against the *Bremen* had taken place on July 26, 1935. The following night, demonstrators gained access to the ship and tore down the swastika flag. Police arrested several people who were subsequently given lenient sentences on August 12 and 14.
208. See above, pp. 297–302.

209. DNB text, September 15, 1935; also published in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1935.
210. See above, speech of May 21, 1935.
211. Just as the Reich Flag Act raised the status of the swastika to sole national flag, the Reich Law of Citizenship likewise should raise the status of well-deserved National Socialists to sole “Reich Citizens” with respective civil rights, in distinction from the remaining Germans to whom no “debt of gratitude” was owed. See above, note 186.
212. See above, p. 502.
213. DNB text, September 15, 1935.
214. DNB report, *ibid.*
215. Published in VB, No. 260, September 17, 1935.
216. The Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 had conferred upon the Reich Minister of War the title of “Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht.” Hitler, in his capacity as Head of State, was now the “Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.” This distinction—merely of formal nature—was dropped on February 4, 1938. See below, *ibid.*
217. Published in VB, No. 260, September 17, 1935.
218. Report in VB, No. 261, September 18, 1935.
219. Hitler did not deliver the proclamation at the Party Congress himself; it was read aloud.
220. Report in VB, No. 268, September 25, 1935.
221. Report in VB, No. 273, September 30, 1935.
222. Hindenburg’s coffin was removed from the Tannenberg monument before the end of World War II and transferred to the Elisabeth Church in Marburg an der Lahn.
223. Reports in VB, No. 276, October 3, 1935.
224. Published in VB, *ibid.* By virtue of this decree, Hitler put an end to years of controversy on the erection of a Reich memorial for the World War dead. Sites competing for the honor had included Lorch am Rhein, Bad Berka, and others.
225. Reports in VB, Nos. 277 and 278, October 4 and 5, 1935.
226. Published in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1935.
227. At this time already, Hitler no longer went forth among his Volk quite as fearlessly as he claims here. Later, during the war, his appearances in public grew exceedingly rare.
228. People in Germany gave Hitler’s attempts to increase the military and political potential by stepping up the birth rate the ironic epithet of “demographic policy.”
229. The wording of this passage reveals that Hitler would not, in the long term, confine naval tonnage to a third of that of the British.
230. Published in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1935; also reproduced by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Führer-Reden zum Winterhilfswerk 1933–1936* (Munich, 1937).
231. On the first Sunday of each winter month, all Germans were to eat only *Eintopf* (stew) such as those served by the military in field kitchens. The money saved was to be handed in to the Winterhilfswerk. Even

at this point—i.e. in peacetime (!)—restaurants were also required to serve only stew dishes on these Sundays and to collect respective contributions for the organisation.

232. This refers to the time prior to 1914.
233. This type of generous impulse on Hitler's part was a rarity, reserved at best for family members of German Communists who themselves were allotted but meager rations in the concentration camps. Russian Communists on the other hand were to be exterminated, even if they were hungry.
234. Report in VB, No. 294, October 21, 1935.
235. *Gedenkhalle für die Gefalenen des Dritten Reiches*, edited by Hans Weberstedt and Kurt Langner, Munich, 1935. The Party's stamp of approval was given on October 20, 1935.
236. The first *Wartburgfest* took place in 1817.
237. Open letter from Mackensen to Seldte dated July 31, 1935. DNB text, August 5, 1935.
238. Report in VB, No. 296, October 23, 1935. Official ancestral estates of the Third Reich were not to be parceled out; they enjoyed a special status and respective privileges.
239. Hitler's endowments to faithful ministers and generals went into hundreds of thousands of marks. Funk, for instance, received RM 520,000 while Lammers and Ribbentrop were given RM 500,000 each; Keitel received RM 250,000 and Milch RM 500,000. See IMT, Blue Series B, XIII, pp. 158–161.
240. Report in VB, No. 297, October 24, 1935. Wilhelm Friedrich Loeper, former Captain; Reichswehr officer from 1920 to 1924 (last at the Pionierschule in Munich); Gauleiter in Magdeburg-Anhalt from 1924; appointed Reichsstatthalter in 1933.
241. Report in VB, *ibid.* See also below, Hitler's letter to Seldte dated November 7, 1935.
242. Report in VB, No. 301, October 28, 1935.
243. At the end of his life, Hitler claimed the opposite, i.e. that he had been treacherously betrayed by all his friends including Göring and Himmler; see below, Vol. IV, Appendix.
244. Report in VB, No. 308, November 4, 1935.
245. It is not clear to which "sad events" are referred here except those on November 8/9, 1923. The bridge had been erected in 1828, expanded in width in 1892, and decorated with allegoric figures. It was damaged by bombs in World War II.
246. Report in VB, No. 308, November 4, 1935.
247. RGBL. 1935, I, pp. 1285–1287.
248. RGBL. 1935, I, pp. 1287 f.
249. The basic design of the imperial naval ensign which had flown mainly on the ships of the imperial fleet was modeled after the British naval ensign.
250. Report in VB, No. 310, November 6, 1935.
251. Recruits born in 1914 and, in East Prussia, born in 1910 as well.

252. Published in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1935.
253. Reference here is to the black-white-red flag with a large black iron cross in its center. In the Weimar Republic, this banner—just as the former black-white-red flag of the merchant marine—showed a black-red-gold jack in the inner upper corner.
254. Hitler never did put this into practice; here his words were merely designed to comfort those who might mourn the loss of the old black-white-red flag.
255. Published in VB, No. 313, November 9, 1935.
256. Published in VB, No. 315, November 11, 1935.
257. One is still waiting in vain for revelations on this point!
258. The Blood order (decoration of November 9, 1923) was a silver medal with a matt finish measuring 4 cm in diameter. The front showed an eagle in side view perched on a wreath of oak leaves which encircled the date “9. Nov.” To the right was the inscription, “München 1923–1933.” The back of the medal featured an embossed image of the Feldherrnhalle; above it stood the swastika in rays of sunshine with the inscription in an arch, “Und ihr habt dock gesiegt!” (But you still have triumphed).
The order was worn on a blood-red band which was intertwined and attached to the right breast pocket. Hitler had created the Blood Order in March of 1934; it was originally intended only for those who had taken part in the coup attempt of 1923. After the Anschluss of Austria, it was also awarded on a general basis to “Blood Witnesses of the Movement.”
259. His successor as Chief of the Wehrmacht Office (called Ministerial Office prior to May 21, 1935) was Major General Wilhelm Keitel.
260. Hitler had ordered that the entire square, which had contained a number of green areas, be covered with concrete slabs in the Italian style.
261. Initially, the war in Abyssinia did not progress well for Italy. The Ethiopians had unexpectedly offered strong resistance, and the League of Nations had passed economic sanctions against Italy for its aggression there.
262. Report in VB, No. 315, November 11, 1935.
263. After the end of the Third Reich, the sixteen dead were dismissed from their “Eternal Guard” and removed to normal cemeteries. Whereas the pantheons themselves were detonated, the party structures, which also survived World War II intact, were used as state administrative buildings.
264. NSK text, November 9, 1935.
265. Report in VB, No. 316, November 12, 1935.
266. Reports in VB, No. 320, November 16, 1935.
267. Reports in VB, Nos. 326 and 327, November 22 and 23, 1935.
268. DNB text, November 27, 1935. Published in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1935.
269. Report in VB, No. 334, November 30, 1935.
270. Report in VB, No. 341, December 7, 1935.

- 271. Report in VB, No. 343, December 9, 1935.
- 272. *lbid.*
- 273. Report in VB, No. 350, December 16, 1935. See also DGFP, C, IV, nos. 460 and 462, pp. 913 f. and 917 ff.
- 274. Report in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1935.
- 275. Report in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1935.
- 276. Published in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1936.

The Year 1936

Notes

1. Dr. h.c. Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, born 1882 in Braunau am Inn. Austrian Minister without Portfolio from July 11, 1936; Minister of the Interior from November 3, 1936; Vice Chancellor March 12, 1938, to May 24, 1938; died in 1946.
2. DNB report, January 1, 1936. The specification “in Berlin” refers only to the place where the announcement was read. Hitler himself was in Berchtesgaden at the time.
3. Report in VB, No. 6, January 6, 1936.
4. Report in VB, No. 7, January 7, 1936.
5. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1936.
6. Report in VB, No. 11, January 11, 1936.
7. Published in VB, *ibid.*
8. Published in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1936.
9. Published in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1936.
10. Published in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1936.
11. See below, speech of November 8, 1941. “The last battalion on the battlefield will be a German one.”
12. Printed in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* January 16, 1933.
13. Published in VB, No. 20, January 20, 1936.
14. Published in VB, No. 22, January 22, 1936.
15. Published in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1936.
16. Printed in VB, No. 27, January 27, 1936. The reproduction in the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* of January 26, 1936, contains greater detail on Madame Titayna’s remarks, and therefore is cited here.
17. See below, February 21, 1936.
18. At the time Funk was State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Propaganda; See above, p. 580, note 52.
19. This right Hitler accorded only to the German people. Other people, such as the Polish, Russians, Serbians, etc.—not to mention the Jews—should “vegetate” or best be eliminated.
20. Here Hitler is referring to a war with France or the Western Powers. He believed he was justified in waging a war in the East, since such a crusade would be dedicated to the conquest of new “Lebensraum.”
21. This interpretation of the rules governing the acquisition of new territory was made in reference to German interests only. Hitler applied vastly different criteria when other peoples’ territory was at stake.
22. Reference is made here to the Anschluss of Austria with the German Reich.
23. This remark refers to Leni Riefenstahl.
24. Pierre Laval, born 1883 in Chateldun, French Premier repeatedly, executed for collaboration in 1945.
25. Ferdinand de Brinon, State Secretary, later General Delegate, executed for collaboration in 1947.

26. This is reflected in his memoirs *Souvenirs d'une Ambassade à Berlin* (Paris, 1949). Because of his repeated favorable statements, François-Poncet mockingly was called the "Reich Speaker of the NSDAP" in Germany prior to 1938. Even Hitler once offered him this title as a joke; according to Schmidt, pp. 363 f.
27. DNB report, June 25, 1936; VB, Berlin Edition, February 26, 1936.
28. This remark, which Hitler frequently uttered, formed part of the so-called *Wandsprüche* (mural sayings) and ran as follows: *Deutsch sein heisst wahr sein, deutsch sein heisst klar sein* ("To be German means to be honest, to be German means to be clear"). Hitler himself never took this maxim too seriously, as he greatly preferred a convoluted and vague wording, not to mention its content of honesty (!).
29. Evidently Hitler's idea of logic entailed clinging on to the concepts he formulated in 1919, irrespective of whether or not these corresponded to reality or whether reality had discredited them. Despite long-winded proclamations to the contrary, nothing ever came of the proposed draft for a new constitution; nor did a *Führungsauslese*—supposedly ascertaining the proper succession to the Führer—ever take place.
30. Report in VB, No. 29, January 29, 1936.
31. Report in VB, No. 30, January 30, 1936. Late in 1935, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile had agreed to upgrade their representative offices in Germany to Embassies.
32. According to DNB, he spoke before 25,000 SA men only.
33. DNB report, January 30, 1936.
34. These and similar phrases are based on passages from the Gospel according to St. John: "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14, 21); "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14, 3); "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15, 5); "I know my own and my own know me" (John 10, 14).
35. Published in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1936. Born 1895 in Schwerin, Wilhelm Gustloff was head of the meteorological station in Davos. He was also the senior Landesgruppenleiter of the NSDAP Foreign Organization. David Frankfurter, born in Yugoslavia in 1909 as the son of a rabbi, did not know his victim personally. Frankfurter's motive for the assassination was Gustloff's position as a leading National Socialist.
36. Report in Schmidt, p. 335 f.
37. The "Olympic Honor Badge" consisted of a gold-edged star, bearing five horizontal bars, coated in white enamel, and crossed over by five golden rays. In its center were the five gold-edged Olympic rings of white enamel. The symbol of sovereignty was placed over the top ray. The medal was awarded in two classes and was worn on a brick-red, black-trimmed band that contained five interwoven white stripes (RGBL. 1936, I, pp. 53 ff.). The honorary badge was awarded to deserving members of the organizational committee at the Games. On July 31, 1936, Hitler also issued an "Olympic Commemorative Medal" that was worn on a similar band, a distinction awarded to nearly all

- persons involved in the conduct of the Games, whether they were policemen or ushers.
38. DNB report, February 5, 1936.
 39. DNB report, February 6, 1936.
 40. See below, November 9, 1938.
 41. Published in VB, No. 44, February 13, 1936.
 42. Eleven members of the Thule Society (see above, p. 556, note 101), were taken hostage and executed by the Munich Räteregierung (soviet government) in 1919.
 43. Published in VB, No. 48, February 17, 1936.
 44. Ferdinand Porsche.
 45. Hitler was alluding to the economic sanctions of the League of Nations chastising Italy, which oddly enough did not include restrictions on the import of fuel.
 46. DNB text, February 16, 1936.
 47. In *Mein Kampf* (pp. 699 f.), Hitler had called France “Germany’s most deadly enemy.”
 48. See below, March 7, 1936.
 49. DNB text, February 28, 1936; cf. also *Paris Midi*, February 28, 1936.
 50. Up to the year 1932, Hitler described himself as an “artist and writer” on all official documents as well as on police registration forms (completion of which was required in the event of a change of address). As recent as February 5, 1933, he had declared he would not accept payment for his work as Chancellor, since he earned sufficient money through his activities as an author (see above, February 5, 1933, as well as p. 581, note 80.)—The fact that he actually had no intention of “correcting” his stance in foreign policy vis-à-vis France became quite obvious in the years 1940 through 1944 during which he controlled the country.
 51. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, February 26, 1936.
 52. He had already given a detailed description of this assembly in *Mein Kampf*, pp. 400 ff.
 53. Reference is made here to the then party chairman Karl Harrer. Hitler was not elected to preside over the NSDAP until July 1921.
 54. China also followed suit and promoted its previous envoy in Berlin to the rank of Ambassador.
 55. Reports in VB, No. 59, February 28, 1936.
 56. Report in VB, No. 60, February 29, 1936.
 57. Report in VB, *ibid.*
 58. The signatory powers of the Locarno Pact (Great Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium) had challenged the German Government on March 19, 1936, “to submit the question to the Permanent International Court of Justice in The Hague as to whether the mutual assistance pact entered into by France and the Soviet Union is compatible with the existence of the Locarno Pact, and to pledge to respect its decision as final in the case.” Hitler remained silent on this demand. Cf. Schmidt, p. 328.
 59. Cf. Bullock, pp. 342 f.

60. Printed in VB, No. 67, March 7, 1936.
61. Quoted from the wording published in 1936 by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Des Führers Kampf um den Weltfrieden* ("The Führer's Struggle for World Peace"), that contains the speech in the Reichstag and excerpts of the following campaign speeches. A special edition appeared that same year, entitled *Die Rededes Führers in der historischen Reichstagsitzung vom 7. März 1936*. It was printed in Mainz for the SA Brigade 150 Rheinessen.
An English edition (*Speech delivered in the Reichstag, March 7th, 1936, by Adolf Hitler, Führer and Chancellor*) was also published in 1936 by Müller & Sohn KG, in Berlin.
62. Somehow Hitler had managed to lose one million people in his citation. In the months of January and February he had spoken of 68 million.
63. "So oder so"(one way or another) was one of Hitler's favorite phrases, when he was referring to the implementation of force to resolve a problem.
64. In this instance, Hitler was referring to the renunciation of the Alsace-Lorraine area. However, when he occupied the territory in the course of the Second World War, he did not hesitate one minute to annex it to the German Reich.
65. The treaty referred to is the Locarno Pact of 1925.
66. For his attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Hitler had to take steps first to prepare the "territorial prerequisites" for such a venture.
67. Édouard Herriot, born 1872 in Troyes, died 1957 in Saint-Genis-Laval (Département Rhone), radical socialist politician; Mayor of Lyon; served repeatedly as minister.—Hitler was by no means convinced of the correctness of the figures he employed, he simply used them because they suited his purpose at the time.
68. Reference is made to Bertrand do Jouvenel; see above, February 21, 1936.
69. Quoted from the Mainz special edition (see above, note 61), in which the complete Memorandum was published. The subsequent suggestions were not included in the Eher pamphlet.
70. Such assertions on the part of Hitler that, if only his present demands were fulfilled, he would have had "no more territorial claims to make" in Europe would be frequently heard in the following years. His cynicism was such that he did not seem to be bothered by the obvious discrepancy between his recurrent assurances and his new demands for annexation—first of Austria, then the Sudetenland; Bohemia and Moravia; the Memelland; Danzig; the Polish Corridor, and etc.
71. RGl. 1936, p. 133.
72. Reports in VB, No. 69, March 9, 1936.
73. Song *Die Wacht am Rhein*, poem by Max Schneckenburger, music by Karl Wilhelm; opening line: *Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall*; chorus: *Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein*; popular after the Franco-German War of 1870–71. As a national Prussian song, it was never sung by the National Socialists, with this one singular exception.

74. DNB text, March 8, 1936. Also printed in VB, No. 69, March 9, 1936.
75. Published in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1936. DNB wording, November 11, 1936. The DNB text contains a few discrepancies by comparison. Cf. also Ward Price, pp. 128 f.
76. Albert Sarraut, then French Premier.
77. Published in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1936.
78. Schmidt, p. 320.
79. In accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, the Rhineland was divided into three zones of occupation, which were to be administered by the Allied Powers: zone I (Cologne) until 1925; zone II (Koblenz) until 1930; and zone III (Mainz-Wiesbaden) until 1935. In 1929, the Allied troops were withdrawn early from zone II, to be followed by zone III in 1930.
80. Cf. Recouly, p. 194.
81. Maxim Maximovich Litvinov (Wallach), born 1876, died 1951, People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union from 1930 to 1939.—Report on the meeting in Schmidt, p. 318 ff. The session took place in London on March 19, 1936.
82. Excerpts published by the Eher Verlag in 1936. Verbatim account here as quoted in the Eher pamphlet, with the exception of the speech in Cologne.
83. Reference is made to Marshal Józef Piłsudski.
84. This was an exaggeration. Only about one-third of the people had supported him at the time.
85. The flags were square, fashioned after the Prussian and imperial ensigns, but adorned with the swastika. The basic color of the flag indicated the branch of the service the unit belonged to (white for the Infantry, red for the Artillery, and so on). The cloth of the flag was divided into four squares by an iron cross. The Reichswehr had never had *Truppenfahnen*. Aside from the importance symbols such as this flag had for Hitler in general, he hoped to wipe out the Reichswehr's legacy of the years 1919 through 1934. Whenever Hitler now referred to the armed forces in his speeches, he was careful in particular either to qualify it as the "Old Army" (up to 1918), or as the new Wehrmacht in existence since 1935. He acted as though neither a German army nor a German navy had existed in the interim.
86. Published in VB, No. 77, March 17, 1936.
87. The audiences responded as one with: "Ja! "Obviously it had been Hitler, who had first used the puppet show approach, prior to Goebbels' well-known rally after the Stalingrad catastrophe. Goebbels asked on February 18, 1943: "Do you want total war?" and the audience responded unanimously: "Ja!"
88. Reference is made here to Eden's admonition that Germany ought to at least make a symbolic gesture and to refrain from fortifying the occupied area along the Rhine river.
89. This elegant wording might have misled the innocent bystander to assume that Hitler one day would renounce power and return to private

life. Among friends Hitler sometimes alluded to an utopian future in which he might leave command post to a successor and retire to enjoy his last days in a city, for example in Linz. However, nothing was further from his mind than actually renouncing even one shred of the power that he had fought so hard to obtain. The words cited here are perhaps best understood as a tool for rhetorical purposes, or perhaps as a parody of the Catholic Ash Wednesday liturgy: “Memento, homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris!” (“For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”)

90. The claim that Germany had been governed by 47 parties prior to 1933 was one of the stories Hitler used for propaganda purposes. In 1935, he had claimed that it had been 37 parties (see above, September 11, 1935). In reality, there had been only one instance in which over 30 parties had applied for participation in a Reichstag election, namely, the July 31, 1932 election. However, the majority of the parties did not fulfill the prerequisites to partake in the election and were thus removed from the list of eligible parties. For example, in the electoral district of Franconia only 18 parties had presented candidates for the election, even though the last of them was listed as number “32.” In spite of the fact that a multitude of small parties existed during the Weimar Republic, they exerted little influence on national politics and thus did not hamper the parliamentary process. Only ten parties actually influenced governmental activities. Through representation in the Reichstag, the only political parties that actually took part in the formation of a government were: the SPD, the Center Party (with the Bavarian People’s Party), the German State Party (former German Democratic Party). The German People’s Party, the German National People’s Party, the Economic Party of the Middle Class (Wirtschaftspartei), and the Thuringian Agrarian League also infrequently participated in a government coalition.
91. Reference to Eden’s “unreasonable demand,” see above, note 88.
92. That Tuesday would have been March 31, i.e. after the plebiscite. In London on April 1, Ribbentrop presented his colleagues with the announced “new peace initiative.”
93. Published in VB, No. 85, March 25, 1936. The fighter group referred to was financed by SA donations on Hitler’s birthday one year earlier on April 20, 1935.
94. The term “liberator” is erroneous since the Rhineland was not oppressed by any alien power. There simply was nothing it could be “liberated” from. If anyone had a claim to such a title, it would have been the former Reich Chancellor and Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929). By pursuing the matter in diplomatic channels and avoiding the use of military pressure, he had been a key figure in promoting the early withdrawal of the French and British troops from zone II and zone III of the Rhineland. An impressive monument had been erected in Mainz honoring Stresemann; however, once they gained power, the National Socialists had it removed.

95. Report in VB, No. 89, March 29, 1936.
96. Hitler's speech in Cologne is reproduced here as it was reported in the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* of March 12, 1936. Both the transcription in the VB and in the Eher pamphlet of 1936 contain errors.
97. Borrowed from an expression of the character Prometheus in Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound*. Also used by the German humanist Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1533).
98. According to Hitler, the German National reactionaries entertained "senile concepts," as did the British statesmen he frequently ridiculed.
99. According to the Reich Electoral Law, one deputy's seat in the Reichstag was accorded to every 60,000 votes cast.
100. See above, March 7, 1936.
101. The Saar had been united with the Gau Rheinpfalz for administrative purposes. Its new name therefore was "Saarpfalz."
102. Published in VB, No. 91, March 31, 1936.
103. Report in VB, No. 92, April 1, 1936.
104. Cf. Schmidt, p. 327.
105. Reports in VB, Nos. 102 to 104, April 11 to 13, 1936.
106. Reports in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1936.
107. There had been no more Field Marshal named in Germany after 1918. During the First World War, numerous professional military men had borne this title, in addition to the German Kings, Crown Princes, Dukes, etc. The following men were named Field Marshal on the dates indicated: von Billow (1915), von Eichhorn (1917), von der Goltz (1911), von Haeseler (1905), von Hindenburg (1914), Liman von Sanders (1915 as Turkish Field Marshal), von Mackensen (1915), von Tirpitz (1911), von Woyrsch (1918).—After Ludendorff had declined to be promoted to this rank by Hitler in 1935, the latter accorded Minister of War von Blomberg the title of Field Marshal. Blomberg gladly accepted the additional glitter. On February 4, 1938, Göring joined him in the illustrious ranks. During the Second World War, Hitler named no less than 27 additional Field Marshals and Grand Admirals. This number even exceeded that of Napoleon, who had been most generous in the distribution of honorary titles as well. In 1940, Hitler promoted Göring another step up, to the position of a Reichsmarschall, a title Hitler had just invented and that even towered above the rank of a Field Marshal. The last man to be appointed Field Marshal was Ritter von Greim, whom Hitler promoted on the eve of April 26, 1945.
108. Published in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1936.
109. Erwin von Witzleben, born 1881 in Breslau; named Field Marshal in 1940; hanged in 1944 in Berlin-Plötzensee in connection with the assassination attempt of July 20.
110. Reports in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1936.
111. Reports in VB, No. 116. April 25, 1936.—The *Ordensburgen* were massive stone structures that were intended to bear resemblance to ancient Germanic cult sites. What precisely was to be taught there was a matter never resolved while Hitler was in power. The National

Socialist “Weltanschauung” was nothing other than fervent belief in Hitler. Everything he said, thought, did, and ordered was to be the epitome of National Socialism. Apart from the unrelenting subservience to Hitler, it was never quite clear what the National Socialist “Weltanschauung” entailed. Additional insecurity was created by Hitler’s constant alteration of explanations, which frequently led to the appearance of contradictions with earlier arguments. Moreover, Hitler’s repeated shifts in tactics—and the fact that he did not disclose his secret ambitions and motivations even to the most intimate of his staff—further confused matters.

112. Reports in VB, Nos. 116/118/120, April 25/27/29, 1936.
113. Published in VB, Nos. 123/124, May 2/3, 1936.
114. Reports in VB, *ibid*.
115. Published in VB, *ibid*.
116. Reference is made here to Hitler’s “peace proposal.” See above, April 1, 1936.
117. Subsequent to remarking “I know,” Hitler made a dramatic pause indicating his agreement with the audience’s implied opinion that the Jews were to blame for this. However, in order not to carry the theatrics too far, Hitler repeated once more “I know” and continued the sentence with another interrelation.
118. This turn of the phrase is merely a repetition of opinions expressed earlier (see above, May 1, 1935.) In reality, Hitler would never have settled for being “the last” amongst the Volksgenossen since he desired always to be “the first.” Had the opportunity presented itself to him during his lifetime, there is no doubt that he gladly would have become King of Great Britain.
119. Report in VB, *ibid*.
120. VB, No. 127, May 6, 1936. No one knows what subsequently happened to the parchment paper edition. It has historic value insofar as Hitler considered it worthy to be preserved. He was in no manner involved with the production of the book.
121. Cf. Schmidt, p. 330.
122. Published in VB, No. 139, May 18, 1936.
123. Report in VB, No. 141/142, May 20/21, 1936. In Munich on May 16, Schreck had died of meningitis at the age of thirty-eight.
124. Reports in VB, No. 143, May 22, 1936.
125. Printed in VB, No. 144, May 23, 1936.
126. Report in VB, No. 149, May 28, 1936.
127. Report in VB, No. 150, May 29, 1936.
128. Reports in VB, Nos. 151 and 152/153, May 30 and May 31/June 1, 1936. Hitler did not like the U-boat monument in Laboe at all; in one conversation he called it “an unrivaled essay in kitsch and bad taste, as it stands there with its inverted bow” (cf. Picker, p. 212).
129. Published in VB, No. 156, June 4, 1936.
130. Reports in VB, No. 162, June 10, 1936, and DNB reports, June 9, 1936.
131. Report in VB, *ibid*.

132. Printed in VB, No. 165, June 13, 1936.
133. Reports in VB, No. 164, June 12, 1936.
134. Report in VB, No. 169, June 17, 1936.
135. Report in VB, No. 170, June 18, 1936.
136. Published in VB, *ibid.*
137. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, June 19, 1936.
138. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, June 18, 1936.
139. The uniforms referred to here were of a light green color. The central part of the shako was light green uniform cloth. In the place of the police star, there was the sovereign symbol (eagle) surrounded by a garland of oak leaves. This new police insignia pin was also worn on the police cap and on the left sleeve.
140. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 454 f. Hitler never had practised boxing or any other type of sport. He valued boxing because of intellectual considerations, in particular since it was a form of sport the English cultivated and the German Philistines found disgusting, he believed that if German youngsters learned how to box, it would prepare them spiritually for striking out at other occasions as well and this, in turn, would prepare Germany's next generation for what Hitler held to be its mission in life, namely, to conquer new Lebensraum in the East.
141. Published in VB, No. 173, June 21, 1936.—Max Schmeling, a studied economist, had been world heavyweight champion from 1930 to 1932 and the first European to win this title in the twentieth century. Joe Louis suffered the first of the only three defeats in his career by Schmeling. After winning the heavyweight title in 1937, Louis knocked out Schmeling within the first round, again in New York City on June 22, 1938.
These two sporting events of 1936 and 1938 appear to be more than coincidental. The climate had changed since the year of the Olympic Games, when the whole world had seemed to court Nazi Germany. In 1938, Joe Louis stood for the free world and the equality of rights of the races against the "Nazi representative and model Aryan" Schmeling. Cf. Max Schmeling, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt, 1977) pp. 384 ff.
142. Report in VB, No. 175, June 23, 1936.
143. Report in VB, No. 179, June 27, 1936.
144. Report in VB, No. 181, June 29, 1936.
145. Published in VB, *ibid.* The University of Heidelberg was founded in 1386. There were only two other German universities that dated back even further. In 1347, Germans established a university in Prague, and in 1365, a university was founded in Vienna.
146. Willy Marschler, Thuringian Minister of Finance since 1932; Minister-President of Thuringia since 1933.
147. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, July 4, 1936.—Fritz Sauckel, born 1894; sailor by profession; Minister-President of Thuringia in 1932; Reich Governor of Thuringia from 1933 to 1945; Plenipotentiary-General for Labor (*Arbeitseinsatz*) during the Second World War and hence responsible for the management of the Arbeitseinsatz, forced labor

camps and especially for the treatment of foreign workers there; sentenced to death by the International Military Tribunal and hanged in 1946.

148. Report in VB, No. 187, July 5, 1936.
149. Reference is made here to the National Constituent Assembly that convened on August 11, 1919 in Weimar and drafted the new Constitution for the Weimar Republic.
150. Report in VB, No. 188, July 6, 1936.
151. Ibid.
152. See *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, edited by Malcolm Muggeridge (London, 1948), p. 146.
153. Published in VB, No. 195, July 13, 1936.
154. Reference is made here to the agreement reached by Italy, Hungary, and Austria that had been signed in Rome.
155. Hitler took his time about signing the ordinance into law. As a matter of fact, he did not sign it until August 24, 1936 (RGL. 1936, I, p. 647) when the traveling season had already ended.
156. Published in VB, No. 195, July 13, 1936.
157. Published in VB, No. 199, July 17, 1936.
158. Report in VB, No. 202, July 20, 1936.
159. The battleships sent were the armored ships *Admiral Scheer* and *Deutschland*, as well as the battle cruiser *Köln* and the Second Torpedoboat Flotilla.
160. See below, January 30, 1937 and August 6, 1937.
161. Published in VB, No. 204, July 22, 1936.
162. RGL. 1936, I, p. 577.
163. Report in VB, No. 216, August 3, 1936.
164. Ernst Curtius had been the first German to excavate the sites at Olympia in the years 1875 to 1881. Since 1877, Friedrich Dörpfeld participated in the enterprise, who served as director of the German Archeological Institute in Athens until 1912. Upon Hitler's insistence, renewed excavations began in 1937. The meanwhile 83 years old Dörpfeld initially participated in this undertaking. For details see E. Kunze, *Berichte über die neuen deutschen Ausgrabungen in Olympia 1937-1944*, as well as E. Kunze and H. Schleif, *Olympische Forschungen*, Vol. I, 1944.
165. Published in VB, No. 216, August 3, 1936.
166. Published in VB, *ibid.*
167. Published in VB, No. 217, August 4, 1936.
168. Reports in VB, No. 226, August 13, 1936.
169. Cf. Bullock, pp. 363 f.—On July 4, 1936, the President of the Senate in Danzig, Arthur Greiser, had demanded of the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva to remove either its Commissioner from Danzig or to curtail his powers at least. It is obvious that Greiser would not have voiced such a far-reaching demand without prior instruction by Hitler.
170. Report in VB, No. 227, August 14, 1936.
171. Konrad Henlein, born 1898 in Maffersdorf (near Reichenberg); leader

- of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia from 1935; Reichskommissar for the Sudetenland in 1938; later Reich Governor and Gauleiter; committed suicide in 1945.
172. Published in VB, No. 230, August 17, 1936.
173. Ibid.
174. Riefenstahl patterned the two parts of her documentary *Olympiade*, shown in 1938, along the same lines. In both *Fest der Völker* and *Fest der Schönheit*, “the prologue establishes a type of mystical atmosphere for the portrayal of the events. The presence of the charismatic Führer seems to beatify the athletes’ achievements and, indeed, their efforts appear to be ritual sacrifices, offerings brought in His honor.” Gregor/Patalas, p. 144.
175. Report in VB, No. 237, August 24, 1936.
176. RGBl. 1936, I, p. 706.
177. See above, speech of March 28, 1936.
178. Reports in VB, No. 244, August 31, 1936.
179. Reports in VB, Nos. 249 and 266, September 5 and 22, 1936, respectively; see also Schmidt, pp. 336 ff.—David Lloyd George (1863–1945), leader of the Liberal Party, British Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922.
180. *Mein Kampf*, p. 533.
181. This and the following Party Congress speeches of 1936, with few corrections, are taken directly from the Eher pamphlet entitled *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ebre 1936* (6th ed., Munich, 1936). The texts published there correspond to the respective publications printed by the VB.
182. Instructions for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan were not issued until October 18, 1936; see below, *ibid.*
183. With the “colonial claims” Hitler did not refer to the restitution of Germany’s former colonies in Africa and overseas, but rather he had in mind the conquest of new Lebensraum in the territory east of Germany. This intention is expressed clearly in *Mein Kampf*, p. 742. His demands for the restitution of former German colonies was nothing more than a rhetorical and tactical device.
184. References here are made to Heinz Neumann, a German Communist who had emigrated to the Soviet Union, and to Béla Kun (1885–1937) who, in 1919, proclaimed the establishment of a soviet republic in Hungary. A year later, Kun also emigrated to the Soviet Union.
185. *Mein Kampf* pp. 604 f.
186. Prior to the First World War, Hitler himself labored to avoid having to make this “most noble sacrifice.” See above, p. 16.
187. The Eher pamphlet incorrectly reproduced this word as *geändert* (changed) instead of *beendet* (ended).
188. Reference is made here to Spain. However, it was General Franco who was attempting to rise to power—not the Marxists.
189. See above, January 30, 1936, for an overview of passages lend from St. John. Hitler frequently employed these as a rhetorical device. Additional citations from the Evangelists’ writings: “Blessed are those who have

- not seen and yet believe” (John 20, 29). “The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them” (Luke 7, 22).
190. Play on words taken from Eusebius of Caesarea’s report on Emperor Constantine the Great’s battle against Maxentius in the year 312: “In hoc signo vinces” (In this sign, conquer). According to the legend, Constantine spotted a luminous cross in the sky as symbol of the Christian belief, together with these words. Profoundly moved by the mystic vision, the Emperor converted to Christianity.
 191. “Just in passing,” one might mention the fact that not one kilometer of the Munich subway system, along Lindwurmstrasse as envisioned, was ever completed during the Third Reich. See also below, May 22, 1938.
 192. Since he would be otherwise engaged, Hitler never realized any of the grandiose plans he announced on this day.
 193. These *obere Zehntausend*, the high society, had been instrumental to Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, a fact the Führer naturally never mentioned in his speeches.
 194. In the course of the Second World War, Hitler managed to present the world with “hideous monstrosities” far worse than these.
 195. This remark was aimed at the English in particular.
 196. The middle-class Russian Government under Minister-President Aleksandr Kerensky (1881–1970) was toppled by the Bolsheviks in 1917.
 197. Leon Blum (1872–1950), Socialist politician, repeatedly French Premier, had formed a government with the Communist party among others in 1936, called the popular front government. France was particularly interested in suppressing the Franco rebellion in Spain in order not to neighbor three Fascist regimes.
 198. This remark was directed against the German generals, who had doubted the success of the March occupation of the Rhineland.
 199. Published in VB, No. 262, September 18, 1936.
 200. Published in VB, No. 263, September 19, 1936.
 201. On September 12, 1936 in Nuremberg, Hitler had declared that the transportation network would be completed within four years time. See above, *ibid.*—Report on the Breslau speech in VB, No. 272, September 28, 1936.
 202. The armored ships were classed according to their constructional blueprint and listed alphabetically. The 26,000 (or rather 31,800) ton heavy warship D was the first battleship to be built after the First World War. The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that the construction of warships in excess of 10,000 tons was prohibited. In fact, none of the cruisers built prior to 1933 even approximated this maximum tonnage quota.
 203. Devaluations took place in the following countries: the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia.
 204. Published in VB, Berlin edition, October 5, 1936.
 205. Wording as published by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Führer Reden zum Winterhilfswerk 1933–1936* (Munich and Berlin, 1937).

206. The casualty and injury counts Hitler referred to in his speeches had a tendency to constantly be on the rise from one speech to the next, and by far exceeded the counts published in official reports of the NSDAP. See above, May 21, 1935.
207. Contrary to Hitler's assertions, there had never been any "forced labor camps" in the Weimar Republic, and his account was certainly not descriptive of the situation in Germany. Even had he intended instead to deplore and expose the existence of forced labor camps in the Soviet Union, his claim that their existence was endemic to Marxist or socialist systems was simply not true. Already under the Tsars, forced labor camps had served as a form of punishment in Russia.
208. Published in VB, No. 281, October 7, 1936.
209. Report in VB, No. 282, October 8, 1936.
210. RGBL. 1936, I, p. 887.
211. See below, December 17, 1936.
212. Report in VB, No. 299, October 25, 1936. Cf. Ciano's statements at a press conference in Munich on October 25, 1936 (DNB text, October 25, 1936); see *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, pp. 43 ff. and Bullock, p. 351.
213. DNB text, October 31, 1936. Published in VB, No. 307, November 2, 1936.
214. See above, November 13, 1932.
215. For details of this discussion cf. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, No. 303, December 12, 1964.
216. Published in VB, No. 315, November 10, 1936.
217. Hitler is alluding to the indecisiveness of Reichswehr General von Lussow who, according to Hitler's account before the People's Court of Justice in Munich, had agreed to cooperate in the 1923 Putsch only if "certain prerequisites" were fulfilled.
218. As is well known, Hitler was convinced that the German Army in 1918 had succumbed not to a numerically superior opponent, but rather that it had been penetrated and destroyed from within.
219. During the time period in which no German troops had been stationed in the Rhineland, Hitler had constantly worried about the possibility of an Allied military intervention. No doubt, such a move would have caused the National Socialists great difficulties domestically. Hitler now felt relieved of this concern.
220. DNB report, November 10, 1936.
221. Reports in VB, No. 318, November 13, 1936.
222. Report in VB, No. 319, November 14, 1936.
223. DNB report, November 19, 1936.
224. Ibid.
225. NSK report, November 20, 1936.
226. Report in VB, No. 330, November 25, 1936.
227. Ibid. The *Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches* (Eagle's Shield of the German Reich) medal was of bronze, 10.8 cm in diameter and rested on a bronze base. The sovereign symbol of the Reich was engraved on its face while its back side bore the recipient's name, along with a short

- dedication. The medal was intended for display, not wear. Up to 1941, Hitler distributed the award to thirty-seven men and women of the arts and humanities whom he thought deserving of such a distinction.
228. Italy acceded to the Anti-Comintern Pact on November 6, 1937. See below, *ibid.*
229. As future events would prove, the Japanese feared the Russians far less than the Anglo-Saxon Powers. In all likelihood, however, Hitler would have been only too happy to sacrifice the agreement with Japan to a similar agreement with Great Britain.
230. DNB text, November 25, 1936.
231. Report in VB, No. 333, November 28, 1936. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, born 1887 in Aplerbeck (Westphalia), head of German military intelligence (Abwehr) from 1935; suspected of involvement in the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt; subsequently imprisoned; executed in 1945 at the Flossenbürg concentration camp.
232. Report in VB, No. 332, November 27, 1936.
233. Report in VB, No. 334, November 29, 1936.
234. Report in VB, No. 336, December 1, 1936.
235. RGBL. 1936, I, p. 993.
236. Philipp Bouhler, born 1899, Chief of the Führer's Chancellery (Kanzlei des Führers), Hitler's Berlin Office; Bouhler published a book on Napoleon in 1942. His great-grandfather had taken part in the War of 1812.
237. Reports in VB, No. 338, December 3, 1936.
238. DNB report, December 8, 1936. Behind closed doors, the tonnage limit was raised to 31,800.
239. Reports in VB, Nos. 349 and 355, December 14 and 20, 1936.
240. Report in VB, No. 350, December 15, 1936. George VI had been crowned, following the abdication of his brother Edward VIII on December 10, 1936.
241. Report in VB, No. 352, December 17, 1936.
242. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, December 17, 1936.
243. Report in VB, No. 363, December 28, 1936.
244. Printed in VB, *ibid.*
245. Report in VB, No. 366, December 31,

The Year 1937

Notes

1. The Soldatenhund (or rather: NS Marinebund) existed from December 1935 until March 1938. The union had been created “with the approval of the Führer and Reich Chancellor.” However, it soon became obvious that the Soldatenhund represented an attempt, on the part of the military, at converting the Third Reich into a pure military dictatorship. The military men were convinced that the institutionalization of general conscription would extend their influence into the realm of private lives of Germany’s civilian population, thus significantly broadening their potential power base. They envisioned creating an association in which all active duty military personnel would automatically be enrolled. This would then permit the Commanders in Chief of Army and Navy to keep the enlisted men under constant surveillance. In concert with the existing Wehrkreise, the Soldatenbund classed its members in various groups. An officer headed each of these subdivisions. Retired Infantry General Freiherr Seutter von Lötzen served as the League’s Bundesführer in his capacity as the highest ranking officer among the group’s members. Cf. *DasArchiv*, edited by Alfred Ingemar Berndt (Berlin, December 21, 1935), p. 1204.

General Walter von Unruh (1877–1956) headed the Soldatenhund’s propaganda division. In the years 1942 through 1944, the Führer assigned Unruh the post of special commissioner responsible for overseeing the proper and most efficient allocation of soldiers in the war effort. This earned Unruh the nickname *Heldenklau* (thief of heroes) in a popular allusion to propaganda’s fuel-conservation campaign and its fictitious anti-hero *Kohlenklau* (thief of coals). From 1936 through 1937, Unruh traveled throughout Germany, speaking before groups of officers and expounding the goals and significance of his organization. In one address in Würzburg, Unruh reiterated the following:

“All unit leaders, station commanders and recruitment officers are responsible for ascertaining that every soldier and every reserve officer becomes a member of the Soldatenbund, after his term of duty has expired. There is no such thing as joining the association ‘voluntarily’ [as for instance its statutes required!] Whoever refuses to join the Soldatenbund will be kept on active duty until he has changed his mind. Only then will he know ‘true military spirit.’ In the future, the Soldatenbund will play a role of great importance in civilian life. It is planned to give each member of the Soldatenhund a rifle, a steel helmet and a uniform to take home with him. The ‘status of being on leave,’ [the official and highly appropriate terminology defining reserve duty needs to be transformed into a status of constant alertness. There will be drills every Sunday, even if they only take place in connection with soccer matches. Should the SA, SS and other party divisions be in need

of recruits, they should address the Soldatenbund and it will assign a number of its members to them, depending on the concrete situation.” (Quotation taken from the author’s notes at Unruh’s presentation on October 25, 1937.)

In early 1938, the Soldatenbund had a total membership of 350,000. This figure included the retired non-commissioned officers who were organized in the Reichstreubund, and hence were affiliated with the Soldatenbund. Cf. *Jahrbuch des Soldatenbundes* (Berlin, 1937/1938). Incidentally, this was the only yearbook ever published by the Soldatenbund. Under the influence of Göring, the Luftwaffe long refused to set up an organization corresponding to the reactionary Soldatenbund. It was not until October 1, 1937, that a Luftwaffenbund was founded. At this late a date, however, the issue had ceased to be of any importance. Cf. *Keesings Archiv der Gegenwart* (Vienna, 1937), p. 3237.

2. See below, speech of November 5, 1937, in the Reich Chancellery.
3. See below, October 29, 1937.
4. Hitler used this expression in his speech of October 16, 1932, see above, p. 170.
5. See below, May 31, 1937.
6. Hitler himself actually was in Berchtesgaden at the time.
7. Published in VB, No. 2/3, January 2/3, 1937.
8. Ibid.
9. DNB text, January 2, 1937. Archduke Friedrich Maria Albrecht of Austria-Hungary, Duke of Teschen, born 1856, had served as Field Marshal both in the Prussian and the Austro-Hungarian Army.
10. Printed in VB, No. 4, January 4, 1937. References here are made to the chief editor, retired Captain Wilhelm Weiss, and his deputy, SA Gruppenführer and retired Lieutenant Josef Berchtold who had led Hitler’s combat patrol (*Stosstrupp Hitler*) in the 1923 Putsch.
11. DNB text, January 5, 1937.
12. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1937.
13. DNB illustrated report, January 8, 1937.
14. Published in VB, No. 12, January 12, 1937.
15. DNB text, January 12, 1937. Printed in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1937. On January 8, the French press had falsely reported that strong German contingents had landed in Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish Morocco). German troops, however, had landed in Spain.
16. Published in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1937. The Adolf Hitler Schools were a type of Gymnasium (secondary school), usually established in connection with a boarding school, where the pupils wore uniforms. These schools were reserved for elite pupils, mostly sons of leading men in the Party etc., and are not to be confused with the *National-politische Erziehungsanstalten* (Napolas). The latter served as a type of cadet training institutions inundated with National Socialist doctrine; its pupils, however, did not enjoy any special privileges and, in part, former citadels were used to accommodate the cadets. This was the case in Oranienburg near Limburg, Hesse, for example.

The graduates of the Adolf Hitler Schools were housed in the Ordensburgen, reserved for the education of the new National Socialist leadership. Contrary to frequent and incorrect claims in the literature, the Ordensburgen were subordinate to Reichsleiters and not administered by the SS. In the Ordensburgen, the next generation was trained to follow in the footsteps of the Political Leaders. The students' school dress was an exact replica of the uniforms worn by the Political Leaders. On January 16, 1938, cornerstones for the first Adolf Hitler Schools were laid at Waldbröl near Cologne, Hesselberg, Mittenwald, and at various other locations.

17. Published in VB, No. 18, January 18, 1937.
18. The term Ordnungspolizei refers to members of the regular police force and gendarmerie who wore uniform. Investigators with the criminal police and Gestapo wore civilian dress.
19. Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, born 1879 in Lublinitz (Upper Silesia); State Secretary and Chief of the Reich Chancellery in 1933; Reich Minister in 1937.
20. Report on the roofing ceremony at Berchtesgaden in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1937.
21. Hitler is referring to a vacation trip he took on the steam ship *Robert Ley* from April 2 to 4, 1939. See below, April 1, 1939.
22. Two days earlier, Eden had taken a stand on the involvement of foreign powers in Spain and quite openly referred to Germany and Italy as principal agents. He had called upon Germany to abandon the idea of 'national exclusiveness,' and to no longer isolate itself in order to avoid aggravating tensions internationally.
23. Official announcement, published in VB, No. 22, January 22, 1937.
24. On such occasions, Hitler would not raise his arm as completely as Mussolini did. He would extend his right arm at an almost right angle, in order to lend a more military character to the previously informal Fascist salute. As army regulations would later stipulate, the greeting required the arm to be raised no higher than to eye level (*Hand in Augenhöhe*).
25. DNB reports, January 31, 1937.
26. Text printed in VB, special edition, January 31, 1937.
27. Reference is made here to Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles pertaining to the question of Germany's war guilt, as well as to regulations set down in the London Agreement of August 16, 1924. These rules concerned the August 30, 1924 Reich Laws (conversion of the Reichsbank into an enterprise independent of the Reich Government and the transformation of the Reichsbahn into a company). In 1929, a meeting of experts in Paris had already provided for exclusive German ownership of the Reichsbahn. Two conferences in The Hague in the years 1929 and 1930 re-established this status. In his policy statement of March 23, 1933, Hitler had nevertheless declared the "reintegration of the Reichsbahn under Reich authority" a "binding task." See above, p. 282.

28. Hitler is alluding to a statement made by the British Prime Minister Baldwin.
29. Hitler is alluding to the 1936 sanctions imposed upon Italy because of its aggression against Ethiopia. There is no substance to Hitler's claim that the League of Nations produced words only. It was effective in several instances, resolving international conflicts through its agency, and thus preventing the outbreak of open hostilities in a number of cases. Even Hitler had to grudgingly acknowledge the key role played by the League of Nations in the reintegration of the Saar in 1935.
30. Reference is made to a French press report speculating that Germany entertained territorial ambitions regarding Spanish Morocco. See above, January 12, 1937 and note 15.
31. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 736–742.
32. Allusion to the foreign press, in particular to publications in the Anglo-Saxon states.
33. Despite placing his signature beneath both agreements, Hitler respected neither the obligations incurred through the Munich Agreement of September 9, 1938, nor did he observe the stipulations of the German-British declaration of September 30, 1938.
34. The Golden Party Badge bore the regular symbol of the Party, surrounded by a golden laurel wreath. The medal Hitler introduced in 1933 was a pin of 3.1 cm in diameter, and was worn above the Iron Cross on the left chest. Initially, the award was restricted to recipients whose Party membership number was beneath 100,000 [thus effectively limiting its distribution to Party members of the first hour]. After January 30, 1937, other Party members received this distinction as well. In a number of cases, as in the one detailed above, non-Party members also received the Golden Party Badge which entailed instant membership for them.
35. Reference is made here to the trial against Bukharin, and several of Trotsky's relatives.
36. Carl von Ossietzky, born 1889 in Hamburg, died 1938 in Berlin; editor of the weekly *Weltbühne*, secretary of the German Peace Society; arrested and detained in a concentration camp. Following worldwide pleas for his release, Ossietzky was allowed to leave the camp in 1937, only to die shortly thereafter as a result of the unbearable conditions he had been subjected to in the camp. Swiss professor Carl Jakob Burckhardt, then League of Nations' Commissioner in Danzig, labored for Ossietzky's release in particular.
37. RGl. 1937, I, p. 305.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 95 f.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
42. Published in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1937.—Albert Speer, born 1905 in Mannheim, died 1981 in London; architect of the Reich Party Congress buildings in Nuremberg and other National Socialist facilities;

as successor to Fritz Todt, Reich Minister for Armament and Munitions in 1942 (for Armament and War Production from 1943 to 1945); sentenced to 20 years of prison at the 1946 Nuremberg trials; released in 1966.

43. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1937.
44. The ban on membership was recalled on May 1, 1937. Since precisely four years earlier, only members of the Hitler Youth and the Stahlhelm had been allowed to join the Party. In part the recall of the membership ban appears to have been justified by the expanding movement and, on the other hand, the increasing financial needs of the Party. By no means did the rejection of an application for membership in the Party represent a threat to the life and limb of the applicant. Harm could come only to public servants in the sense that membership in the Party was crucial to professional advancement.
Subsequent to 1945, American occupation authorities identified Party members in accordance with the following criteria: membership obtained after May 1, 1937, indicated Party members of lesser conviction. Persons who had joined the Party in 1933, were considered to have been more deeply involved in the Movement ideologically. Individuals who had pledged their allegiance to the Party in its early years, prior to 1933, were regarded as die-hard National Socialists. Parenthetically, it is important to note that the date of a person's entry into the Party is not indicative of this individual's ideological commitment to National Socialism. As a matter of fact, many of those who joined the Party in 1933, or at an even earlier date, would not have done so in 1937 after having witnessed four years of Hitler's rule.
45. Reference is made here to ministers von Neurath, Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, Gürtner, Schacht, and Eltz von Rübénach.
46. Dr. Johannes Popitz, born 1884 in Leipzig; Prussian Minister of Finance; imprisoned in connection with the events of July 20, 1944; hanged on February 2, 1945, in Berlin.
47. State Secretary in the Prussian State Ministry.
48. State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Aviation; appointed Field Marshal in 1940. Blomberg issued the following order of the day to the Wehrmacht on February 1 (VB, No. 34, February 2, 1937):
"On January 30, 1937, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht awarded the Golden Party Badge to Field Marshal von Blomberg, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, Admiral General Raeder, as well as to General der Flieger Milch. In doing so, the Führer has greatly honored these officers by presenting them with the greatest order in all of National Socialist Germany. Beyond its significance to the individual recipient, this order honors the entire Wehrmacht. The Führer has made plain that he sees both Party and Wehrmacht as the eternal guarantors of our Volk's survival and that, in this manner, he wishes to express his deep gratitude to the countless enlisted men and officers who have remained faithful to him and the National Socialist cause. This we have done and this we will continue to do for all time

to come. Our strength and our deeds, our earthly possessions and our blood belong to the Führer and the German Volk! *Heil dem Führer!*
von Blomberg, Field Marshal.”

Strictly speaking, the mentioned generals should have rejected this distinction, since the award implied simultaneous acquisition of membership in the Party. At the time, soldiers were not allowed to belong to a political organization.

49. See below, August 27, 1938.
50. Julius Dorpmüller, born 1896 in Elherfeld, died 1945 in MalentGremsmühlen.
51. DNB report, February 2, 1937. Published in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1937.
52. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, February 5, 1937.
53. Report in VB, No. 37, February 6, 1937.
54. Report in VB, No. 39, February 8, 1937.
55. Report in VB, No. 43, February 12, 1937.
56. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 203. Printed in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1937.
57. Report in VB, No. 49, Berlin Edition, February 18, 1937.
58. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 241.
59. On April 14, 1939 Hitler provided for the establishment of the *Spanienkreuz* (Cross of Spain) for the “services rendered by German volunteers in Spain’s struggle for freedom.” See below, April 14, 1939.
60. Published in VB, No. 53, February 22, 1937.
61. When war finally broke out, Hitler made an appeal to the NSDAP, employing similar terminology: “We have nothing to lose, but everything to win.” See below, September 3, 1939.
62. The following events marked the commemoration of the *Volkstrauertag* and *Heldengedenktag* in the years listed in parentheses: Hindenburg issues a decree permitting the swastika flag to be flown next to the black-white-red Reich flag (1933); Hindenburg provides for the introduction of the sovereign symbol of the Party to the Reichswehr (1934); reintroduction of general conscription (1935); occupation of the Rhineland (1936); Anschluss of Austria (1938); tension with the remainder of Czechoslovakia, imminent invasion by German troops (1939).
63. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, February 25, 1937. Records of the speech are on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 2).
64. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1937. A verbatim account of the interview was not published until 1938. Cf. VB, No. 176, June 25, 1938.
65. Reports in VB, Nos. 64 to 70, March 5 to 11, 1937.
66. Report in VB, No. 70, March 11, 1937.
67. Published in VB, No. 71, March 12, 1937.
68. Report in VB, *ibid.*
69. Reports in VB, No. 72, March 13, 1937.
70. Report in VB, *ibid.*
71. VB, No. 74, March 15, 1937.
72. See below, February 4, 1938.

73. Report in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1937.
74. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1937.
75. Published in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1937.
76. It is evident here, too, that what Hitler understood by weltanschaulich attitude was actually bravery, that had to be proven through displays of courage. In addition, the National Socialist Weltanschauung entailed the duty of blind obedience to Adolf Hitler and the unrelenting belief that everything he said was correct and just.
77. Ohnesorge announced this in a speech before postal clerks in Würzburg on May 23, 1937 (taken from the author's notes). Professor Richard Klein of Munich designed the stamp, drawn from a photograph by Heinrich Hoffmann. The stamp was 23 x 27.32 mm in size.
78. Cf. "Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen" in *Münchner Illustrierte*, 48 (1954), p. 18 ff.
79. Published in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1937.
80. *Art Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft*, 1, 1937.
81. Reference is made to the Christian churches. Point 24 of the program of the NSDAP read as follows: "We demand freedom for all religious groupings within the nation, as long as these do not pose a threat to its existence or go against the moral standards of the Germanic race. The Party itself adheres to a 'positive' Christianity, however, without binding itself with regard to a particular denomination." Cf. Hofer, p. 30.
82. Reference is made here to the religious movement "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis" and, in particular, to Ludendorff's wife Mathilde.
83. See below, November 9, 1937, exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Ludendorff.
84. Printed in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1937.
85. All other states dispatched at least their Foreign Ministers to attend the coronation ceremony.
86. Law of January 26, 1937. RGBL. 1937, I, pp. 91 ff.
87. Published in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1937.
88. Published in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1937.
89. Report in VB, No. 99, April 9, 1937.
90. Report in VB, No. 107, April 17, 1937.
91. Report in VB, No. 113, April 23, 1937.
92. Speaking before the press on April 22, 1937, Krauss declared that his discussion with Hitler and Göring supposedly had "not touched upon the situation in Austria and within the Austrian Army." Cf. report in VB, No. 113, April 23, 1937.
93. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 343 f.
94. Published in VB, No. 110, April 20, 1937.
95. DNB report, April 20, 1937.
96. Friedrich Christian Christiansen, born 1879 in Wyk on the island of Föhr; awarded the "Pour le mérite" medal in 1917; commander of the flying boat 'Do X' in 1932; department head in the Reich Ministry of Aviation from 1933 to 1935; Corps Leader of the NSFK from 1937 to

1943; General der Flieger in 1938; Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands from 1940 to 1945. In 1943, Colonel General Alfred Keller succeeded Christiansen as Corps Leader of the NSFK.

97. See above, April 20, 1936.
98. Report in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1937.
99. The “completely unexpected,” i.e. surprising nature of Hitler’s arrival, as cited in this utterly ridiculous report of his visit, represents a device his assistants used repeatedly in an effort to calm Hitler’s fear of an assassination attempt. Hitler constantly worried that if his whereabouts or arrival times were too well known beforehand, this might endanger his life. Cf. Baur, p. 104.
100. Report in VB, No. 115, April 25, 1937.
101. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1937. A record of the speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 2a/EW 67 207–67 245).
102. Called Ordensjunkers, not to be confused with the SS Junkers who constituted the next generation of leaders for the SS.
103. See above, April 24, 1936.
104. Report in VB, No. 121/122, May 1/2, 1937.
105. Once designated a “NS Musterbetrieb”, the business would receive a specially manufactured business flag as a reward for its efforts. In addition, a metal plate was affixed above the entrance. Both the DAF symbol (swastika and machine wheel) and classification as “NS Musterbetrieb” would be engraved on a plaque above the business’ entrance. Post Offices frequently were designated this way.
106. Report in VB, No. 121/122, May 1/2, 1937. The speeches given on the occasion of May Day and reports on the festivities were published in VB, No. 123, May 3, 1937.
107. Parody on the closing lines of Catholic liturgy: “Et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum” (From now until the end of time).
108. Here Hitler is alluding to charges of sexual misconduct brought against a number of Catholic clergymen at the time.
109. One cannot help the feeling that Hitler was attempting to proclaim May Day a “National Socialist Easter.”
110. Report in VB, No. 127, May 7, 1937. The KdF ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* served as battleship in the Second World War and later was also used to evacuate refugees from East Germany. The ship was named for the head of the NSDAP in Switzerland, Landesgruppenführer Wilhelm Gustloff, who had been assassinated in 1936 (see above, February 4, 1936). In 1945, the ship was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea, and sank with numerous refugees on board.
111. Published in VB, No. 128, May 8, 1937.—Hitler himself disliked zeppelins, and therefore he had resisted Goebbels’ suggestion to name the ‘LZ 129’ after him. For Hitler, a zeppelin was an unnatural creation since it did not have a corresponding image among natural flying creatures. Cf. Picker, P. 159.
112. The speech and Hitler’s reply to it were printed in VB, No. 132, May 12,

1937. Henderson had been named Ambassador earlier, on February 5, 1937, as successor to Sir Eric Phipps, but had not arrived in Berlin until this date.
113. Published in VB, No. 132, May 12, 1937.
 114. Report in VB, *ibid.*
 115. *Ibid.*
 116. Report in VB, No. 141, May 21, 1937. The speech contained many details on well-known Hitler's ideas on the subjects of productivity, buying power, stability of prices and wages, and the relationship of manpower to currency regulations. A record of the speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 3/EW 67 39767 427).
 117. Report in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1937.
 118. Published in VB, No. 144, May 24, 1937.
 119. Report in VB, No. 146/147, May 26/27, 1937. The Reich Military Research and Development Council had been established on March 16, 1937, as provided for in the Four-Year Plan. Reich Minister of Education Rust appointed General Karl Becker as president of the Council. Becker had previously served as dean and lecturer at the Faculty of Defense Technology of the Technical University in Berlin.
 120. Reports in VB, No. 148, May 28, 1937.
 121. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, June 1, 1937.
 122. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, May 30, 1937.
 123. DGFP, D, III, no. 267, pp. 296 f. Originally published as DNB text, May 30, 1937.
 124. The legal Government of Spain at the time had its headquarters in Valencia.
 125. The amount of casualties would rise to 23 men, whose names were published. However, in his speech in Wtirzburg, Hitler reported 31 sailors dead. See below, June 27, 1937.
 126. DNB text, May 31, 1937.
 127. The port of Almería, located in southern Spain, had 60,000 inhabitants. One German armored ship and four destroyers began firing at 5:45 a.m. (local time) from a distance of 12.5 nautical miles. According to governmental sources in Spain, the ships fired 200 rounds, leveling 39 homes. Several other houses sustained severe damage. Initial reports placed the death toll at 21 and injuries to 53 persons. Spanish shore batteries returned fire for approximately 70 rounds. DNB reports, May 31, 1937.
 128. DNB text, *ibid.*
 129. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1937.
 130. *Ibid.*
 131. Published in VB, No. 156, June 5, 1937. General Mola had been the officer in command of Franco's army in the North. Mola's plane had crashed in the fog close to Bilbao.
 132. The Gau Bayerische Ostmark encompassed the districts Upper Franconia, Upper Palatinate, and Lower Bavaria.
 133. Reports in VB, No. 158, June 7, 1937.

134. Published in VB, *ibid.*
135. Hitler was alluding to the increasingly skeptical Reich Minister of Economics, Schacht.
136. The term *Gottgläubigkeit* (belief in God) indicated that while certain National Socialists believed in the existence of one god (a German-Germanic one), these men rejected the traditional Christian schools of thought. Thus they stood in direct opposition to Point 24 of their own NSDAP Party Program which stipulated “positive Christianity.” On official documents, National Socialists accepted “gottgläubig” as a separate denomination as valid as “Protestant” or “Catholic.” Apart from the SS men, there were actually very few among the NSDAP members who left their respective churches to officially join the ranks of the “believers in God.” Hitler himself continued to pay his taxes to the Catholic church until he died. Cf. Zoller, p. 193.
137. These figures are incorrect. On an average only half the German population died as a result of the Thirty Years’ War.
138. Report in VB, No. 165, June 14, 1937.
139. Published in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1937.
140. Reports in VB, No. 169, June 18, 1937.
141. Report in VB, No. 171, June 20, 1937.
142. DNB report, June 20, 1937.
143. Dr. Bernhard Wilhelm von Bülow, born 1885 in Potsdam, died 1936 in Berlin; a nephew of the former Reich Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow; State Secretary in the Foreign Office since 1930.
144. DNB text, June 21, 1937.
145. Reports in VB, No. 172, June 21, 1937.
146. *Ibid.*
147. Published in VB, No. 177, June 26, 1937.
148. Report in VB, No. 170, June 24, 1937.
149. DNB text, June 26, 1937.
150. The NSDAP Gau Mainfranken encompassed what is today the district of Lower Franconia.
151. The last words of this sentence were inaudible because of the loud applause.
152. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1937.
153. Report in VB, No. 196, July 15, 1937.
154. Report in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1937.
155. Published in VB, No. 200, July 19, 1937.
156. Hitler had bestowed the title of professor on Frau Troost.
157. Published in VB, No. 202, July 21, 1937. There is also mention of a telegram to the widow of Marconi.
158. DNB text, July 21, 1937. Published in VB, No. 203, July 22, 1937.
159. Report in VB, No. 205, July 24, 1937.
160. Report in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1937.
161. Report in VB, No. 213, August 1, 1937.
162. Published in VB, No 214, August 2, 1937.
163. In this context as well it is evident that Hitler understood the term

- “Almighty” to refer to a god that existed exclusively for the German people. It is interesting to note how Hitler’s will becomes mingled with that of his god (“our will”).
164. Published in VB, No. 214, August 2, 1937.
 165. Report in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1937.
 166. Published in VB, No. 216, August 4, 1937.
 167. Published in VB, No. 219, August 7, 1937.
 168. Report in VB, No. 230, August 18, 1937.
 169. Published in VB, *ibid.* The upcoming birthday of Hindenburg was going to be on October 2, 1937.
 170. Reports in VB, No. 229, August 17, 1937.
 171. DNB text, August 16, 1937.
 172. Published in VB, No. 245, September 2, 1937.
 173. Unless otherwise specified, Hitler’s speeches at the 1937 Party Congress are cited from the Eher pamphlet, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ehre 1937* (Munich, 1938). These speeches are also reprinted in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.
 174. Schacht was removed from his office as Minister of Economics, but remained in the Cabinet as Reich Minister without Portfolio up to 1944.
 175. In his address on the Day of German Art, Hitler had declared that it was not the “intent” of a work that mattered but rather the “ability” of the artist. See above, speech of July 19, 1937.
 176. The weapons referred to are pistol, carbine and bayonet. In addition to the bayonet, Prussian policemen also bore a truncheon in the years prior to 1933, a fact that irked National Socialists in particular.
 177. DNB report, September 10, 1937.
 178. Allusion to the foreign press.
 179. Expression coined by Karl Brögers. See above, p. 132.
 180. The mysterious painting was made by the famous portraitist Franz von Lenbach (1836–1904). According to Hitler’s statements, he himself had bought it for 34,000 marks in 1934. Cf. Baur, p. 276.
 181. DNB report, September 12, 1937.
 182. DNB report, September 13, 1937.
 183. Incorrectly cited in the Eher text as “proclamatory.”
 184. These proofs consisted of the “statistical” figures Rosenberg had presented at the Party Congress in 1936.
 185. Hitler’s conclusion is obviously a faulty one, since the “Star of David” has six points whereas the Soviet Star has only five.
 186. Coined by Hitler, the term “Germanic Reich of the German Nation” is his personal alteration of the term “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” that had existed from the 15th century until 1806. Hitler’s formulation of the term underscored his desire to unite all nations of the “Germanic race” beneath the German flag. He did not limit his scope to German speaking people, but also sought to include the British—the *Brudervolk*—and all Nordic peoples as well as the Dutch in his grand scheme. Further, he saw the territories to be conquered in Eastern Europe as future colonies for this new form of state. The Führer

had already resolved the question of the future for the population groups that had settled within these regions, i.e. in Poland, the Baltic States, and Russia: either they chose to live in servitude under German leadership or they faced extermination. Cf. Hans-Dietrich Looock, "Zur 'grossgermanischen Politik' des Dritten Reiches," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 37 ff.

187. Prior to returning the Italian visit in 1938, Hitler ordered uniforms tailored especially for the German Diplomatic Corps. The suit's cut was a strictly military one, the cloth of a gray-blue shade, replete with dagger. Schmidt, p. 383, dubbed the combination the "admiral's uniform."
188. RGBL. 1937, I, p. 1013.
189. This reserve on the part of Munich's citizens was particularly evident in 1938 on the occasion of the Four-Power Agreement. Crowds welcomed Chamberlain and Daladier far more enthusiastically and cordially than they greeted Hitler. See below, September 30, 1938; cf. Schmidt, pp. 417 f.
190. The document read verbatim:
"Adolf Hitler, Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich and Volk, herewith is named honorary corporal of the MVSN [Militia Voluntaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale; Voluntary Militia for the National Security]. As Führer of the German Volk, he has restored to Germany the belief in its own, new greatness. With a determined hand, he leads the German nation onward toward its great destiny. He has proven to Italy his unrestrained friendship and communion with its people in their hour of need. He has thwarted all assaults upon European culture as its representative and foremost guardian.
Rome, September 24, 1937—XVth year of the Fascist era.
The Supreme Commander, Mussolini"
191. See above, p. 408.
192. The insignia consisted of a triangular sleeve badge with fasces.
193. On May 1, 1937, Hitler established this award in order to honor meritorious foreigners. It was awarded in various categories: Grand Cross, Distinguished Service Cross with Star, etc. The order was in the form of a gold-edged, eight-point cross made of white enamel. In each of its four angles, the cross bore an eagle with swastika. The Grand Cross consisted of a star to be worn on the recipient's chest and fastened by means of a red shoulder strap with white-black-white edgings. Upon appointment to the office, every foreign minister had the order automatically bestowed upon him.
194. DNB report, September 25, 1937.
195. DNB report, September 26, 1937.
196. Buna, short for *Butadien-Natrium* (butadiene sodium), trademark for synthetic rubber.
197. Published in VB, No. 271, September 28, 1937.
198. According to official figures (DNB), 650,000 persons had marched up and another 120,000 had assembled in the adjacent stadium. In his

- speech, however, Hitler spoke of “over one million people”.
199. Published in VB, No. 272, September 29, 1937.
 200. Allusion to Germany’s stance during the Abyssinian War and the sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations.
 201. In near identical wording, on March 13, 1938, Hitler thanked Mussolini for his attitude to the Anschluss of Austria.
 202. See above, April 20, 1936.
 203. Cf. Benito Mussolini, *La dottrina del Fascismo* (Milan, 1932).
 204. Report in VB, No. 274, October 1, 1937.
 205. The 1938 Erntedankfest had to be canceled because of the invasion of the Sudetenland. During the Second World War, no more harvest festivals took place. Hitler gave his last Erntedankfest address on October 3, 1937. Published in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1937.
 206. Published in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1937.
 207. Published in VB, No. 279, October 6, 1937.
 208. See above, p. 539.
 209. Parody of the “copper coins of the widow.” Luke 21, 4; Mark 12, 44.
 210. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, October 16, 1937.
 211. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 745 ff.
 212. Cf. Schmidt, p. 375.
 213. Report in VB, No. 296, October 23, 1937.
 214. Cf. Schmidt, p. 376.
 215. Report in VB, No. 302, October 29, 1937.
 216. Published in VB, *ibid.*
 217. Report in VB, No. 304, October 31, 1937.
 218. John 16,12.
 219. Kurt Lüdecke, *I knew Hitler* (London, 1938), cited in Bullock, p. 381.
 220. See below, order of January 11, 1940.
 221. It seems as though the time from mid-October to mid-November constituted a particular constellation for Hitler. On several occasions, he then appeared to be predisposed to a violent resolution of problems at hand which, however, had a tendency to turn against him in the end: 1923, the aborted Putsch attempt in Munich; 1937, the decision to take an aggressive stance in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Austria; 1938, the decision to annex the remainder of Czechoslovakia by force; 1939, the decision to immediately go ahead with the offensive to the West. One wonders why the—in his eyes—negative results of November 9, 1918 for Germany (“legend of the stab in the back”) and of November 8/9, 1923 for him personally had not served as a warning to a man as suspicious and superstitious as Hitler, but, on the contrary, seemed to have incited him. The “coincidence” that Hitler would attack Russia on exactly the same day (June 22) as Napoleon, can be considered as similarly conspicuous.
 222. Conference in the Reich Chancellery. See below, November 5, 1937.
 223. Notes taken by the author on October 31, 1937, according to information related by the Gau Propagandaleiter Waldemar Vogt (Würzburg, later Berlin).

224. The term Anschluss at the time referred to the unification of Austria and the Third Reich, and has become part of the vocabulary in various foreign languages.
225. Cf. Schmidt, p. 347.
226. Telegram thanking Mussolini. See below, March 13, 1938.
227. *Fall Otto* was the code name for military action directed against Austria. The name stood for Otto of Habsburg, the pretender to the Austrian throne.
228. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 739 f.
229. Hitler referred to the Anti-Comintern Pact in these terms. See below, speech of November 8, 1937.
230. Report in VB, No. 309, November 5, 1937. On November 4, 1937, the Italian Minister of Justice, Solmi, visited Hitler in Berlin. He also received calls from the newly appointed Venezuelan Envoy Dr. Herrera and the Iranian Envoy Nader Arasteh.
231. VB, No. 310, November 6, 1937.
The text of the joint declaration of the German and Polish Governments, published on November 5, 1937, concerning treatment of their respective minorities, read verbatim:
The German Government and the Polish Government have taken occasion to make the position of the German minority in Poland and of the Polish minority in Germany the subject of a friendly discussion. They agree in the conviction that the treatment of these minorities is of great importance for the further development of friendly and neighborly relations between Germany and Poland, and that in each of the two countries the well-being of the minority can be the more surely guaranteed if it is certain that the same principles will be observed in the other country. The two Governments are therefore pleased to be able to declare that each of the two States, within the framework of its sovereignty, regards the following principles as determining for the treatment of the said minorities:
- 1) Mutual respect for German and Polish nationality in itself precludes any attempt to assimilate the minority by force, to question membership in the minority, or to hinder profession of membership in the minority. In particular, no pressure of any kind will be exerted on youthful members of the minority in order to alienate them from their adherence to such minority.
 - 2) Members of the minority shall have the right to the free use of their language in speech and in writing, in their personal and economic relations, in the press, and in public meetings.
 - 3) The right of members of the minority to unite in associations, including those of a cultural and economic nature, shall be guaranteed.
 - 4) The minority may maintain and establish schools in its mother tongue.
- With respect to church life, the members of the minority shall have the right to practice their religion in their mother tongue and to organize their own churches. There shall be no interference with existing

conditions in the matters of faith and of charitable activities.

5) Members of the minority may not, because of their membership in such minority, be hindered or prejudiced in their choice or exercise of an occupation or economic activity. In the economic field they shall enjoy the same rights as the members of the majority nationality in the State, particularly with respect to ownership or acquisition of real property.

The above principles shall in no way affect the duty of members of the minority to give their undivided loyalty to the State to which they belong. These principles are laid down in an effort to assure the minority equitable living conditions and a harmonious coexistence with the majority nationality; this will contribute to progressive strengthening of friendly and neighborly relations between Germany and Poland.

DGFP, D, V, no. 18, pp. 24 ff.

232. VB, No. 310, November 6, 1937.

233. "Danzig ist mit Polen verbunden." Cf. *Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-1939* (London, 1939), pp. 3638. (Hereafter referred to as the *Polish White Book*.)

234. Friedrich Hossbach, born 1894, died 1980; Chief in the Central Department of the General Staff and Wehrmacht adjutant to Hitler from August 3, 1934, to January 1, 1938; Infantry General and Commander of the Fourth Army in 1944-45.

235. DGFP, D, I, no. 19, pp. 29 ff. Original text published in IMT, 386 PS. Also printed in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *1939-1945—Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten* (Darmstadt, 1959), pp. 83 ff.

236. Evidently Hitler thought he could duplicate a strategy Bismarck had employed in 1866. Bismarck had invaded Bohemia while Italy was preoccupied with the war to its south.

237. Statement made in Borrisow, Headquarters of the Heeresgruppe Mitte, autumn of 1941. See below, September 24, 1941. Also printed in Schlabrendorff, p. 60.

238. Blomberg, Fritsch, and Neurath would be dismissed from office in February 1938. See below; February 4, 1938.

239. Taken from the author's notes. The public rally was an assembly of mayors of towns in Lower Franconia on the morning of March 3, 1938.

240. Both telegrams were published in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1937.

241. *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, p. 143.

242. Report in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1937.

243. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1937. Records of this speech have been preserved and its text is being kept in the archives of the Munich magazine *Quick*.

244. Reference is made to world Jewry, or rather to the supposedly existing, secret Jewish world government.

245. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1937.

246. DNB report, November 10, 1937. The recruits referred to were those of the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, the *SS Standarten Deutschland* and

- Germania*, the *SS Totenkopfverbände* (Death's Heads units), special police formations, the *SS Führerschulen* (leader schools) Braunschweig and Bad Tölz, as well as of a few pioneer and communication units.
247. Report in VB, No. 324, November 20, 1937. See also Schmidt, pp. 377 ff.; Bullock, pp. 366 f.; DGFP, D, I, nos. 20–22, pp. 39–71.
 248. DGFP, *ibid.*, pp. 55 ff.
 249. Report in VB, No. 326, November 22, 1937.
 250. Published in VB, *ibid.*
 251. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.
 252. Report in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1937.
 253. Report in VB, No. 328, November 24, 1937.
 254. The 'secret speech' was published as an appendix to Picker, pp. 443 ff. The report of the speech there does not correspond to its verbatim content in some instances. Therefore the author has amended several misquotes. Records of the speech are on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 5/EW 68 368–68 400).
 255. "Germanic Emperors" had never existed.
 256. The figure is an arbitrary one. There were not even ten million organized National Socialists in the strict sense of the term (i.e. Party members or members of one of the formations). However, if Hitler was also counting the entire youth movement, the members of the DAF, NSV, etc., as part of the organized membership, he might as well have said forty million.
 257. Report in VB, No. 330, November 26, 1937.
 258. *Ibid.*
 259. Published in VB, No. 331, November 27, 1937.
 260. DNB text, November 26, 1937.
 261. Karl Hanke, born 1903 in Lauban; a vocational school teacher by profession; Gauleiter in Breslau in 1941, designated for Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police in 1945 by the provisions of Hitler's last will; supposedly slain by Czechs as an unknown SS man in May of 1945.
 262. DNB text, November 27, 1937.
 263. Report in VB, No. 338, December 4, 1937.
 264. Report in VB, No. 341, December 7, 1937.
 265. DNB report, December 7, 1937.
 266. DNB text, December 12, 1937.
 267. Hitler's generalization on the topic of the League of Nations lacked justification. Even Hitler himself had to concede the effectiveness of the League after the Saar plebiscite. See above, March 1, 1935.
 268. This was an indirect appeal to all smaller nations to henceforth better listen to the Führer and not to the League of Nations.
 269. While Hitler did not expand upon the topic in this context, the reasons were indeed the very same ones in all three countries. Japan, Germany, and Italy pursued an aggressive policy of expansion at the expense of other states. The League of Nations' objection to such an approach greatly inconvenienced them.

270. Report in VB, No. 353, December 19, 1937. Hitler never considered road construction projects in other countries, such as in the United States, to be of any consequence to the comparisons he drew. It must also have slipped his memory that he had already accorded the title of “greatest constructional undertaking on earth” to the Stadium in Nuremberg. See above, September 6 and 7, 1937.
271. Report in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1937.
272. Ibid.
273. Report in VB, No. 354, December 20, 1937.
274. Published in VB, No. 355, December 21, 1937.
275. Ibid.
276. As Ludendorff’s resting place, Hitler had considered the Neue Soldatenhalle (Soldiers’ Memorial Hall) in Berlin. Cf. Picker, pp. 233 and 398.
277. Report in VB, No. 357, December 23, 1937.
278. Reports in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1937.
279. Report in VB, *ibid.*
280. Report in VB, No. 364, December 30, 1937.
281. Published in VB, No. 3, January 3,

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Notes

1. Hitler had referred to Göring in this manner in an address before the leaders of Germany's economy. See above, December 17, 1936.
2. See above, 1937, note 1.
3. See below, September 14, 1938.
4. Speaking before the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht, Hitler had employed this term in reference to the British and French statesmen who had partaken in the Munich Conference. See below, August 22, 1939.
5. See below, September 30, 1938.
6. Cf. Schmidt, p. 417.
7. According to Schacht's testimony before the Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Hitler lost his temper after the Munich Conference and exclaimed: "Chamberlain, that bastard (*dieser Kerl*), has ruined my entry into Prague." IMT, Vol. XIII, p. 4.
8. See below, October 9, 1938.
9. See below, November 8, 1938.
10. See above, February 12, 1936.
11. See above, p. 170.
12. Published in VB, No. 3, January 3, 1938.
13. DNB text, January 2, 1938.
14. DNB report, *ibid*.
15. Announcement in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1938.
16. Report in Vß, Nos. 9 and 10, January 9 and 10, 1938.
17. DNB text, January 11, 1938.
18. Reports in VB, No. 12. 1938.
19. Reports in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1938.
20. Title of a film produced in 1933, *Hitlerjunge Quex*, based on a novel initially published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.
21. As Bullock states, p. 416.
22. Cf. Zoller, pp. 128 ff.
23. Cf. Theodor Eschenburg, "Die Rolle der Persönlichkeit," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (1961), p. 14.
24. Report in V13, No. 13, January 13, 1938.
25. Report in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1938.
26. According to the newspaper *Novosti*. DNB report, January 16, 1938.
27. Report in VB, No. 18, January 18, 1938.
28. Printed in VB, No. 24, January 24, 1938.
29. For details on the Fritsch Affair see Graf Kielmannsegg, *Der Fritsch-Prozess* (Hamburg, 1949), Hermann Foertsch, *Schuld und Verhängnis. Die Fritschkrise im Frühlabr 1938* (Stuttgart, 1951), and Harold C. Deutsch, *Hitler and his Generals. The Hidden Crisis January-June 1938* (St. Paul, 1974).
30. On September 22, 1939, Fritsch died under mysterious circumstances.

He allegedly sustained injuries while leading his company in an attack upon Warsaw. Shot in the thigh, he collapsed in the street and died as a consequence of the severe loss of blood from the wound. When informed of Fritsch's death, Hitler barely looked up and took little note of the news. Unmoved, he went on with that day's business. Cf. Baur, p. 180. A photograph of an empty Warsaw street was presented to the public as evidence of Fritsch's supposedly heroic death. According to Foertsch, p. 134, Fritsch actually committed suicide.

31. Court-martial investigation of the Fritsch case began on March 17, 1935. Göring presided over the trial after his timely promotion to the rank of Field Marshal. The inquiry revealed that the accusations brought against Fritsch in truth pertained to another man. In fact, Schmidt, the sole witness in the trial had actually observed a retired captain of the cavalry by the name of Frisch engaging in homosexual activities. Taking advantage of the similarity of surnames, the Gestapo had coached Schmidt in his testimony against Fritsch. However, Schmidt failed to be convincing and paid with his life for it—he was murdered. It took time before Freiherr von Fritsch's name was officially "cleared." As a gesture of rehabilitation to please the General staff, Hitler appointed him Chief of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment on August 11, 1938. See below, *ibid.*
32. Lieutenant Colonel Rudolf Schmudt succeeded Colonel Hossbach. Later, Schmudt was promoted to the rank of general. He sustained severe injuries as a result of the 1944 attempt on Hitler's life. See below, July 20, 1944.
33. Published in VB, No. 30, January 30, 1938.
34. See below, speech of February 20, 1938.
35. Reports in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1938.
36. On the medal a star-shaped order was surrounded by numerous small diamonds. On the front of the medal, the head of Athena was engraved in a gold casing. The medal was worn on the left chest and attached by means of a wide ribbon.
37. The objects in question were cross-shaped orders and medals which were awarded in different categories (bronze, silver, and gold), according to the recipient's years of service with the military. The badges were worn with the uniform on a blue ribbon, strongly reminiscent of medals Hitler had presented to the Wehrmacht on March 16, 1936, on the first anniversary of the reintroduction of general conscription.
38. See above, p. 146. For details on the reception by Hitler, cf. also Bullock, p. 418.
39. Beck resigned as Chief of the General Staff on August 27, 1938 because he could not reconcile himself to Hitler's plans for war. Beck later became active in the resistance movement. Subsequent to the precipitous July 20, 1944 report of Hitler's assassination, Beck unwittingly placed himself at the disposal of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. At the request of General Fromm, Commander of the Replacement Army, Beck shot himself on the spot.

40. Report in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1938.
41. Reports in VB, Nos. 34 and 35, February 3 and 4, 1938.
42. RGBL, 1938, I, p. 111.
43. DNB text, February 4, 1938.
44. Ibid.
45. DNB reports, *ibid.*
46. Brauchitsch was forced to retire on December 19, 1941; Hitler not only blamed him for the failure of the offensive in Russia, in particular did he want to exercise the Supreme Command of the Army himself.
47. See above, 1935, note 259.
48. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1938.
49. DNB report, February 4, 1938.
50. The men in question were Reich Ministers Rudolf Hess, Hans Frank, Hjalmar Schacht, Hans Heinrich Lammers, and Otto Meissner. On February 1, 1937, Meissner had been promoted to the rank of minister thus bearing the title of "State Minister."
51. See above, p. 340.
52. See above, November 26, 1937.
53. By 1936, Hitler had reduced the number of times the cabinet was in session to an absolute minimum and governed in a most high-handed manner. After 1936, he no longer took any pretense and did not sign decrees into law exclusively in Berlin, the city which remained the official seat of government. Instead, he would issue decrees from wherever he happened to be at the moment, be it in Berchtesgaden, Munich, or Nuremberg. The Cabinet Privy Council existed on paper only. It was quite transparent that Hitler had created the council simply to remove Neurath from the Foreign Ministry in a manner less conspicuous than an outright dismissal. A so-called Reich Defense Council was created subsequent to the outbreak of the Second World War, strongly reminiscent of the Cabinet Privy Council, nearly all the former members of which sat on the Reich Defense Council as well. This notwithstanding, neither body ever convened.
54. RGBL, 1938, I, p. 112.
55. DNB text, February 2, 1938.
56. Ibid.
57. In his 1946 testimony before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Ribbentrop maintained the following (see IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, pp. 274 f. and 468 ff.):
"When I took over the Reich Foreign Ministry, I was aware from the beginning that I would be working, let me say, in the shadow of a titan. I would have to exercise great constraint, that is to say, that I would not be in a position to conduct foreign policy ... in the fashion a foreign minister normally would. [—]
"Naturally, the overpowering personality of the Führer dominated the conduct of foreign policy as well. He always attended to it in great detail. I was always loyal to Hitler. I carried out his orders in spite of the fact that I frequently disagreed with him and we had serious

differences. I offered to resign on various occasions. However, whenever Hitler ordered me to do something, I always carried out the order in accordance with the principles of our *Führerstaat*”

When Undersecretary Adolf Freiherr von Steengracht took the witness stand in 1946, he declared the following (*ibid.*, pp. 124 f.): “Hitler did not merely issue guidelines for the conduct of foreign affairs, but also often involved himself in the most minute details. Frequently, Ribbentrop would say that the Führer had actually no need for a foreign minister, all he really wanted was a secretary for foreign affairs.”

Von Steengracht further stated that Ribbentrop’s importance was even less than that of a possible secretary: “Perhaps [as secretary], Ribbentrop at least might have been in a position to influence the writing of speeches on foreign matters. However, Hitler always wrote these speeches himself without any prior consultation with Ribbentrop.”

58. DNB text, February 4, 1938.
59. DNB text, February 5, 1938.
60. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Mussolini according to DNB text, February 5, 1938.
61. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and France according to DNB text, February 7, 1938. Also printed in VB, No. 39, February 8, 1938.
62. Statement of Josef Berchtold to the author on February 7, 1938.
63. See above, pp. 504 ff.
64. Wilhelm Keppler, born 1882 in Heidelberg, died 1960 in Kressbronn; Hitler’s economic adviser; president of the Reich office of Soil Research; State Secretary for special duties in the Reich Foreign Ministry; Reich Commissioner (Reichsbeauftragter) for Austria from March 18, 1938, within the Four-Year Plan. Keppler was instrumental in bringing about the meeting of Hitler and von Papen. He did so in his capacity as President of the Reich Office of Soil Research.
65. Statement made by Field Marshal Erhard Milch (born 1892 in Wilhelmshaven, died 1972 in Wuppertal). Testifying before the International Military Tribunal, he recalled the following later comment by Hitler on the subject: “When Schuschnigg came to visit, I had my two crudest looking generals parade in the anteroom” (the men in question were Generals Sperrle and Reichenau). Cf. *Neue Zeitung*, June 19, 1948.
66. On the conversation between Hitler and Schuschnigg cf. Kurt von Schuschnigg’s autobiographies, *Ein Requiem in Rot-WeissRot* (Zurich, 1947) and “Aufzeichnungen des Häftlings Dr. Auster,” in *Neue Rundschau* (Stockholm, April 1946) and *Neue Zeitung*, June 28, and July 1, 1946; cf. also Franz von Papen, *Der Wahrheitsine Gasse* (Munich, 1952) pp. 467 ff., and Hitler’s speeches of February 20, March 8, March 25, and April 3, 1938. See below, *ibid.*
67. See below, March 18, 1938.
68. See below, March 25, 1938.
69. In a similar fashion, Hitler would later instigate a confrontation with the Czechoslovakian President Beneš (see below, September 26, 1938). He did not aim to secure a peaceful electoral process, however. It was a

- question of power politics for him.—Dr. Edvard Beneš (1884–1948), Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister 1918–35, also Prime Minister 1921–22; President of the Czechoslovakian Republic from December 1935 to October 1938; lived in exile in France and England 1938–45.
70. With the words “at the German borders,” Hitler referred to the states bordering Germany, alluding to the suppression of the National Socialist coup attempt in Austria. See above, July 24, 1934.
 71. Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart, born 1892 in Stannern; lawyer by profession; appointed Minister of the Interior on February 16, 1938; named Federal Chancellor on March 12, 1938; Reich Minister in 1939; Reichskommissar for the Netherlands from 1940 to 1945; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
 72. DNB text, February 16, 1938.
 73. See IMT, 1780 PS.
 74. DNB text, February 16, 1938.
 75. Ibid.
 76. Report in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1938.
 77. Published in VB, No. 50, February 19, 1938.
 78. Text according to the Eher pamphlet, *Führerbotschaft an Volk und Welt. Reichstagsrede vom 20. Februar 1938* (Munich, 1938).
 79. Hitler was referring to the then residence of Reich President Hindenburg who lived in the old Chancellery building in Wilhelmstrasse.
 80. Reference is made to Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) who served as Premier of France repeatedly. However, Clemenceau never employed the phrase Hitler attributed to him. See below, September 3, 1939.
 81. On September 1, 1939, Hitler reported that he had spent RM 90 billion on armament. Back in 1932, however, he had claimed that the RM 3 billion (in reparation costs demanded of Germany) would spell certain ruin for the country. See below, September 1, 1939.
 82. He meant to say that the emblem was attached to the cap.
 83. Hitler made this statement in an attempt to rouse the British. Such sentiments notwithstanding, he made overtures to the British in 1939, offering the assistance of German troops in the defense of the Empire. See below, August 27, 1939.
 84. Allusion to letters written by members of the House of Commons on the subject of sentences passed by the People’s Court of justice.
 85. This was intended as a warning to the Western Powers. Hitler felt that these had best desist from any opposition to Germany’s policy of expansion in the East.
 86. Reference is made to Dr. Carl Jakob Burckhardt, born 1891 in Basel, died 1974 in Geneva; Swiss professor; League of Nations’ Commissioner in Danzig from January 18, 1937 to September 1, 1939.
 87. Reference is made to Japan and Italy.
 88. Hitler’s form of address was incorrect since various other parties (DNVP, Center Party, and several smaller bourgeois parties) also had voted in favor of the Enabling Act. None of their members remained in the Reichstag after July 1933.
 89. The “Austrian Legion” was an association composed of Austrian

National Socialists, the majority of whom were also members of the SA. They had fled their homeland in the years after 1933 in order to avoid prison sentences and confinement to *Anhaltelagers*. The SA accommodated them in camps in Upper Bavaria, where they received pocket-money, SA uniforms, and kept busy with scouting games. At no time did Hitler seriously contemplate involving these troops in the invasion of Austria. They reminded him too much of militia units which he abhorred. He desired to flaunt Germany's military might before the world and, in the event of an invasion, it would have to be carried out by regular German troops exclusively. Moreover, he did not think the Austrian SA men reliable enough since they lacked the blind obedience instilled in the German soldier. He feared that native National Socialists might deviate from the Party line and succumb to the temptation of local politics. He worried greatly about this possibility whenever he conquered new territories. Furthermore, he felt that it was of little concern whether or not his policy pleased the more idealistic among his Party comrades in Austria. Meanwhile, Austria's National Socialists had brought the greatest sacrifice in terms of blood for Hitler, remaining loyal to the Party throughout years of persecution and maltreatment. Austrian National Socialists were made to feel the brunt of Hitler's opportunistic strategy immediately after the Anschluss, when they were barred from participating in the Army's entry into Austria on March 13. It was not until Wehrmacht and Reich German Party divisions had claimed for themselves all the glory in the "liberated homeland," that members of the Austrian Legion were allowed to return to their native land.

90. Published in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1938. A record of the speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 7/EW 67 246-67 265).
91. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 215.
92. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1938.
93. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1938.
94. Published in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1938.
95. DNB report, March 2, 1938.
96. DNB report, March 3, 1938.
97. Report in VB, No. 66, March 7, 1938.
98. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1938.
99. Report in Schmidt, pp. 390 ff.
100. Reference in VB, No. 70, March 11, 1938. The ship in question was the *Robert Ley*.
101. For Hitler's account see below, speech of March 18, 1938. In an interview with Ward Price (see below, March 12, 1938), Hitler further stated that he had even commissioned an envoy to Vienna to investigate the matter since the rumor appeared all too fantastic to him.
102. Schuschnigg closed his appeal with the words "*Front-Heil! Österreich!*" The original text of the appeal for the conduct of a plebiscite is reproduced in *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), March 10, 1938.
103. In his speeches on March 25 and April 1, 1938, Hitler announced that

a letter by Schuschnigg had been recovered subsequent to the Anschluss. Allegedly, this letter had been addressed to an Austrian Landeshauptmann (in all likelihood to the Landeshauptmann of Upper Austria, Gleissner, in Linz). In it, Schuschnigg referred to the Berchtesgaden meeting as a “mere tactical maneuver,” designed to gain time in the hope that international public opinion would shortly change in favor of Austria.

104. Numerous protest demonstrations against Schuschnigg took place in Austria. See also the description in Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, *Meilensteine des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, 1938), pp. 191 ff.
105. Cf. Max Domarus, *Mussolini und Hitler. Zwei Wege, gleiches Ende* (Würzburg, 1977), p. 222. The Envoy in question was the Austrian Military Attaché, Colonel Liebitzky.—Ciano let the Reich Foreign Ministry know: “The Italian Government had been informed by Schuschnigg on March 7 of the plan for a plebiscite. Mussolini had strongly advised him against it.” DGFP, D, I, no. 350, p. 572.
106. See below, March 25, 1938.
107. A few days earlier, Hitler had informed Henderson that all issues concerning Austria and Czechoslovakia were simply ‘none of Great Britain’s business.’ Cf. Schmidt, pp. 391 f.
108. At the time, General von Reichenau was attending a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Cairo.
109. Freiherr Maximilian von Weichs, born 1881 in Dessau, died 1954 in Rösberg near Cologne; appointed Field Marshal in 1943.
110. Fedor von Bock, born 1880 in Kustrin, killed in action on May 3, 1945 in Schleswig-Holstein; Colonel General in 1938; Field Marshal in 1940.
111. The garrison in Würzburg, for example, was put on alert at 11:00 p.m. on March 10, 1938. Immediately thereafter, reserve units and replacement reserve members were called up.
112. Reference to the reorganization in HVBI. 1938, Part C, No. 205, p. 58, dated March 3, 1938. Published officially in a note by the OKW, see below, March 18, 1938.
113. DNB report, March 10, 1938.
114. IMT, 102C, and Hofer, pp. 197 f.
115. Cf. *Neues Wiener-Journal* and *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), editions of March 12 and 13, 1938.
116. Reinhard Heydrich, born 1904 in Halle; Chief of the Security Police (Sipo) and the SD from 1936; Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia from September 1941; died in June 1942 in Prague as a result of injuries sustained in an attempt upon his life by Czech nationalists.
117. Verbatim content in IMT, 2949PS
118. Text published in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 12, 1938.
119. Dr. Wilhelm Miklas, born 1872 in Krems, died 1956 in Vienna; Federal President from December 10, 1928 to March 13, 1938. Subsequent to the Anschluss, Hitler did not seek retribution regarding Miklas since the Austrian’s steadfastness had greatly impressed him.
120. DGFP, D, I, no. 358, p. 580.

121. Hubert Klausner (1892–1939), retired Major; after the Anschluss minister in the Seyss-Inquart cabinet and later Gauleiter of Kärnten (Carinthia).
122. See below, speech of March 25, 1938.
123. See below, April 6, 1938.
124. See above, September 28, 1937.
125. The supporters of a Habsburg monarchy in Austria, the so-called “Legitimists,” formed part of Schuschnigg’s Vaterländische Front. However, there were no serious attempts made to bring about the restoration of the monarchy to power.
126. Text published in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 14, 1938.
127. Reference is made here to the war in Abyssinia and the sanctions imposed by the League of Nations.
128. Prince Philip of Hesse, born 1896 in Rumpenheim, married Mafalda Royal Princess of Savoy (born 1902 in Rome, died 1944 in the KZ Buchenwald). At the time, the Prince was Oberpräsident of the Province of Hesse-Nassau in Kassel and SS Obergruppenführer. Subsequent to the armistice in Italy in 1943, the Prince and his wife were interned in a concentration camp. American troops liberated the Prince in 1945.
129. Report of the Agenzia Steffani, March 12, 1938.
130. In Rome on March 16, 1938, Mussolini spoke before the Chamber of Deputies on the subject of the events in Austria. He declared that not one Austrian had ever shown any gratitude for his sending of four Italian divisions to the Brenner in July of 1934: “At noon on March 7, one of Schuschnigg’s confidants asked me for my opinion on the plebiscite which was planned. In a manner not to be mistaken, I told him I thought it a wrong step. It would prove itself to be a counterproductive measure ... In these days, we have witnessed the great desire of the Austrian people for an Anschluss. It was nothing more and nothing less than a revolution and we in Italy are the first to acknowledge this.” Original text published in Franco Martinelli, *Mussolini ai raggi X* (Milan 1964), pp. 558 ff.; German translation of the complete speech in Domaris, *Mussolini*, pp. 226 ff.
131. Cf. IMT, 2949-PS.
132. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 12, 1938.
133. DNB report, March 12, 1938.
134. DNB text, *ibid.*
135. *Ibid.*
136. Martin Bormann was Hess’ staff manager at the time.
137. Philip Bouhler, chief of the Führer’s Chancellery, rarely appeared in public.
138. DNB text, March 12, 1938.
139. Evidently, Hitler had not yet determined to annex Austria and to integrate it into the German Reich. Nonetheless, he would do so within a few hours’ time.
140. Peace treaty between the Allied Forces and Austria signed at Saint-Germain on September 10, 1919.
141. Translation according to the original German wording of both parties,

- published in VB, No. 74, March 15, 1938. Cf. also *Daily Mail*, March 13, 1938.
142. RGl. 1938, I, pp. 237 f.
 143. At this point, the “Reich Government” consisted of no one else than Adolf Hitler. At the time, none of the Reich ministers, who supposedly signed the law into effect, were present in Linz.
 144. The DNB published the following:
“Vienna, March 13. Official announcement: Upon a written request, dated March 13, by the Federal Chancellor, the Federal President has resigned from office. In accordance to Article 77, Paragraph 1, of the 1934 Constitution, Dr. Seyss-Inquart, the Federal Chancellor, assumes the President’s responsibilities.”
 145. DNB text, March 13, 1938. General conscription was in force in Austria as well, although prohibited by the 1919 Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain. In one of his frequent imitations of Hitler’s moves, Schuschnigg had transformed the numerically restricted regular army into an army based upon conscription (cf. Austrian Bundesgesetzblatt 1936, No. 102). The Western Powers did not respond to this move on the part of Austria. They had neither opposed Germany’s 1935 institution of the draft nor a similar measure by Hungary in 1938.
 146. NSK text, March 13, 1938.
 147. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Mussolini, published in VB, Nos. 73 and 74, March 14 and 15, 1938.
 148. Cf. Papen, pp. 492 ff.
 149. Kurt von Schuschnigg remained in confinement until American troops came to his rescue in 1945. He was incarcerated first in Vienna and then in the KZ Flossenbürg. From there, he was transferred to other concentration camps toward the end of the War. Nonetheless, he gained permission to marry Gräfin Vera von Czernin while detained. Previously, she had been married to Leopold Graf von Fugger. She shared her new husband’s confinement and even gave birth to a daughter while in the camps. The Schuschnigg family was granted various unusual privileges, such as the possession of a radio.
 150. See above, 1934, note 186.
 151. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 16, 1938.
 152. DNB text, March 15, 1938.
 153. Published in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1938. The author has corrected a few insignificant discrepancies in the text.
 154. Parody of a statement made by William I at Sedan on September 2, 1870: “What a great change under God’s guidance!”
 155. Printed in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1938.
 156. Neurath had been appointed SS Gruppenführer earlier. See above, September 19, 1937.
 157. In July 1935, the SS Leibstandarte had already conducted maneuvers wearing this new field-gray uniform. Cf. illustrations in *Schwarzes Korps*, No. 23, July 31, 1935.
 158. DNB report, March 15, 1938.

159. Facsimile reproduction in the *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), March 29, 1938. A day earlier, Innitzer had made various proclamations on this great “turning point in the religious and cultural life of Germany.” Cf. VB, No. 93, April 3, 1938.
160. VB, No. 76, March 17, 1938.
161. Report in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1938.
162. Published in VB, *ibid.*
163. Published in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1938. See also above, March 10, 1938.
164. Published in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1938.
165. Text according to the Eher pamphlet, *Rede des Führers and Reichskanzlers Adolf Hitler vor dem Reichstag am. 18. März 1938* (Munich, 1938).
166. See above, March 1, 1938.
167. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 26, 1938.
168. Hitler is alluding to the colonization of the Teutonic Order and the settlement of Austrian Protestants in Prussia, with particular reference to the groups driven from Salzburg in 1731.
169. Published in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1938.
170. These accounts are grossly exaggerated. In the period 1933 through 1937, the number of National Socialist casualties totaled 136 in Austria, a figure that includes those Austrian Socialists who were hung. These victims are listed individually in the *Neues Wiener Journal*, November 9, 1938.
171. The activities of Himmler and Heydrich in Vienna are ample proof that Hitler was not truly as “forgetful” as he pretended to be in this instance. The assassination of Wilhelm von Ketteler is one more example of this. Ketteler’s sole “crime” had been that he had worked as von Papen’s secretary. See above, March 14, 1938.
172. “*Das Volk steht auf, der Sturm bricht los.*” Opening line of the poem *Männer und Buben* by Theodor Körner (1771–1813). See Theodor Körner, *Leyer und Schwert* (Berlin, 1814). The phrase was later used by Goebbels in his notorious call for total war in the Berlin Sportpalast on November 18, 1943: “Now Volk stand up, and storm break loose!”
173. In the years that followed, Hitler would repeatedly make similar pompous statements. On December 10, 1940, he grandiosely proclaimed: “A place taken by a German soldier, will never be taken by any other soldier!” See below, *ibid.*
174. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 27, 1938.
175. DGFP, D, II, no. 109, enclosure, p. 204. For the original text see IMT, 2788-PS and Hofer, p. 200.
176. Dr. Milan Hodža, born 1878 in Sucany; Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia from November 1935 to September 1938; emigrated to England at the outbreak of the Second World War; died 1944 in Florida.
177. DNB text, March 29, 1938.
178. See above, note 171.
179. The first KdF ship had been christened *Wilhelm Gustloff*.
180. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 29, 1938.

181. Ibid.
182. DNB text, March 29, 1938. Also printed in VB, Berlin Edition, March 30, 1938.
183. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 29, 1938.
184. DNB text, March 30, 1938. Also printed in VB, Berlin Edition, March 31, 1938.
185. Hitler appears to have come up with this flattery on the spur of the moment. The official reproduction of his March 15, 1938 speeches in Vienna contain no such statement.
186. Published in VB, No. 91, April 1, 1938.
187. Report in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1938.
188. Given the large number of Swabians living abroad, Stuttgart had been declared the “city of Germans living abroad” in 1933.
189. Published in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1938.
190. See above, note 103.
191. Published in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1938.
192. DNB, April 3, 1938. Quotation according to the *Aschaffenburg Zeitung*, April 4, 1938. The reproduction in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1938, contains errors.
193. See above, note 172.
194. Parody of the Bible passage: “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” Matthew 19, 6.
195. See above, note 90.
196. DNB text, April 3, 1938.
197. DNB text, April 4, 1938.
198. Ibid.
199. See above, p. 505.
200. Published in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1938.
201. Parody of the opening lines of the Gospel according to John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1, 1.
202. Parody of Goethe, Faust, Part I, 3: “*Ein Ted von jenerKraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.*” (Part of that Power, not understood, which always wills the Bad, and always works the Good.—English quotation taken from the London 1866 edition.)
203. Hitler himself would prove a year later that this was indeed possible in spite of everything. On August 25, 1939, he repealed the order to march on Poland the next day and he did so primarily because of foreign policy considerations. See below, August 25, 1939.
204. Report in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1938.
205. Published in VB, No. 99, April 9, 1938.
206. Published in VB, No. 101, April 11, 1938.
207. Ibid.
208. See above, pp. 259 ff.
209. See above, March 28, 1936.
210. Notes taken by the author on April 9, 1938. (For the translation, the officially deleted sentence was reinserted; editor’s note.)

211. The Second World War would prove that even “all German tribes united” could indeed be conquered. Events would prove wrong Hitler’s theory of “one Volk” that obeyed “one will” and hence was invincible.
212. Opening line of the so-called *Fluchtlied 1812* on Napoleon’s defeat in Russia, written by an unknown contemporary: “*Mit Mann und Ross und Wagen, so hat sie Gott geschlagen*. “Hitler enjoyed quoting this particular song and did so especially after the victories in Poland and France. See below, September 19, 1939.
213. DNB text, April 9, 1938.
214. DNB text, April 11, 1938.
215. Published in VB, No. 102, April 12, 1938.
216. Report in VB, No. 104/105, April 14/15, 1938.
217. Published in VB, No. 106/107/108, April 16/17/18, 1938.
218. At the time, the SA Standarte *Feldherrnhalle* was an armed unit that consisted of four *Sturmabteilungen* (battalions). There were 400 men in each battalion and these men lived in six camps. Initially, they would not carry arms on public occasions. However, the Standarte *Feldherrnhalle* openly participated in the October 1, 1938 move into Czechoslovakia as a fully armed regiment of the Luftwaffe.—As recently as 1934, Hitler had accused armed SA units of high treason in an effort to appease the generals. Once in command of the Wehrmacht, Hitler no longer resisted the transformation of the armed SA units into special regiments, provided that these did not serve as disguise for militia formations.
219. Reports in VB, Nos. 111 and 113, April 21 and 23, 1938.
220. “Green” was the code name for Czechoslovakia. “Operation Green” or “Case Green” (*Fall Grün*) stood for military action against this state.
221. DGFP, D, II, no. 133, pp. 139 f. Original German text in IMT, 338-PS. Also printed in Hofer, pp. 202 f. For the additional conferences at the Berghof on September 3, see DGFP, D, II, no. 424, pp. 686 f., and in Nuremberg on September 9 and 10, see *ibid.*, no. 448, pp. 727 ff.
222. Rudolf Schmundt, Wehrmacht Adjutant assigned to Hitler personally in February 1938, succeeded Colonel Hossbach who had been dismissed from his post on January 28, 1938.
223. Obviously, the life of the German Envoy in Prague, Dr. Eisenlohr, did not mean all too much to Hitler. As the document on “Case Green” reveals, Hitler had no qualms about arranging for the assassination of Eisenlohr if no other pretext for the invasion of Czechoslovakia could be conjured up in time.
224. Case Red (*Fall Rot*) was the code name for operations against France.
225. For details see Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, *Der Marsch ins Grossdeutsche Reich* (Munich, 1939), p. 30.
226. Reports in VB, No. 113, April 23, 1938.
227. By virtue of the April 14, 1939 law on the establishment of an administrative apparatus for the Ostmark (*Ostmarkgesetz*), Austria was subdivided into seven autonomous Reich Gaus. The administrative

reform in Austria was far more radical than any earlier reorganization process within the Old Reich's borders. There, at least, the existence of historic regions was accounted for in the creation of new administrative units. For example, Länder such as Prussia and Bavaria continued to exist within their historic boundaries.—In Austria, however, any lingering memory of Austria in its former state was to be relentlessly eradicated. The previous Austrian Länder of Upper and Lower Austria, for instance, were changed to the districts of Upper and Lower Danube.

228. RGBl. 1938, I, pp. 407 f.
229. Hitler's Austria expert Wilhelm Keppler, placed in charge of the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.
230. Published in VB, No. 116, April 26, 1938.
231. Hitler employed similar methods later when he occupied other countries. This applied to instances as well in which a pro-German provisional government had constituted itself, as was the case in Croatia and the Ukraine. Its members would be either arrested or harassed by Hitler's cronies to such an extent that they soon regretted ever having entertained sympathies toward Germany.
232. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1938.
233. NSK text, April 28, 1938. Printed in VB, No. 121, May 1, 1938.
234. Published in VB, No. 134, May 14, 1938.
235. RGBl. 1938, I, pp. 431 f. This bronze medal was worn on a dark red band with black and white stripes. Hitler's face was engraved on the front of the medal in the center of the slogan: *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*
236. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1938.
237. Ibid.
238. Reports on Hitler's travels in Italy in VB, Nos. 123 to 131, May 3 to 11, 1938.
239. The Palazzo Venezia served as Mussolini's seat of government.
240. Published in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1938.
241. DNB text, May 4, 1938.
242. Published in VB, No. 126, May 6, 1938.
243. Cf. description of the incident rendered by Fritz Dreesen jr. in "Kronzeuge Linge," *Revue* (Munich 1954/1955), series X–XI.
244. Published in VB, No. 129, May 9, 1938.
245. Cf. Picker, p. 409.
246. See below, September 10, 1943.
247. Published in VII, No. 131, May 11, 1938.
248. Ibid.
249. Printed in DNB, May 11, 1938.
250. Published in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1938.
251. Up to this point, officers and soldiers had only extended the "German salute" to Hitler when they did not wear hats. Thereafter, the military salute to Hitler was completely abandoned. Within the Wehrmacht itself, however, it was still customarily extended up to July 20, 1944 and afterwards replaced by the "German salute" as a general regulation.
252. DNB report, May 11, 1938.

253. See above, January 18, 1937.
254. Cf. *Bullock*, p. 446, and IMT, 388-PS.
255. Published in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1938.
256. See above, September 12, 1936.
257. To the great annoyance of Munich's citizens, the Matthäus Church near the Stachus was torn down as a first step to the planned construction of a subway system in the city. King Louis I of Bavaria had built the edifice in 1833. Up to its destruction, the Church had served as the main meeting place for Munich's Protestant congregation.
258. Published in V13, No. 143, May 23, 1938.
259. Hitler is referring to the period prior to 1914.
260. See below, speech of September 12, 1938.
261. The Volkswagen factory had built its production halls, administrative buildings and living quarters for its workers on a huge terrain. Twenty-eight separate communities were founded, the aggregate of which later formed the city of Wolfsburg. The construction of the Volkswagen factory was accompanied by the establishment of a savings association. For a weekly contribution of five marks, members acquired the right to buy a Volkswagen, the commercial value of which was 990 marks. The whole scheme was doomed, however. While the worker continued to make his weekly payments, he never obtained the car he coveted. The Second World War soon prohibited civilian driving anyway. The Volkswagenwerk was refitted to accommodate the production needs of the Wehrmacht. The military started producing its famous crosscountry *Kübelwagen* there. This vehicle was to be of enormous value to the troops in Africa and Russia since its motor did not require watercooling.
262. Published in VB, No. 147, June 27, 1938.
263. Lafferentz was the Reichsamtsleiter of the DAF and head of the society for the advancement of the Volkswagen.
264. Cf. IMT, 388-PS.
265. See below, September 12, 1938.
266. See below, January 30, 1939.
267. Hitler paid no heed to such obvious considerations. In 1939, for instance, he intended to launch his attack upon the Netherlands, Belgium, and France in mid-November. See below, October 10, 1939.
268. DGFP, D, 11, no. 221, pp. 357 ff. German text printed in IMT, 388-PS.
269. Kurt Zeitzler, later promoted General; succeeded Halder as Chief of the Army General Staff in September 1942; retired after the July 1944 events.
270. Reports on the parade and the performance of Weber's *Der Freischütz* in VB, No. 150, May 30, 1938.
271. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 45.
272. Published in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1938.
273. RGBl. 1938, 1, pp. 611 f.
274. Report in VB, Nos. 155, 156 and 157, June 4, 5 and 6, 1938.
275. *Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnisrock*. In the days when Fritsch's reactionary current pervaded the Army, a new uniform had been introduced in an

- effort to emphasize continuity of military tradition. Its cut was strongly reminiscent of the Imperial Army's dress uniform. National Socialists were adamant in their opposition to its introduction. On a more practical note, the tunic had neither breast pockets nor side pockets but instead was furnished with a multitude of buttons and laced tails and cuffs. Even older officers were not pleased with this old-fashioned uniform, that soon earned the nickname "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Tunic," a play on words in reference to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. In actual combat situations, the uniform was more of a hindrance than help; finally it was forced upon home front garrisons.
276. Reports on these addresses in VB, No. 161, June 10, 1938.
277. DNB report, May 10, 1938.
278. Published in VB, No. 164, June 13, 1938.
279. Franz Schwede-Coburg, a non-commissioned career officer, had been elected Coburg's first National Socialist mayor even prior to Hitler's seizure of power. In 1934, he became Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of Pomerania.
280. DNB report, June 13, 1938.
281. Published in VB, No. 166/167, June 15/16, 1938.
282. See above, November 27, 1937.
283. NSK report, June 14, 1938.
284. See above, March 12, 1938.
285. Captain Leopold had led the illegal National Socialist Party in Austria in the times of Schuschnigg's rule.
286. Report in VB, No. 178, June 27, 1938.
287. Report in VB, No. 180, June 29, 1938.
288. Ibid.
289. Hitler's "Denkschrift zur Frage unserer Festungsanlagen" (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Militärarchiv, H-10-38) has been published in Otto-Wilhelm Förster, *Das Befestigungswesen*, Vol. XXV of *Die Wehrmacht im Kampf* (Neckargemünd, 1960), appendix 13, pp. 123 ff.
290. Upon this point, Förster, p. 138, remarks the following: "Hitler had forgotten the most effective enemy of a fortification line in a war, the pioneer."
291. RGBL 1938, I, p. 65.
292. In the summer months of 1938, the entire road network in North and East Bavaria was hastily rebuilt and repaired. The strategic significance of this area had greatly increased in light of the imminent assault upon Czechoslovakia.
293. Report in VB, No. 192, July 11, 1938.
294. Ibid.
295. Published in VB, *ibid.*
296. DNB report, July 13, 1938. Menemencioglu served as Foreign Minister of Turkey in the years 1942 to 1944. As he fell ill in 1942, Hitler sent the renowned German surgeon Professor Sauerbruch to Turkey to attend him.
297. Report in VB, No. 197, July 16, 1938.

298. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1938.
299. See above, April 7, 1937.
300. DNB text, July 13, 1938.
301. Report in VB, No. 199, July 18, 1938.
302. Report in VB, No. 206, July 25, 1938.
303. Published in VB, No. 210, July 29, 1938.
304. See above, Hitler's speech of July 31, 1937.
305. Reports on the festivities in Breslau in VB, No. 213, August 1, 1938.
306. Immediately subsequent to the March 1938 annexation of Austria, a Viennese edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* was set up. Initial production was limited to a small-size format because of a lack of the appropriate rotary presses needed for publication of larger formats.
307. Report in VB, No. 219, August 7, 1938.
308. IMT, Vol. XXI, testimonies by Field Marshals von Brauchitsch (p. 24) and von Manstein (p. 48). Cf. Bullock, pp. 450 f.
309. Verbatim account of the Beck memorandum in Wolfgang Foerster, *Ein General kämpft gegen den Krieg* (Munich, 1949).
310. Entry into the diary of Colonel General Alfred Jodl, dated August 10, 1938, as cited in Bullock, p. 451. In 1946, Jodl was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg Trials and subsequently hanged.
311. Published in VB, No. 224, August 12, 1938.
312. Report in VB, No. 227, August 15, 1938.
313. Report in VB, No. 230, August 18, 1938.
314. Cf. IMT, 647-PS. Excerpt printed in Hofer, pp. 110 f.
315. Report in VB, No. 231, August 19, 1938.
316. Ibid.
317. Report in VB, No. 233, August 21, 1938.
318. See above, April 21, 1938.
319. Wilhelm Freiherr von Tegetthoff, Austrian Admiral (1827–1871). In 1866, he secured victory against the Italian Navy at Lissa.
320. Report on Horthy's official visit in VB, Nos. 235 to 240, August 23 to 28, 1938.
321. Published in VB, No. 238, August 26, 1938. Inadvertently, Hitler's reference to the Hungarian-German border must have offended his guests. Hungary had lost the area to Austria as a result of the First World War. Hungary coveted the Burgenland itself.
322. Term employed in the DNB text, August 25, 1938.
323. June 4, 1920 Peace Treaty entered into by the Allied Powers and Hungary following the First World War.
324. Cf. VB, Nos. 235 and 242, August 23 and 30, 1938 respectively.
325. See Wolfgang Foerster, *Ein General kämpft gegen den Krieg*; Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler*, Josef Foltmann, *Opfergang der Generale*; and others. See also Bullock, pp. 449 ff.
326. Hans David Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg (1759–1830), Prussian general. He concluded the December 30, 1812 Neutrality Convention of Tauroggen with the Russians on his own.
327. The Ottomar Krug collection (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz) lists 2,530

- generals in the Army of the Third Reich. The April 20, 1945 listing of Luftwaffe generals cites 418 generals served with the Luftwaffe alone. Cf. typed records edited and published by the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia (Kornelimünster, 1954). The Navy list contains the names of 235 admirals. Cf. Walter Lohmann and Hans H. Hildebrand, *Die deutsche Kriegsmarine 1939–1945* (Bad Nauheim, 1956).
328. General Franz Halder, born 1884 in Würzburg, died 1972 in Aschau am Chiemsee, rose to the rank of Colonel General and became Chief of the General Staff for the period from 1939 to 1942. He was interred in a concentration camp in the years 1944 and 1945. In his publication *Hitler als Feldherr* (Munich, 1949), p. 14, Halder remarks on Hitler: "He was completely inept at military leadership. He replaced it with the brute force of military orders."
329. The aggregate of generals at Hitler's disposal during the Second World War was termed the *Führerreserve*.
330. See above, speech of March 7, 1936.
331. The *Paris Journal* printed the interview on September 2, 1938. Its German version appeared in the *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 3, 1938. Neither the *Völkischer Beobachter* nor the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* published the interview's verbatim account.
332. Cf. *The Times*, June 3, 1938, etc. For Lord Runciman's mission see DGFP, D, II, nos. 313–333, pp. 512 ff.
333. See below, speech of September 12, 1938. In reference to Beneš' offers, Hitler argued: "It's all tactics. Herr Beneš talks, wants to organize negotiations. He wishes to resolve the question of procedure in accordance with the Geneva Convention and hands out little favors to placate the people.—Herr Beneš is not supposed to grant the Sudeten Germans any favors. They have a right to their own way of life, just as any other people do.—I am not in the least willing to allow foreign statesmen to create a second Palestine right here in the heart of Germany."
334. DNB text, September 2, 1938.
335. Assaults upon Czechoslovakia in the German press had begun as early as May 21. On August 6, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published an article entitled "Genug!" and thereby launched an anti-Czechoslovakian campaign in all German papers.
336. DNB text, September 6, 1938.
337. Reference is made to a line of fortification along the Franco-German border which had been strongly reinforced. The French Minister of War André Maginot (1877–1932) had both planned and commissioned its construction. Work on the structure was begun in 1930. In 1940, German troops charged through the fortified stronghold, precisely as, in 1944 and 1945, the Allied Forces would later penetrate Germany's Atlantic Wall and West Wall.
338. Claiming that "a few reserve battalions had merely been practicing the defense of the new German line of fortifications," Alfred-Ingemar Berndt plays down the importance of the German mobilization in his

- book on Greater Germany. This mobilization along Germany's eastern border was clearly and offensively directed against Czechoslovakia. Only the remaining mobilization to the western border had a defensive character. Cf. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 81.
339. The insignias of the Holy Roman Empire contained crown, scepter, sword, and several relics as the Holy Lance. The latter was of particular significance to Hitler. According to the legend, it was the spear of Longinus, a soldier who at the crucifixion stabbed Jesus Christ in the right side. Similar to the myth of the Grail, the Holy Lance was said to give its possessors—among them Constantine the Great and Charlemagne—magical powers.
 340. Hitler's speeches at this Party Congress are quoted from the Eher pamphlet, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag Grossdeutschland 1938* (Munich, 1938).
 341. This appeal obviously was directed at Great Britain to finally accept Germany's outstretched hand. In exchange for freedom of action in the East, Germany was willing to contribute to the "defense of the British Empire." Hitler was quite willing to sacrifice the alliance with both Italy and Japan to a rapprochement with Britain.
 342. In spite of Streicher's earlier visit (see above, October 28, 1937), measures against Jews in Italy were implemented hesitantly and only after considerable pressure by Germany.
 343. Here Hitler was ridiculing Rosenberg's philosophical opus *Der Mytbos des 20. Jabrbunderts*. On one occasion, Hitler remarked that he was glad that only the enemies of National Socialism seemed capable of understanding the abstruse book. Cf. Picker, p. 275.
 344. DNB report, September 8, 1938.
 345. See above, April 3, 1938.
 346. As mentioned earlier, Hitler valued little those of his successes which he had obtained through the intervention of an international body, as was the case in the Saar plebiscite and the Munich Conference.
 347. Plebiscites of this nature were held in the Third Reich in the years 1933, 1934, 1936, and 1938. In the period from 1939 to 1945, there were neither plebiscites nor elections.
 348. Reference is made to the April 10, 1938 Reichstag election. Supposedly, 99 percent of the electorate had expressed their support for Hitler.
 349. Hitler knew well that neither the German Nationalists, nor the Center, nor the Social Democrats had ever allied themselves with the Communists in the days of the Weimar Republic. Had such an alliance come about, the National Socialist Party would clearly have been defeated in 1932, since it could claim no more than 37 percent support among voters. These accusations were merely a means of propaganda, designed to frighten the Western Powers into a sort of neutrality for fear of Communism. This approach had worked extremely well with the German Nationalists and the Center Party in 1933. Hitler could not imagine an alliance between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union coming about as indeed it would in the course of the Second World War. A like

- coalition was simply not possible in his eyes because it defied his theory on the fundamental equality of domestic and foreign policy.
350. Reference is made to the Soviet People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Litvinov.
351. See below, note 408.
352. Pierre Cot, born 1895 in Grenoble, died 1977 in Chamberry. From 1933 to 1938, he repeatedly served as France's Minister of Aviation. At this point in time, however, Cot was Minister of Commerce.
353. Denmark had 3.8 million inhabitants at the time.
354. Hitler is referring to Great Britain, i.e. to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935.
355. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921) had been German Reich Chancellor from 1909 to 1917. Georg Graf Hertling (1843–1919) succeeded him in the years 1917 to 1918.
356. See above, 1937, note 15.
357. It is highly unlikely that there had been any manipulation of the election results. According to official figures, 95.5 percent of the Sudeten German electorate had voted in favor of Henlein's party on May 21, 1938. In the May 28 election, 92.2 percent of the Sudeten Germans had expressed their support for this party.
358. Hitler had construed the term "Germanic-German Reich." The "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" had ceased to exist in 1806.
359. DNB text, September 14, 1938.
360. Cf. Lewis B. Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938–1939* (London, 1948), p. 35.
361. See above, February 12, 1938.
362. The German press did not specifically mention Keitel's presence. However, pictures taken at the occasion reveal that he indeed attended the meeting.
363. Larry William Fuchser, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement. A Study in the Politics of History* (New York, London, 1982), p. 143; cf. also Chamberlain's notes in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939* (hereafter referred to as DBrFP), Third Series, pp. 338 ff.; for descriptions of the meeting see further the German memorandum in DGFP, D, II no. 487, pp. 786 ff.; Schmidt, pp. 394 ff.; Friedrich Berber, *Deutschland-England 1933–1939* (Essen, 1943) pp. 145 f.; Fuchser, pp. 141 ff., Shirer, pp. 384 ff.; cf. also Nevile Henderson, *The Failure of a Mission* (New York, 1940), pp. 152 ff.
The interpreter Schmidt quoted Chamberlain's words as he had transmitted them to Hitler in direct form: "If you have already resolved to employ force without waiting for a discussion, why did you let me come? Given the circumstances, it will be best if I depart immediately. I am wasting my time here." (Retranslated from Schmidt, p. 397).
364. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 758.
365. Printed in Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 116.
366. According to Reuters.
367. DGFP, D, II, no. 487, p. 798; DNB text, September 15, 1938.

368. Translation according to the original German wording of both parties, published in VB, Berlin Edition, September 20, 1938. Cf. also *Daily Mail*, September 19, 1938.
369. This statement reveals Hitler's determination not to allow for the creation of an autonomous Czechoslovakian state and that, instead, he sought annexation.
370. The Sudeten German Freikorps wore a badge with red and black stripes on its flat caps for identification in addition to the uniform. The Freikorps consisted of five groups with a supposed membership of 80,000 men. In reality, the membership ran between 10,000 and 15,000 volunteers. Cf. Martin Broszat, "Das Sudetendeutsche Freikorps," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (1961), pp. 30 ff. Hitler had no desire to rely upon the Sudeten German Freikorps for military purposes any more than he had relied upon the Austrian Legion earlier that year. The Wehrmacht carried through the occupation of the Sudetenland by itself. On October 10, Hitler dissolved the Freikorps. See below, *ibid.*
371. DNB text, September 18, 1938.
372. IMT, 388-PS (26).
373. DNB report, September 20, 1938.
374. *Ibid.* The Czechoslovakian Teschen or Olsa region was located at the Polish-Silesian border.
375. DNB text, September 21, 1938.
376. Édouard Daladier, born 1884 in Carpentras, died 1970 in Paris; from 1938 to 1940 served his third term as Premier of France. For Chamberlain's talk with Daladier see Fuchser, pp. 144 ff.
377. Georges Bonnet, born 1889 in Bassillac, died 1973 in Paris; French Minister for Foreign Affairs from April 1938 to September 1939.
378. Printed in Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 127. See *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 21, 1938.—For the joint communication handed to Beneš by the British and French Governments see DGFP, D, II, no. 523, pp. 831 ff.
379. DNB text, September 21, 1938.
380. Cf. Bullock, p. 456.
381. Reports on the conference in Schmidt, pp. 400 ff.; DGFP, D, II, no. 562, pp. 870 ff.; Fuchser, pp. 147 ff.
382. Reference is made to the fact that, while Poland claimed the Olsa area, Hungary coveted the Carpatho-Ukraine and parts of Slovakia.
383. DGFP, D, II, no. 572, pp. 887 f. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 142 ff.
384. DGFP, D, II, no. 573, pp. 889 ff. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 145 ff.
385. Hitler erroneously recalled the date of this particular speech and he did so repeatedly. The speech had actually taken place two days prior, on February 20, 1938. See below, April 28, 1939.
386. DGFP, D, II, no. 574, p. 892. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 149 f.
387. Chamberlain was mistaken on this date. The conference had taken place on September 15, 1938.

388. German memorandum of August 30, 1938. It contained a proposal for the resolution of outstanding problems related to the Danzig question and the existence of the Polish Corridor. Moreover, it addressed German-Polish differences in the minorities question. See below, August 30, 1939.
389. DGFP, D, II, no. 584, pp. 908 f. German text in DNB report, September 24, 1938.
390. Initially, the date for the withdrawal had been set for September 28 in the memorandum. As described, Hitler then changed the deadline to October 1, 1938.
391. Statements quoted according to Schmidt, pp. 404 ff.
392. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 6, 1938. See also Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 157 ff.
393. Hitler had made similar concessions to Schuschnigg. See above, February 12, 1938.
394. DNB text issued at 2:00 a.m. on September 24, 1938.
395. Reuters report, September 24, 1938.
396. A month later, in a speech at Znaim, Hitler declared the following: "We would have marched in here on October 2 at 8:00 a.m., one way or another!" See below, October 26, 1938.
397. DNB report, September 25, 1938.
398. Report in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 28, 1938. Cf. also DGFP, D, II, no. 631, pp. 957 f.
399. The letter read verbatim:

10 Downing Street, Whitehall, September 26, 1938

My Dear Reichskanzler!

In my capacity as intermediary I have transmitted to the Czechoslovakian Government the memorandum which your Excellency gave me on the occasion of our last conversation.

The Czechoslovakian Government now inform me that, while they adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten German areas on the lines discussed by my Government and the French Government and explained by me to you on Thursday last, they regard as wholly unacceptable the proposal in your memorandum for the immediate evacuation of the areas and their immediate occupation by German troops, these processes to take place before the terms of cession have been negotiated or even discussed.

Your Excellency will remember that in my letter to you of Friday last I said that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle and very shortly afterward by formal delimitation would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force, and that, in my opinion, if German troops moved into the areas that you had proposed, I felt sure that the Czechoslovakian Government would resist and that this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force. I referred also to the effect likely

to be produced upon public opinion in my country, in France, and, indeed, in the world generally. The development of opinion since my return confirms me in the views I expressed to you in my letter and in our subsequent conversation.

In communicating with me about your proposals, the Government of Czechoslovakia point out that they go far beyond what was agreed in the so-called Anglo-French plan. Czechoslovakia would be deprived of every safeguard for her national existence. She would have to yield up large proportions of her carefully prepared defenses and admit the German armies deep into her country before it had been organized on the new basis or any preparations had been made for its defense. Her national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of the German plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight.

I learn that the German Ambassador in Paris has issued a communiqué which begins by stating that as a result of our conversations at Godesberg your Excellency and I are in complete agreement as to the imperative necessity to maintain the peace of Europe. In this spirit I address my present communication to you.

In the first place, I would remind your Excellency that as the Czechoslovakian Government adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten German areas there can be no question of Germany "finding it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation." I am quoting the words at the end of your Excellency's letter to me of Friday last.

On the contrary, a settlement by negotiation remains possible and, with a clear recollection of the conversations which you and I have had and with an equally clear appreciation of the consequences which must follow the abandonment of negotiation and the substitution of force, I ask your Excellency to agree that representatives of Germany shall meet representatives of the Czechoslovakian Government to discuss immediately the situation by which we are confronted with a view to settling by agreement the way in which the territory is to be handed over. I am convinced that these discussions can be completed in a very short time and, if you and the Czechoslovakian Government desire it, I am willing to arrange for the representation of the British Government at the discussions.

In our conversation, as in the official communiqué issued in Germany, you said that the only difference between us lay in the method of carrying out an agreed principle. If this is so, then surely the tragic consequences of a conflict ought not to be incurred over a difference in method. A conference such as I suggest would give confidence that the cession of territory would be carried into effect, but that it would be done in an orderly manner with suitable safeguards.

Convinced that your passionate wish to see the Sudeten German question promptly and satisfactorily settled can be fulfilled without

incurring the human misery and suffering that would inevitably follow on a conflict, I most earnestly urge you to accept my proposal.

I am, Yours faithfully,

Neville Chamberlain

DGFP, D, II, no. 619, pp. 944 f.; cf. also Schmidt, pp. 407 ff., with a report on the Hitler-Wilson meeting of September 26, 1938.

400. Sir Ivon Kirkpatrick was a member of the British Embassy in Berlin then. After the Second World War, he became British High Commissioner in Germany and later served as British Ambassador to West Germany.
401. Cf. Kirkpatrick's notes, DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. II, No. 1, 118; cf. Bullock, p. 461.
402. Once war had broken out, Hitler declared: "I now wish to be nothing other than the first soldier of the German Reich. Therefore I have put on that tunic which has always been the most holy and dear to me. I shall not take it off again until after victory is ours, or—I shall not live to see the day." See below, September 1, 1939.
403. The national emblem was affixed to the right side of all uniforms worn by members of the various branches of the Wehrmacht (Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe).
404. DNB report, September 27, 1938.
405. Later Hitler would claim to have spent 90 billions marks on armament. See below, September 1, 1939.
406. This type of rhetoric would ultimately backfire on Hitler. Chamberlain took note of Hitler's comment and, on September 30, 1938, he presented Hitler with a joint Anglo-German declaration of peaceful intent. Hitler had no recourse other than to sign the declaration.
407. Allusion to John 8, 44: "...for he [Satan] is a liar and the father of lies."
408. To emphasize this point of view, Hitler had ordered that Czechoslovakia from now on be officially written in two words, separated by a hyphen: *Tschecho-Slowakei*. (Editor's note: Hitler's spelling was not adopted in the English translation, either in the DGFP texts or subsequently in this work.)
409. Applause drowned out the remainder of this sentence.
410. It is revealing that Hitler only incidentally mentioned the Soviet Union and Bolshevism, the foe of mankind, in the context of this particular speech. He could neither fathom the Western Powers nor the Soviet Union partaking in the imminent conflict. He believed that the Soviet Union would not become involved in the hostilities because its armies would have to cross either Polish or Hungarian territory if the Soviets intended to comply with the terms of a mutual assistance pact concluded with Czechoslovakia in 1935.
411. See above, September 26, 1938.
412. Reference is made to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States at the time.
413. William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (New York, 1942) p. 114. Shirer broadcast the scene from a seat in the balcony just above Hitler.
414. Written in 1813 by the German poet Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860). See above, p. 29 and Introduction, note 57.

in the Great War failed to bring tranquillity. Victory and defeat were alike sterile. That lesson the world should have learned. For that reason, above all others, I addressed on September 29 my appeal to your Excellency and to the President of Czechoslovakia and to the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and of France.

The two points I sought to emphasize were, first, that all matters of difference between the German Government and the Czechoslovak Government could and should be settled by pacific methods; and, second, that the threatened alternative of the use of force on a scale likely to result in a general war is as unnecessary as it is unjustifiable. It is, therefore, supremely important that negotiations should continue without interruption until a fair and constructive solution is reached. My conviction on these two points is deepened because responsible statesmen have officially stated that an agreement in principle has already been reached between the Government of the German Reich and the Government of Czechoslovakia, although the precise time, method, and detail of carrying out that agreement remain at issue. Whatever existing differences may be, and whatever their merits may be—and upon them I do not and need not undertake to pass judgment—my appeal was solely that negotiations be continued until a peaceful settlement is found, and that thereby a resort to force be avoided.

Present negotiations still stand open. They can be continued if you will give the word. Should the need for supplementing them become evident, nothing stand in the way of widening their scope into a conference of all the nations directly interested in the present controversy. Such a meeting to be held immediately—in some neutral spot in Europe—would offer the opportunity for this and correlated questions to be solved in a spirit of justice, of fair dealing, and, in all human probability, with greater permanence.

In my considered judgment, and in the light of the experience of this century, continued negotiations remain the only way by which the immediate problem can be disposed of upon any lasting basis. Should you agree to a solution in this peaceful manner, I am convinced that hundreds of millions throughout the world would recognize your action as an outstanding historic service to all humanity.

Allow me to state my unqualified conviction that history, and the souls of every man, woman, and child whose lives will be lost in the threatened war, will hold us and all of us accountable should we omit any appeal for its prevention.

The Government of the United States has no political involvement in Europe and will assume no obligations in the conduct of the present negotiations. Yet in your own right we recognize our responsibilities as a part of a world of neighbors.

The conscience and the impelling desire of the people of my country demand that the voice of their Government be raised again, and yet again, to avert and to avoid war.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

418. Cf. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 222. See also Schmidt, pp. 410 f.
419. The British fleet had been activated. France had called certain of its reserve units to the colors. Belgium drafted six age groups. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 28 and 29, 1938.
420. In 1939, Great Britain entered into a most timely mutual assistance pact with Poland.
421. 'Address to the British nation,' transmitted on BBC; see Fuchser, p. 156.
422. Report on Hitler's respective talks with François-Poncet and Attolico in Schmidt, pp. 410 f.
423. In the time period between September 18 and September 26, 1938, Mussolini had several speaking engagements in the cities of Trieste, Gorizia, Treviso, Padua, Belluno, Vicenza, and Verona.
424. On November 30, 1938, Ciano announced Mussolini's Eight-Point Program of September 27 before the Italian House. Ciano referred to the steps detailed in the program as "security measures." Cf. Agenzia Steffani, November 1, 1938.
425. International public opinion interpreted the fact that Hitler had set the ultimatum for 2:00 a.m. on September 28 as an indication that he would mobilize German troops only then. However, German soldiers had already previously called up for maneuvers serving as disguise for mobilization. Germany's reservists were at their battle stations long before September 28.
426. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 236.
427. DNB report, September 28, 1938.
428. Ibid. English translation in DGFP, D, II, no. 663, p. 995.
429. Prior to the National Socialist rise to power, members of all Party formations had worn either the simple brown cap of the SA or its black variant sported by the SS men. Right from the start, Hitler had only disdain for this type of cap, although it was both economical and suitable. Obviously, it reminded him too much of the attire worn by the Austrian military and post office officials, and the French flics. He himself never wore such a cap.
Once the financial situation of the Party had greatly improved in 1932-33, Hitler introduced the peaked cap he greatly preferred to his favorite organizations within the Party, such as the Political Leaders and the SS. Hitler was greatly enamoured of the more military appearing peaked cap and wore one himself. He chose one of a black color and with white edgings for the SS, a cap the famous officers of the Prussian Death's-Head Hussars had worn prior to 1914.
Those Party divisions that had incurred Hitler's displeasure did not receive a like distinction. The SA, upon which Hitler looked with great contempt, and the Labor Service were appropriated a far more modest cap made of simple cloth, strongly reminiscent of that worn by members of the Italian Bersaglieri troops. In Germany's satellite states, countries such as Italy, Slovakia, and Croatia, one of the first visible signs of the local government's subservience to the Third Reich were Hitler's peaked caps bestowed upon members of the armed services.

430. Cf. speech given by Ciano before the Italian House on November 30, 1938, printed in Agenzia Steffani, December 1, 1938.
431. The Agreement and the communiqué were published in German in DNB report, September 30, 1938 and in the Reichsgesetzblatt (RGBl. 1938, II, pp. 835 ff.). The latter rendition is incomplete, because the additional declaration on the Polish and Hungarian minorities is missing.—The above made quotation of the Agreement is according to the English original text (DGFP, D, II, no. 675, pp. 1014 ff.). Both it and the German version were signed by the four statesmen. The annex, the two additional declarations, and the supplementary declaration were also signed in the same order as the Agreement.
432. See above, March 1, 1935.
433. Munich's citizenry was not afraid to beat up a National Socialist Minister in public, as it did in the case of Hermann Esser—albeit not for political reasons. In no other German city was the man in the street as reluctant to extend the Hitler salute as in Munich. Anyone who stepped into a shop in Munich during the Second World War and bellowed his "Heil Hitler!" risked either not being served well or not being served at all.
434. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 417 f.
435. See above, note 7.
436. See above, speech of February 24, 1935.
437. See above, speech of March 28, 1936.
438. Cf. Schmidt, p. 417.
439. See above, September 26, 1938.
440. Cf. Schmidt, p. 417: "I did not share the impression Chamberlain relates in his private correspondence recently published. Chamberlain maintains that Hitler enthusiastically greeted the declaration. To the contrary, it appeared to me as though Hitler was quite hesitant at first. Only after a careful review of the terminology, Hitler finally acquiesced and signed the declaration. I had the impression then that he did so merely as a favor to Chamberlain and he himself had little faith in the effectiveness of such a measure."
441. DGFP, D, II, no. 676, pp. 1017 f. The original signed text was in English; German text in DNB report, September 30, 1938.
442. Pierre-Étienne Flandin, born 1889 in Paris, died 1958 in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat; French Premier from 1934 to 1935. He had called for a complete reorientation of French policy in September of 1938 by having huge posters placed all over France.
443. Published in the *Neue Basler Zeitung*, No. 238, October 12, 1938.
444. Note sent to the author by Waldemar Vogt, Gau Propagandaleiter in Berlin, on October 10, 1938.
445. DNB text, September 30, 1938.
446. Ibid. The *Erntedankfest* had been scheduled for October 2 (Sunday after Michaelmas).
447. Verbatim account in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1938.
448. RGBl. 1938, 1, pp. 1331 f.
449. Matter resolved in the cases of the Saar and Austria by appointing

- Bürckel, a citizen of the Old Reich, to Reichskommissar. See above, March 1, 1935, and April 23, 1938.
450. DNB text, October 3, 1938.
451. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, October 5, 1938.
452. DNB text, October 6, 1938.
453. See above, September 12, 1938.
454. See above, May 28, 1938, and speech of September 12, 1938.
455. See below, October 21, 1938.
456. Alfred Duff Cooper, born 1890, died 1954; repeatedly served as British Minister of War and Information; Lord Norwich subsequent to 1952.
457. Parody of a line in Schiller: “*Und die Treue, sie ist doch kein leerer Wahn*” (Truth is no dream!—Its power is strong) in the ballad *Die Bürgschaft*. (*The Hostage*. English quotation taken from the Leipzig 1844 edition, trans. Edward Bulwer-Lytton.)
458. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, October 7, 1938.
459. Ibid.
460. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, October 8, 1938.
461. Hitler used this term in reference to British and French statesmen. See below, August 22, 1939.
462. Published in VB, No. 283, October 10, 1938.
463. DNB text, October 10, 1938.
464. On the meeting of the International Commission cf. DGFP, D, IV, no. 56, pp. 63 ff.
465. Report in VB, No. 287, October 14, 1938.
466. DNB text, October 14, 1938.
467. Monsignor Dr. Josef Tiso, born 1887 in Velká Bytča; Slovakian Premier from October 6, 1938; State President from 1939; hanged in 1947.
468. DNB text, October 14, 1938.
469. Report in VB, No. 290, October 17, 1938.
470. Report in VB, No. 292, October 19, 1938.
471. Further details on Hitler’s *Teehaus* pavilion in Geiss, pp. 100 ff.
472. For François-Poncet’s report on the meeting see *Documents Diplomatiques, 1938–39* (Paris, 1939), No. 18. (Hereafter referred to as the *French Yellow Book*.)
473. See below, December 6, 1938.
474. DNB text, October 18, 1938.
475. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 1524. The medal in question was worn on a black-red-black band and resembled the “medal in commemoration of March 13, 1938.” See above, April 30, 1938.
476. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, October 21, 1938.
477. DNB text, October 20, 1938.
478. A law on the reunion of the Sudeten German territories with the German Reich was issued from Berchtesgaden on October 21, 1938. Cf. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 1641.
479. DGFP, D, IV, no. 81, pp. 99 f. German text printed in IMT, 136-C. Excerpts printed in Hofer, p. 219.
480. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1938.

481. Reports in VB, *ibid.*
482. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, October 28, 1938.
483. Prussia and Austria signed the armistice at the castle of Nikolsburg on July 21, 1866, where the preliminary peace treaty was signed on July 26, 1866, as well. The final Peace Treaty of Prague, dated August 23, 1866, adopted the provisions set forth in the Peace of Nikolsburg.
484. Armistice between Germany and the Allies of November 11, 1918. Subsequent to the fall of France, Hitler insisted that the French Government under Pétain surrender and sign an armistice with the German Reich at precisely the same location.
485. These peace treaties heralded the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. During the winter months of late 1939 and early 1940, rumors circulated to the effect that Hitler was confident that, in the end, he would dictate the terms of peace to the Western Powers at Münster and Osnabrück.
486. Report in VB, No. 303, October 30, 1938.
487. Published in VB, No. 306, November 2, 1938. The Gau of Sudetenland, created by the NSDAP, and the Reichsgau of the same name consisted of all territories in eastern and northern Bohemia. Reichenberg served as its capital. The southern part of Bohemia was placed under Bavarian administration, while the southern section of Moravia fell to Austria.
488. RGBL. 1938, I, p. 1567.
489. Hitler's absence was conspicuous also at the reading of the second "Viennese sentence" on August 30, 1940. The verdict accorded Hungary the title to certain lands located in Transylvania, territory which had been part of Romania previously. On the other hand, however, Hitler made a point of personally attending the festivities at the Belvedere Palace on the occasion of the signing of the Three-Power Pact of 1940-41, in which Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania joined forces. See below, November 20, 1940, March 1 and 25, 1941.
490. DNB report, November 3, 1938.
491. Content of the speech in VB, No. 311, November 7, 1938.
492. Because the Czech territory in its entirety had been denied Germany, Hitler considered German law to have suffered abuse at the hands of the Munich Conference. The claims accorded Germany were restricted to the Sudetenland.
493. Parody of Werner Richard Heymann's (1896-1961) popular song *Das gibt's nur einmal, das kommt nichtwieder*, performed by Lilian Harvey for *Der Kongress tanzt Ufa*, (1931), one of the first sound movies.
494. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1938. Several recordings of this speech have been preserved and the verbatim account is on file at the archives of the *Quick* magazine in Munich.
495. Allusion to the mass panic that just had swept the United States after Orson Welles' radio broadcast on Halloween: according to the highly realistic airing, adapted from the novel *War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells, a Martian spaceship had landed in New Jersey.
496. Allusion to Bismarck's famous exclamation during a speech delivered on May 14, 1872: "We are not going to Canossa!" in the year 1077, King

- Henry IV (German Emperor from 1084) had done penance by going on a pilgrimage to Canossa where he threw himself at the feet of Pope Gregory VII.
497. Allusion to doubts Bismarck voiced regarding the future of the German Reich in his memoirs *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* (new ed., Stuttgart and Berlin, 1913), Vol. II.
498. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1938.
499. Report in VB, *ibid.*
500. The SS Verfügungstruppe wore belt buckles with the following engraving: *Unsere Ehre heisst Treue* (“Our honor means loyalty”).
501. See above, note 429.
502. Hitler placed particular emphasis on the destruction of synagogues. As early as the September 1938 Party Congress, he had reproached Gauleiter Julius Streicher for allowing several synagogues in Nuremberg to remain unharmed. Remarks by Gauleiter Hellmuth in Würzburg on September 10, 1938. Taken from the author’s notes.
503. The public coined this term in view of the multitudes of broken glass strewn about Germany’s streets. Then Reich Minister of Economics, Funk supposedly used the term *Glaswoche* (week of glass) in reference to these events as early as November 1938. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIII, p. 165.
504. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg referred to the SA as a criminal organization which formed part of the National Socialist Party. Nevertheless, its members were cleared of the accusations brought against them. Among those on trial, the former SA Obergruppenführer Max Juetter, chief of administration and deputy to the SA Chief of Staff, cut the best figure. He asserted the following at the end of his speech in defense of his actions: “We neither desired nor prepared for war. We men of the SA did not commit any crimes against humanity. In the event that one of us has done wrong, he shall be duly punished—this is our will as well. Hence we plea neither for mercy nor for pity in view of our present personal misfortune. We plea for justice and for nothing other; our consciences are clear. We conducted ourselves as patriots. If you wish to brand patriots as criminals—then, indeed, we are criminals!” IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XXI, p. 260.
505. See above, September 26, 1938.
506. Together with a preface by Wilhelm Treue, the text is printed in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 6 (1958), pp. 175 ff.
507. Hitler is alluding to two speeches he delivered; one on November 6, 1938 in Weimar and the other on November 8, 1938 in Munich. Actually, Hitler had been greatly disappointed by the lack of public enthusiasm in response to the Sudeten crises.
508. The extent to which Hitler was mistaken on this subject was proven in 1939 when the Western Powers did not break down in face of German propaganda but, in fact, declared war on Germany.
509. The audience’s laughter drowned out the beginning of the next sentence.

510. Word indistinct.
511. A German word *Rüsselschwein* does not exist. Hitler's idiom meant a wild boar rooting for truffles in the earth with his snout (*Rüssel*).
512. However, envisioning himself in his future role as warlord, Hitler was not willing to suffer even one defeat. He desired victory and victory alone. Based on the presumption of ever more victories, it was clear that the only new experience Hitler could possibly gain in wartime was defeat. After all, even the most fervent belief in the *Endsieg* cannot "move mountains."
513. In the German original, this sentence was grammatically incorrect.
514. See above, February 4, 1936.
515. DNB text, November 11, 1938.
516. Report in VB, No. 322, November 18, 1938.
517. See above, speech of February 12, 1936.
518. Published in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1938.
519. Ibid.
520. Reference is made to a declaration on the inviolability of Belgian neutrality. As with so many other similar declarations, Hitler would not later abide by its terms. See below, May 10, 1940.
521. DNB report, November 21, 1938.
522. Published in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1938.
523. Report in VB, *ibid*.
524. DNB text, November 24, 1938. It was rather conspicuous that on November 29, 1938—only five days after King Carol's call on Hitler—Codreanu, the imprisoned head of the Iron Guard (a Romanian organization) was killed in an alleged "escape attempt" outside of Bucharest. Twelve other members of the Iron Guard were shot as well.
525. DNB report, November 24, 1938.
526. IMT C-137.
527. See 1939, "Major Events in Summary."
528. Published in VB, No. 338, December 4, 1938. This publication also contains a report on the address delivered at the reception in City Hall.
529. See below, telegram of March 30, 1936, and radio broadcast of the April 10, 1938 address.
530. DNB report, December 5, 1938.
531. Ibid. "Sudeten Silesia" is a region located in eastern Sudetenland, bordering upon Silesia.
532. German text in DNB report, December 6, 1938; French text in the *French Yellow Book*, No. 28; English quotation according to DGFP, D, IV, no. 369, p. 470.
533. The Fascists had strong convictions that the Mediterranean Sea (*mare nostrum*) belonged to Italy. In their opinion, the entire coastline should be incorporated in the Italian Empire in one form or another.
534. The ship had a tonnage of 19,000. The Germania Shipyards in Kiel had recently been commissioned to construct a second aircraft carrier.
535. DNB report, December 10, 1938.
536. Published in VB, No. 345, December 11, 1938.

537. This was a thinly disguised attack on opposition Protestant circles which called themselves “Bekennniskirche” (Confessional Church).
538. DNB report, December 14, 1938.
539. Report in VB, No. 352, December 17, 1938.
540. Speaking before an assembly of publishers and journalists, Hitler attributed this victory, secured without bloodshed, to the German press. See above, November 10, 1938.
541. Published in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1938.
542. Report in VB, *ibid.*
543. Ridder von Rappard, the previous envoy, had been killed in a car accident.
544. IMT, C-138. See also Bullock, p. 478.
545. Report in VB, Nos. 358 to 360, December 24 to 26, 1938.
546. *Ibid.*
547. Report in VB, No. 365, December 31, 1938.
548. Dr. Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, born 1878 in Budapest, died 1962 in Munich; well known at the time for his metaphysical book *Die Bauhütte*.
549. See above, speech of December 2, 1938: “National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!”
550. See above, speech of March 14, 1936: “I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker.”
551. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.

Appendix

Notes

1. With these words, Hitler praised the introduction of the two-year compulsory conscription service in late 1936. See above, September 9, 1936.
2. See above, p. 552, note 16.
3. In a letter to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, proclaimed the following on June 29, 1934: "In a close alliance with the entire Volk, the Wehrmacht stands by ... the Führer of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, who once came from our ranks and will always remain one of us." See above, p. 467.
4. See below, September 24, 1941.
5. See above, February 20, 1938.
6. General Groener made the following statement during the 1930 autumn maneuvers: "A Wehrmacht, standing aloof from party politics, will always play a central role in the affairs of the state." Cf. Otto-Ernst Schüttekopf, *Heer und Republik. Quellen zur Politik der Reichswehrführung 1918–1933* (Hanover and Frankfurt am Main, 1955), p. 306. See also Friedrich von Rabenau, *Seeckt. Aus seinem Leben 1918–1936* (Leipzig, 1940); Werner Conze, "Die Weimarer Republik," in *Deutsche Geschichte im Überblick* (Stuttgart, 1962); and Francis Ludwig Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik in der Weimarer Republik 1918–1933* (Cologne, 1964).
7. See above, 1937, note 1.
8. See below, September 17, 1939.
9. Hitler's assessment of the situation was correct. Once he held the reigns of government and claimed leadership legally, no general dared defy him. Even the generals of the July 20, 1944 resistance movement proceeded against him solely on the notion that he was dead and hence their actions took place within the boundaries of legality.
10. In August of 1932, Hitler made the following reply to an American journalist's inquiry whether he intended to march upon Berlin: "Why should I march on Berlin? I'm already there! The question is not who will march on Berlin, but rather who will march out of Berlin. The SA will not take part in an illegal march." See above, p. 158.
11. See above, p. 135.
12. See below, January 27, 1940.
13. See below, April 29, 1945.
14. See above, p. 195.
15. See above, p. 239.
16. See above, 1937, note 62.
17. See above, p. 376.
18. In the process of integrating the Land Police forces into the Wehrmacht in 1935, the steadily multiplying divisions of the SS Verfügungstruppe became a sort of a private army at Hitler's disposal.

19. See above, p. 467.
20. See above, p. 478.
21. See above, October 22, 1935.
22. See above, September 14, 1936.
23. While the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 empowered Hitler to act as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, the Reich Minister of War in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht also exercised considerable power. Henceforth, this differentiation no longer applied—Hitler securely established himself as sole Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.
24. On December 19, 1941—on the occasion of von Brauchitsch's forced resignation—Hitler personally took over the Supreme Command of the Army, too.
25. See above, September 30, 1938.